



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Tuesday, April 11, 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  
Tuesday, April 11, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

**Speaker:** We will now proceed with the Order Paper.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Speaker:** Under Introduction of Visitors, the Chair is pleased to introduce from the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office: Annette King, the Child and Youth Advocate; Julia Milnes, the Deputy Child and Youth Advocate; and Shauna Kewin, the advocate caseworker. Please join me in welcoming them to the Assembly today.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any other visitors to be introduced?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Along with the leadership from the Child and Youth Advocate and their team today, we would like to welcome a number of individuals who are also here for the same tribute: Doris Bill; well-known leader from our community, Eileen Duchesne; as well as Elder Jessie Dawson. Lance and Nishka from the team from Blue Feather, and Lindsay Cornell from the Boys and Girls Club of Yukon are with us here as well today. A special happy birthday today to Agnieszka Pajor, who is the summit coordinator and youth leader. Thank you for coming today.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any tributes?

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I rise on behalf of the Liberal government and the Third Party to pay tribute to National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, which occurs the second week of April each year.

Every day, someone witnesses a violent crime or fire or helps a loved one experiencing an unexpected medical emergency. Dealing with that horrible worst-day-of-their-life situation starts with a simple phone call for aid. When people need help, the first responder they speak with is seated at an emergency communications centre. These individuals dispatch assistance where it needs to be. Sometimes they administer life-saving guidance. They are trained to be a comforting voice on the other end of the line for people whose world is falling apart. This important work requires both empathy and strength of character. Every day, their sole purpose is helping people navigate traumatic situations. What an incredible responsibility, Mr. Speaker. What an extraordinary role to play in our society.

Across the Yukon, many groups are involved in managing emergency response calls, including 911 operators with the RCMP, Emergency Medical Services staff, community nurses, Whitehorse Fire Department staff, and private contractor employees. These hard-working folks are hidden in offices at the end of the phone lines, meaning that they don't often get the same recognition as the police, firefighters, paramedics, and other emergency responders who are on the scene. Today we acknowledge and applaud our emergency telecommunicators and the valuable role that they fill in our society. I salute them and I invite my colleagues today in the House to do the same.

*Applause*

**Mr. Cathers:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize April 9 to 15 as National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week. We honour the hard-working telecommunications professionals throughout the public safety community — those who work to dispatch emergency services throughout the territory — and that, of course, includes 911, the police, Emergency Medical Services, and fire. It is not always a straightforward job and requires a combination of traits to ensure that the person on the other end of the line receives the services and care that they require in a short amount of time in an emergency situation. Communication skills, judgment, empathy, and competence are just a few of those traits that are necessary. The person who picks up the emergency call must also assess and navigate a situation, provide instructions, and make decisions on the spot as well as locating and dispatching the resources necessary to send all in a matter of where minutes and seconds make all the difference in the world. Like those first on the scene, dispatchers must also endure very emotionally difficult situations. They do so in a calm, professional, and reassuring manner.

Thank you to all of our professional telecommunication staff for the work that you do to assist others. Your work is a fundamental part of the public safety network across the Yukon. Your dedication is truly appreciated.

*Applause*

### In recognition of Yukon Youth Summit

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Today I rise to pay tribute to the Yukon Youth Summit beginning on April 16. Youth from across the territory will gather in person and virtually to participate in important conversations about the Yukon's future and to help in finishing the development of the territorial youth strategy.

Our world is changing quickly. It is more important than ever that we have meaningful conversations with youth and that youth are emboldened to have these conversations among themselves. Young Yukoners bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and a deep understanding of the issues that affect them and their communities.

This summit is an important opportunity for young Yukoners to share their unique views and help shape our shared future. It is also a chance for us to learn about their hopes, dreams, and aspirations as well as the challenges they face. We can identify where they need support and resources and work

together as partners to find solutions that meet their needs. This summit is also an opportunity for us to empower youth to take a central role in creating a better world for themselves and future generations.

Youth have grown up in a different world from the one we did with new technologies, social norms, and cultural values. They are more diverse and inclusive than ever before, and their perspectives are vital to understanding and overcoming the challenges of the day. I am inspired daily by how young people step up and act on issues that matter to them from education to mental health, to social justice, and more.

The Yukon Youth Summit will support these efforts, as will the territorial youth strategy, which I look forward to helping implement. The summit is free and open to all Yukoners ages 12 to 30, and I encourage everyone interested to register at [yukonyouthsummit.com](http://yukonyouthsummit.com).

I would like to again thank all of the sponsors and organizers of the youth summit for making this event possible, and I would like to thank our youth for stepping up and speaking out. Whether it is politics, community development, education or beyond, youth engagement is essential for building a brighter future for us all. Working as partners, I have no doubt that we will continue to build strong, resilient Yukon communities for generations to come.

*Applause*

**Ms. Clarke:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 2023 Yukon Youth Summit taking place April 16 to 19 at the Yukon Arts Centre.

According to Lindsay Cornell, executive director of the Boys and Girls Club Yukon, there are three main goals of this year's summit: first is to create a large, connected and meaningful event for young people in the Yukon to come together in person, post-pandemic; next is to facilitate an avenue to ensure that youth voices are celebrated in all aspects; and last is to finalize the territorial youth strategy.

The summit allows for young minds to come together to add their voices to discussions around important issues that we all face across the territory: mental health and wellness, education, climate change, and the environment. Those are just some of the topics that will continue to be explored under the lens of young and inquisitive minds.

Thank you to all participants in advance for their work in these areas and to all those who have brought forward their perspectives and ideas to date to help inform the territorial youth strategy.

*Applause*

**MLA Tredger:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to add our well wishes for the upcoming Yukon Youth Summit. The Yukon is full of brilliant, committed, inciteful youth who are leaders in their community. They are organized, they are passionate, they know what they need and what will benefit their communities, and they are change-makers. We are so lucky to have them.

The youth summit is a wonderful opportunity for them to come together, to share, to learn from each other, and to inspire

each other. The summit is packed with speakers — some of whom I believe are here today — full of activities and youth-led discussions. Our congratulations to the organizers for putting together such a great event. We wish all the attendees a productive summit, and we can't wait to see what they do in the future.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any returns of documents for tabling?

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I have for tabling the Family and Children's Services annual report for 2020 to 2022.

**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

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to respect provincial and territorial jurisdiction over the management of natural resources.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to take immediate action to ensure that doctors are paid for their services in a timely manner, including quickly resolving the large backlog in bills for health care services provided by doctors.

**Speaker:** Is there a statement by a minister?

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Community infrastructure projects

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I rise today to speak about community infrastructure projects underway across the Yukon. Through our partnerships with Canada, municipalities, First Nations, and unincorporated Yukon communities, we are improving Yukoners' lives.

This year, we will complete several multi-year infrastructure projects around the territory and we are adjusting to global pressures facing contractors, including supply chain disruptions and labour shortages. This fiscal year, the Yukon government will invest almost \$60 million on a range of community-improving infrastructure projects. This investment will focus on clean drinking water, green energy, solid waste, waste-water management, public transit, cultural and recreational facilities, and roads across the territory and in municipalities. This community-building investment reflects the priorities identified by First Nations, municipal governments, and unincorporated Yukon communities.

Mr. Speaker, more than \$1 billion of priorities have been identified across the territory, and we will continue to work

with our partners to allocate funding to best meet local needs and emerging pressures. We are also working with our federal colleagues to increase and more efficiently allocate funding for the Yukon. These investments put Yukoners to work, build sustainable communities, and improve the lives of Yukoners and our economy.

We are also investing heavily in recreation and community space because this is vital for Yukoners' well-being. This includes a new swimming pool in Pelly Crossing, the community centre in Beaver Creek, and an irrigation system at the Mountain View Golf Course.

The protection of communities and property in the Yukon is also a priority. Construction of the Carmacks' fire hall and Emergency Medical Services station will be complete this summer, and the new fire halls and public works buildings in Teslin and Faro are complete. Modern water and waste-water systems are essential for healthy lives, and in Faro, Haines Junction, Mayo, Dawson City, Watson Lake and Whitehorse, replacements and upgrades of aging water and sewer lines will continue this year.

We look forward to continuing this important work which enables sustainable local services and thriving climate-resilient communities. These investments provide work for Yukoners, make for more sustainable communities, enhance economic development, and improve the well-being of all Yukoners for generations to come.

**Ms. McLeod:** I would like to thank the minister for the update.

While these projects are certainly important to their communities, we expected something a bit more noteworthy from the minister to merit a ministerial statement. The minister has left many unanswered questions on community infrastructure this Sitting so perhaps he has updates on those issues.

Last week, the Mayor of Haines Junction identified a funding shortfall with phases 3 and 4 of water and sewer upgrades and has written to the minister asking where the money is coming from. In his response today, can the minister tell the community of Haines Junction where the funding will come from for these important upgrades?

Speaking of infrastructure funding, as we have previously brought up in this House, the Investing in Canada infrastructure program has ended. While projects that have already had funding identified can still move forward, there are serious questions about what will replace the ICIP. So far, all we have heard is from the Premier, who said — quote: "... if you did not use ICIP — the money that has been allocated — it would be reallocated to those jurisdictions that had used theirs." Can the minister explain the Premier's comments and whether or not it's true? If so, which jurisdiction's funding will be reallocated to Yukon and how much can we expect to receive? Communities that have infrastructure priorities that have not yet received federal or territorial funding would certainly like to hear the answer to that question.

Last week, I asked about the tender for the new gymnastics facility in Whitehorse. The tender closed on March 2 and has

yet to be awarded. Perhaps the minister now has some updated information. Can he indicate when the tender for the new gymnastics facility will be awarded and if it is still slated for completion in the 2024-25 fiscal year as well as on budget?

We also know that this year's budget included a significant cut to the funding for rural land development, so can the minister tell us how many lots will be released in rural Yukon this year? Likewise, the minister has continuously refused to tell Yukoners how many total lots the government has released since the 2021 election. Will the minister take the opportunity to use his response to answer this fairly simple question?

We all know how important community infrastructure is, so I look forward to the minister answering some of these questions for Yukoners.

**Ms. White:** We are happy to hear that the government is investing in communities and doing the work that is expected of them. We expect that the minister will work with communities on the projects that they highlight and prioritize, and we remind him that this is his job. We know that there are many emerging issues in Yukon communities from funding gaps for the new recreation centre in Dawson City to concerns about Haines Junction's ability to complete its water and sewage upgrades. This statement doesn't even address concerns around the newest landslide on Robert Service Way, so how does the minister plan on financially supporting the City of Whitehorse as they grapple with the in-your-face effects of climate change? And, as the Minister of Community Services, I would encourage him to register for this year's Association of Yukon Communities AGM in Watson Lake, May 11 to 14, where he can hear directly from municipalities about the issues that they care about and concerns that they have. If he hasn't registered yet, he has until April 21 before he will have to pay a late fee. I look forward to seeing him in Watson Lake.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** About a month ago, I was glad to be in Carmacks with many of my colleagues across the House, actually — in our government and across the floor — to celebrate the grand opening of this new arena. It was a pleasure to catch a glimpse of what this beautiful, modern facility means to that community. It cemented what we know to be true. Investing in recreational infrastructure is so much more than bricks and mortar, figures, and funds; it directly nurtures overall wellness and inclusivity, impacting Yukon families in a positive, healthy way. This is good for the territory as a whole.

I would add that, with the experience of COVID-19, now more than ever, we recognize the importance of community gathering in shared public spaces. Our government believes in the power of community wellness and connections through sport and recreation. We are committed to seeing more moments like the recent Carmacks celebration.

Our government continues to invest in the infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of today and tomorrow. Our government is one that takes action, and we are moving these projects along with our partners — municipalities, First Nations, local advisory committees. The action continues. That's why our 2023-24 budget is committed to making critical

infrastructure upgrades to Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport and the Watson Lake Airport. That is why we are supporting technological infrastructure for economic growth and diversification across the Yukon. Our government will continue to work closely with the local contractors, businesses, the Government of Canada, Yukon First Nations, and Yukoners in general to build projects and enhance communities, create good jobs, and boost our economy.

Now, we had some questions from members opposite. I appreciate their interest in this subject this afternoon. It is important. It's why we do these statements.

I can say to the Member for Watson Lake that the Haines Junction phase 3 project for their infrastructure is progressing. The contract was awarded in 2021. The contractor has indicated that there were labour shortages and some supply chain issues that the contractor was dealing with. We are looking at substantial completion of phase 3 of that project this summer. It's on budget and phase 4 is in design.

There is some confusion. The municipality of Haines Junction is a case in point. I did receive the letter from the mayor. The mayor is confused because some members opposite have said that there is a huge decrease in funding for rural lot development. I will say again, as I have said before in the House, that this is creating confusion in the public, and I really want to clear that up. We are actually, right now, at a level of funding for community lot development that is more than we have seen over the past several years. It is down from our projection but we have enough lot development in there to actually get the lots out the door. We are going to have: three lots in Carmacks; three to four in Dawson; in Haines Junction, we have seven lots; Ross River, there are two industrial; in Mayo, we have two lots; in Watson Lake, we have five to seven lots on the list right now, but that, of course, doesn't include Frances Avenue — more than 40 lots in that community, which they weren't expecting, and we were very happy to deliver on that promise — and we have one in Faro, and one in Destruction Bay slotted for this year.

There is a lot of lot development happening in rural Yukon. We are going to continue that work. We know how important it is for growth in our rural communities.

To the member from the Third Party, of course, I have registered for the Association of Yukon Communities meeting in May. I am happy to see it being down in Watson Lake and I look forward to seeing the member in Watson Lake during that meeting.

I will say that I had a great meeting with the Association of Yukon Communities in March —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Landslide remediation on major roadways

**Mr. Dixon:** Saturday morning's landslide on Robert Service Way has significantly disrupted the lives of many Yukoners. It has created uncertainty about the long-term use of

this important artery in the territory's capital. According to the Yukon Geological Survey, we should expect more slides throughout the rest of the spring.

This morning the Mayor of Whitehorse told CBC Yukon that what is needed is a longer term solution.

What work has the Yukon government done to develop options for a longer term solution to support the City of Whitehorse to ensure that Yukoners continue to have access to this important transportation route?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It's a very important issue. I am glad that it was brought up on the floor of the House today. This government is committed to climate change in a number of different venues. We have a nation-leading climate change action plan in *Our Clean Future*. That is one of the first things that we initiated that has concrete steps to try to help the territory deal with climate change on a territory-wide level. I continue to work with municipalities. We just had a ministerial statement that talked about all of the infrastructure upgrades we are doing. We are doing that to help make our communities more resilient to climate change.

As far as the slides that happened in the City of Whitehorse this past weekend, I was on the phone with the Mayor of Whitehorse first thing Saturday morning to reach out and extend my offers of help. They said that they didn't need anything at this time, but we are working with the City of Whitehorse on an ongoing basis. We have given them \$2 million for the slide that happened last year; they have some money left from that, and we will certainly help out as this issue continues to evolve.

**Mr. Dixon:** In February of this year, the Minister of Community Services issued a press release saying that the Yukon government would provide \$2 million to offset the costs incurred by the city due to the 2022 slides. In that release, the minister said this — quote: "Our assurance of support and backing at the time allowed the City to minimize the unexpected financial impacts to the community and municipal taxpayers."

Mr. Speaker, any longer term solution to this issue will likely come at significant cost. So, I would like to ask the minister what assurances he can provide to the city at this time. Will the Yukon government provide assurances that the cost of the long-term solution that is needed to address this issue will be covered by the Yukon government?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I will say to the member opposite that it is a highly speculative question, actually, on the floor of the House. We don't know what the costs are; we don't know what mitigations engineering companies are going to propose for this area. I will say that we have been right behind the City of Whitehorse and all municipalities, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to dealing with climate change and climate change impacts.

We have been working with Dawson, Carmacks, Mayo, Haines Junction, Teslin, Watson Lake, Whitehorse, and Carmacks. All municipalities have had impacts in the last year, and we have been working side by side with those municipal partners as they deal with these crises. The municipalities have responsibility over the issues that happen within their

boundaries — I have been very clear on that on the floor of the House — but we are behind those municipalities and are supporting them however we can to make sure that they have the money from either ourselves or the federal government or resources that they can use to mitigate the effects of climate change on this territory, which we are seeing growing every year.

**Mr. Dixon:** According to the budget speech, the 2023-24 budget includes a new — quote — “\$50 million contingency fund for emerging priorities, including wildfires and flooding...”

Mr. Speaker, it is hard to think of a more fitting emergency situation than this. Ongoing natural disasters have cut off one of the busiest — if not the busiest — transportation arteries in the Yukon and, according to the mayor of our capital city, a longer term engineering solution is needed.

Will the Government of Yukon make the new \$50-million contingency fund available to the City of Whitehorse to minimize the financial impact to the municipality and protect municipal taxpayers?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First of all, yes, I think that it was good vision to make sure that there was a contingency fund in place — taking into consideration what we have seen with impacts for climate change.

Today, I just want to get on the floor — because it is a very unique situation today that the Leader of the Official Opposition is standing up with grave concern about the clay cliffs and what we have seen — because, going back just a few months ago, I was told that I was disingenuous because I was concerned about the threat and risk along the clay cliffs as we were getting ready to put 5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers out, so I appreciate the turn today. For that to be the first question, led by the Leader of the Official Opposition, we now see that there is an understanding that this is a potential risk. There is an understanding that it is important to work with the City of Whitehorse, which we did all last year. We did geotechnical work and studied together because we know that it is important to look after Yukoners and we know that it is important to ensure that this infrastructure is in place.

Good work on the Department of Finance and the team to have the contingency in place. We will continue to work with the city. The OCP will also drive other interests on how we build out infrastructure, but we will be working hand in hand and it is great to now see more concern about a very significant issue here in the House today.

#### **Question re: Dawson City recreation centre**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Last week, Dawson City council debated and discussed the new recreation centre. The City of Dawson officials provided a report to city council that said this — quote: “At this time, Yukon Government, with support from the Government of Canada has identified and committed to sixty million (\$60,000,000) to fund this project.”

Can the Minister of Community Services confirm how much the Yukon government has budgeted for the Dawson City recreation centre and how much of that budget will be coming from the Government of Canada?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am happy to talk about the long-promised and not delivered Dawson City recreation centre, which we are making good on, Mr. Speaker. It has been something that has been promised for more than a decade to that community. They have been waiting patiently and this government is making it happen.

I am going to turn now to the five-year capital plan — it is actually on page 15 of the document here. It says here that the Dawson City recreation centre is going to have up to \$3 million worth of work done this year, \$40 million to \$45 million worth of work next year, and \$20 million to \$25 million worth of work in 2025-26. If you add those numbers up, you get the cost that we budgeted for the recreation centre.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** According to the City of Dawson council package from April 5, the current capital cost estimate is over \$75 million. We know that Yukon’s allocation under the federal Investing in Canada infrastructure program has already been completely subscribed to, so I would like the minister to clarify where the additional money for this project will come from. How much money for this project will come from Canada and how much money will come from the Government of Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It’s very disappointing for me to hear the members opposite sow so much fear and incorrect information before the Yukon public.

The Investing in Canada infrastructure program funding has been allocated but not yet spent, so there is money for the Dawson City recreation centre coming out of the Investing in Canada infrastructure fund. It’s there. It has been allocated; it has not been spent. As a matter of fact, there could be Investing in Canada infrastructure money rolling out to communities until 2033. There’s a lot of room left in this fund to keep the territory going, and we’re looking for more money from the federal government given that some Canadian jurisdictions have elected not to spend their money and the federal government is looking to reallocate some of those monies to communities like us that have made huge investments in our infrastructure and actually pulled entirely on the funds that we were given. We are going to continue to invest in Yukon communities to make sure that they are resilient and meet the needs of our residents.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Last spring, the minister told the *Yukon News* that the government is working toward a completion date for this project in 2026. Can the minister provide an update on whether or not that timeline is still on track?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I refer the member opposite to the five-year capital plan. It lays out the spending plans of the Yukon government until 2026 and well beyond that. It says in my document right here, which is available online or in hard copy to the members opposite, that the recreation centre in Dawson is due to be completed in 2026.

#### **Question re: Airport improvements**

**Ms. White:** The Yukon’s tourism industry has had a tough couple of years. The pandemic has already forced the closure of several local businesses, and some operators are worried that they might be next.

Almost 5,000 tourists fly to the Yukon with Condor from Europe each summer. It's a hugely important route for Yukon's tourism operators. Many are wondering what they will do when the airport construction project prevents Condor's jets from landing in the territory. Has the minister met with TIAY and key Yukon operators to inform them of this change and to discuss alternatives?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Yes, of course, I have met with the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon. By the way, they said to me that the Yukon had the best performance on supporting the tourism industry across Canada. I thank them for their comments.

Yes, of course, we talked about Condor. We also talked about the Tourism Advisory Board on which Air North sits — or they have a rep on there. The issue isn't just the work on the airport, because Condor itself is moving to different airplanes and those planes are not going to be accommodated in the future here in the Yukon. It would require in the order of magnitude of doubling the size of our terminal.

I have asked the Tourism Advisory Board to provide me with advice, but I think we are working on other solutions — for example, interline agreements and working with European carriers and connecting with them and making sure they can connect to come up to the Yukon.

For the coming year, Condor is still going to be flying here, and then they had intended to phase out their current jets.

**Ms. White:** I am happy to hear that those conversations have happened.

Transport Canada has been working to modernize its regulations in providing increased safety for Canadians travelling by air. An unfortunate side effect of this is that Yukon's airports are not able to accommodate the same types of planes that they were before. The much-touted upgraded runway at the Dawson City Airport, for example, can no longer receive a 737. That was the whole point of paving that runway — so Air North could operate its fleet of 737s there.

I understand that Air North is working to receive an exemption from the federal government for the short term, but what is the minister doing to ensure that Air North can continue to land scheduled flights with its fleet of 737s in Dawson now and into the future?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** There are several reasons why we paved the runway in Dawson. It's also because Transport Canada is moving away from gravel runways — or what kinds of aircraft you can have there at all. A paved runway is a better runway, period. I was very happy with Highways and Public Works for getting that work done.

We are working very closely with Air North. This feels like a new question to me. We were talking about Condor first and now we are talking about Air North and Dawson — fine. What I can say is that the Premier travelled just this past week in support of Air North around potential work that they are doing. We will continue to work with Air North all along. I don't have an update today for the Dawson runway but I did happen to land on it this past weekend.

#### Question re: *Yukon Act* amendments

**Mr. Dixon:** The reason that the federal budget includes a subsequent amendment to the *Yukon Act* that would give the federal minister responsible for Northern Affairs new powers over sites in the Yukon — section 56(1) of the *Yukon Act* requires that before any amendment of that act is made, the federal minister must consult with the Cabinet of the Yukon government.

Can the Premier tell us if Yukon was indeed consulted on this proposed change to the *Yukon Act*? If so, what is the position of the Yukon government?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Actually, the work that has been done — which really focuses on the Faro project, which is what this pertains to — is work that has been ongoing for a number of years within the *Yukon Act*, of course. The work at Faro and the responsibility for remediation on that project had fallen to the Yukon government. There was a switch made. We are the regulator, but now that project is being handled by the Canadian government. The request for this particular change has been made through conversations between the Government of Yukon — I can check, but primarily, I think, from Energy, Mines and Resources. It was a dialogue from Yukon government to the federal government — and then, again, the change that we saw that was identified in the budget, which is really aligning with the work that is being done specifically to the Faro remediation project.

#### Question re: Michelle Creek mining project

**Mr. Kent:** The Michelle project is located within the boundaries of the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* and overlaps three areas including an integrated management area where development is allowed to occur. According to the YESAB registry, the project purpose is “to explore the property for minerals, including silver, lead, and zinc.”

In December 2022, the board recommended that the project not proceed because effects to wildlife and First Nation wellness could not be mitigated. However, here we are almost four months later and there is still no decision document for this project. When is the decision document expected to be issued that would either accept, reject, or vary the board's recommendations?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am happy to get some information for the members opposite. I don't have any at my hands today.

Around the Peel generally, we have been working to relinquish as many claims as possible. I said just last week, I think, when I stood in this House, that 6,500 out of almost 9,000 mineral claims in the Peel have either been lapsed or relinquished in exchange for non-monetary compensation.

The member is asking about a specific issue. I am happy to get some information.

**Mr. Kent:** The Yukon government wrote to the YESA board on February 8, 2023, and it was an official in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources who wrote this letter regarding the Michelle project. It says — quote: “The Decision Body received the Recommendation on December 16, 2022 and since this time have been considering it.



“The Decision Body has been conducting an internal review of the Evaluation Report, and will be conducting consultation with the affected First Nations in the coming weeks.”

My question for the minister is: Has the internal review been completed, and are the consultations with the affected First Nations done? If not, when is it expected to be finished?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** There are a few things. First of all, I am going to go back to our department and get a sense of what the timeline looks like concerning some of that internal work as well as the consultation.

It was a learning experience with this project as well, and it really comes down to how we look at conformity checks, which is policy that has come out of the Peel, and it is ensuring that the right governance is in place to ensure what specific activities can occur in particular areas. What we have seen in this is that there were some challenges around that. I know that there has been some communication between the Yukon government, as well as with the land planning council, looking to make sure that future land planning processes have the right governance models in place and that, when it comes to the conformity of those activities in particular areas, there is a streamlined process to do that.

There has been a lot of work and definitely some learning, but I will have the opportunity to come back as well with my colleague from Energy, Mines and Resources to give the House an update on timelines and some of the internal work that has been undertaken on this particular project.

**Mr. Kent:** In order for the Yukon government to miss the legislated timelines for issuing a decision document, they had to send this letter dated February 6, 2023. They said that the consultation with the affected First Nations would be completed in the coming weeks and that they were conducting an internal review. Again, this is inconsistent with YESAB timelines.

My question again goes back to last week with respect to the claims compensation policy. Will the government establish a fair market value, third-party independent assessment process to establish the value of claims that are affected by land use planning decisions?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that the member opposite knows full well about these processes, and I think that there were probably some public comments made previously when he was in the role of Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on his perspective on compensation for claims. We certainly can bring that to the House.

Our approach has been, in many of these cases, that there have been legacy pieces with the claims in place. We commend the companies that we have had an opportunity to work with. We know that it has been a unique process when you see very significant companies like Newmont making sure that they relinquish claims and that there is a process in place, but I think that questions 1 and 2 were about Michelle property. We see a process that is underway. At this point in time, the member opposite's third question went right to compensation. Where we are right now is a process — a deliberation that is underway.

Again, I will come back to the House and have those discussions, but I think the work that has been done with companies — when they really understand the focus of corporate social responsibility, understand ESG financing and the ability to do the right thing, and to be good partners and to balance environment with economy. We have protected a tremendous amount of land and had the strongest economy while we have been in this job so it's important to balance both.

#### **Question re: Highways projects**

**Mr. Hassard:** Almost six years, back in 2017, the Prime Minister came to the Yukon and announced a major funding commitment for the Yukon Resource Gateway project. In 2021, the Yukon Liberals announced amendments to the original application that added a number of other projects to the fund. According to yukon.ca — and I quote: “In total, there are 11 different components that make up the Yukon Resource Gateway Program. To date, we have 6 project agreements with our First Nations partners for 7 of the program's components.” However, only the Carmacks bypass has seen shovels in the ground so far.

How much is in this year's budget for Gateway and which project components will see work done?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** As indicated, the Yukon government is working in collaboration with Yukon First Nations to seek input and to finalize project agreements for components of the Yukon Resource Gateway program within their respective traditional territories. As the member opposite indicated, six project agreements have been signed for seven components with Yukon First Nations to date. This program will provide opportunities to Yukon First Nations through short- and long-term opportunities, training, and benefit agreements.

As indicated, the Yukon government has worked to increase the flexibility of the Gateway funding program with the Government of Canada. The funding program now includes additional flexibility to focus on projects that First Nations and communities have requested. This flexibility allows us to include additional road components on the Silver Trail, North Canol, and sections of the Robert Campbell Highway.

The Yukon government was successful in negotiating a contribution agreement with the Government of Canada that resulted in the Yukon Resource Gateway program's completion date being extended from 2025 to March 2031. Our agreement with Canada also includes an industry component for funding. Industry has indicated an interest in accessing the funding; however, no formal industry agreements are in place at this time. I look forward to providing further details of this program.

**Mr. Hassard:** Unfortunately, it is details that we are actually looking for. I asked what was in this year's budget and the minister didn't provide any response to that.

In January 2020, the Government of Yukon and the Liard First Nation reached an agreement for the first phase of upgrades to the Nahanni Range Road. The first phase includes two bridge replacements and one bridge rehabilitation. Can the minister tell us the status of this work and when he expects that work to begin?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I just wanted to commend, firstly, the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, Pelly Construction, and the various subcontractors on the successful Carmacks bypass project, which has been a collaborative effort. Construction of that road and the bridge is well underway. The contractor has completed approximately 80 percent of the roadwork and 60 percent of the bridge work this past construction season. The remaining road and bridge work will be substantially complete this season and any remaining work will be finished in 2024.

With respect to the Nahanni Range Road phase 1, in January 2020, as indicated, a project agreement with Liard First Nation was signed for the first phase of the Nahanni Range component. The estimated capital construction cost has the potential of being \$17 million. Clearing of the right-of-way began in 2020 with two direct-award contracts to First Kaska Ltd.

The Yukon government and the Liard First Nation entered into an additional agreement to provide heavy equipment operator training for the Liard First Nation citizens. That training was completed in November 2021 and successfully certified eight Liard First Nation citizens. The training objective is to help increase capacity for the Liard First Nation to participate in road construction projects in the future.

Environmental baseline information for this project is being collected in collaboration with —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Hassard:** Unfortunately, that question was about the two bridge replacements and one bridge rehabilitation but, again, the minister forgot to answer that so we will try again.

Last week, the minister was unable or unwilling to tell us when the balance of road construction projects for this year would be issued. In March 2020, the Yukon and the Ross River Dena Council reached an agreement for bridge replacement and safety improvements on the North Canol Road and construction and resurfacing of kilometre 354.9 to kilometre 414.4 of the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River.

These are obviously important projects for my constituents, and we even saw the former Minister of Highways and Public Works make the bizarre commitment to paving that section of road. Can the minister tell us what the project work schedule is and when we will see tenders for these projects?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Really what we are talking about today is the investment in these roads across the Yukon and for resources.

Let's go back. I just took a moment earlier today to look at the 2016 proposal that was in place. The challenge really is — when you think about the flaws that have had to be dealt with in this project — that right now, based on the cashflow that was identified by the previous government, we would be building a road — I think it was about a \$100-million road — to a project in southeast Yukon that would not legally be able to be permitted and financed based on the current geopolitical situation we are in.

I think it was about a \$100-million road that would be built. As far as I know, and from what we have seen signalled from the federal government, you would just be wrapping that project up — the \$100-million road to nowhere.

What we have done is that we have reprioritized. We are supporting a number of programs. There is training that is in place. There weren't training modules identified — at least in the proposal. We are working with a number of different First Nations to build capacity. We think that this is a generational opportunity where people can be doing this work on some of these roads for 10, 15, or 20 years, especially with the maintenance piece, so we will keep doing the good work and we will keep getting it done.

#### **Question re: Chronic disease and disability benefits program**

**MLA Tredger:** Over two weeks ago, I wrote to the Minister of Health and Social Services on behalf of a family in crisis. Their baby had been diagnosed with a severe allergy that meant she couldn't be breastfed and had, instead, to eat hypoallergenic formula, which cost the family hundreds of dollars every month that they could not afford, and they were not covered by chronic conditions. The minister and the Premier, at the time, said that they hadn't had time to look into it when we talked to them about it the next week.

Now it has been two and a half weeks. What is this minister's plan to help this family feed their child?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that it is a bit disingenuous — the lead-up in the question that it had been about a week or something since I hadn't responded. This came in on, I think, a Friday or Thursday afternoon. I was asked about it on Monday. I indicated at that time that we would be working with the family; we would look into it.

It is a casework that is managed through my office and through the Department of Health and Social Services. It is not appropriate for me to speak about private information — health information of a particular family — here on the Legislative Assembly floor, but what I am able to say and will say is that we are continuously working with families and individuals who are seeking ways — we are always seeking ways to improve insured health coverage to best meet the needs of all Yukoners.

We will look into the matter. As a matter of fact, I had a conversation today about the family being contacted in this particular instance. That is all that I am able to say.

**MLA Tredger:** This family has already been on their own for two and a half weeks — that is already hundreds of dollars out of their pockets. They can't afford to keep paying for this formula. What should they do?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The chronic disease and disability benefits program, which I think is what is being asked about here in relation to this particular concern, is a program that provides supports to eligible Yukoners to help cover some costs associated with managing chronic disease or disabilities. The program provides coverage for approximately 80 chronic conditions, which are determined by regulation. We will continue to work with the individual who has brought forward a concern. The department is doing so as we speak.

It may be that individuals, for whatever personal reasons they have, may not be eligible for some of the programs that are available through the Department of Health and Social Services, but we are looking to find out the details of the

situation and determine whether or not there is a program from which they could benefit.

**MLA Tredger:** This family has been waiting for weeks. We have just heard about a program that they have been told they are ineligible for. Their baby needs formula. What is the plan for families who need to feed their children due to medical conditions that are not covered under chronic diseases?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I noted that there is a chronic disease and disability benefits program that provides supports to eligible Yukoners to help cover some costs associated with managing chronic diseases or disabilities.

I am not going to speak about the individual situation, but we also have a children's drug and optical program that is available to lower income families with children under the age of 18 that does provide financial support in some circumstances. We are looking into the matter, but I think it is important for Yukoners to know that the question may be about a program for which there is no eligible coverage. We will work directly with the individuals because that is the appropriate way to handle it.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

### Notice of opposition private members' business

**Mr. Kent:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, April 12, 2023. They are Motion for the Production of Papers No. 6, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre, and Motion No. 664, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek North.

**MLA Tredger:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, April 12, 2023. They are Motion No. 683, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, and Motion No. 686, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

**Speaker:** We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### Bill No. 26: *Act to amend the Municipal Act (2023)* — Third Reading

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

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I would like to begin by thanking each of the honourable members who have risen to speak on Bill No. 26, *Act to amend the Municipal Act (2023)*.

The Association of Yukon Communities, which includes municipalities and local advisory councils, passed a unanimous

resolution at their May 2022 annual general meeting that requested that the Government of Yukon increase the term of office for municipal councils from three years to four years. At their request, we partnered with them at a public engagement in September 2022 to ask Yukoners what they thought of this change. The majority of respondents we heard from in the Yukon Bureau of Statistics survey supported a four-year term.

Bill No. 26 will extend the term of office for municipal councils and local advisory councils from three years to four, effective with the October 2024 general election. This extended term will give municipal councils the extra time to fulfill their obligations, to enact their strategic priorities, and, importantly, allow them to plan beyond a three-year term. It will also allow for more time to meet increased requirements related to the implementation of First Nation land claims and self-government agreements and the transfer of administration and control of land and resources from Canada to Yukon.

It has been a real pleasure working with the Association of Yukon Communities on this bill. I appreciate the work that they did to bring the resolution forward with unanimity. It has been my pleasure to work with the Department of Highways and Public Works to bring this to fruition.

**Ms. McLeod:** Now, as we know, the AYC started action on this bill with a resolution by the members of the AYC. Most of our communities support the change of the term of office from three years to four years and they see this as a positive change in carrying out their duties to serve Yukoners.

It should be noted, however, that some small, unincorporated communities have concerns with the new term lengths, and I hope that the government will address this with them. But we are in favour of this bill and we will be voting to support it.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, today, the NDP will be voting in support of this bill.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will just get to my feet very quickly here. As the member of this Assembly who happens to represent four of the five unincorporated areas that have local advisory councils that are part of the Association of Yukon Communities, I have met with all four of the local advisory councils within my community. There were some concerns expressed about the length of term and whether or not they would be able to get folks to put their names forward, but they too support the change. Generally speaking, what I heard from them was: "You know, it might be a little bit harder for us, but we support the notion of going to four years", and in their role within the Association of Yukon Communities, they indicated their support overall. I thank the member opposite for noting that concern. I think that is true and correct. I also think that the communities acknowledge that themselves and were supportive of the change.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, it is really a pleasure to be bringing this bill forward today.

We have had a relatively robust debate about this in Committee of the Whole. I do appreciate the thoughts and views of the members opposite and we have explored some of the concerns that were brought to the Member for Watson Lake before in this House. I think that we have a good bill before us and I look forward to this afternoon.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

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

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Blake:** Agree.

**MLA Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 26 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 26 has passed this House.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 24, entitled *Act to amend the Coroners Act and the Public Service Act (2023)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Deputy Chair:** I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

### Bill No. 24: Act to amend the Coroners Act and the Public Service Act (2023)

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 24, entitled *Act to amend the Coroners Act and the Public Service Act (2023)*.

Is there any general debate?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Deputy Chair, I am pleased to speak today in Committee on Bill No. 24, the *Act to amend the Coroners Act and the Public Service Act (2023)*. I am joined today by two representatives, one from Justice and one from the Public Service Commission. I have, from the Public Service Commission, Sasha Gronsdahl, who is the director of policy and Rebecca Veinott from Justice, who works as a legislative drafter. Thank you to you both for being here today to help support this bill through Committee.

In my earlier remarks during second reading, I outlined the proposed changes to the *Public Service Act* and also to the *Coroners Act*. As a summary, this bill will remove the oath of allegiance requirement for public servants and for coroners who are appointed from among members of the public service. I want to speak in a bit more detail about how these changes support the Yukon government in an inclusive way as an inclusive employer.

I would like to begin by providing some background on the oath of allegiance. Right now, usually on the first day of a new job, public servants are required to take two oaths. One is an oath of office where public servants promise to do their job faithfully and keep information confidential. This oath of office is an important part of the ethics framework for public servants and it would not be changed by these proposed amendments.

The second oath, however, is the oath of allegiance to the Crown. The Crown is an important part of our system of democracy. In our constitutional monarchy, the Crown is Canada's head of state. His Majesty King Charles III is the personal embodiment of the Crown in Canada.

In our system of government, while the Crown is the head of state, power is exercised by the democratically elected government. The oath of allegiance requirement stems from British practice that dates back centuries. The reference to the Crown in the oath of office is symbolic of our former

government. However, like many symbols, the Crown means different things to different people. For some, including those whose lives have been affected by colonialism, the symbol of the Crown can represent a painful history. This may include some people who have immigrated to Canada from other countries with colonial histories and some Indigenous people in Canada who may have strong-held beliefs about the relationship between Indigenous people and the Crown.

Imagine a scenario where a person who associates the Crown with a painful history of colonialism applies for a job within the Yukon government and that person is successful. It is that person's first day of work and there is excitement to begin. A human resources representative sits down with that employee to complete some paperwork and they are confronted with the oath of allegiance to the Crown that they must take. Now, in current practice, that employee may request an exemption from the oath of allegiance if they feel that it contradicts their personal beliefs but that does put the onus on the employee to speak up in an environment that already seems unfamiliar.

We have heard directly from employees, including some Indigenous employees who have had this experience, that if the oath of allegiance serves as a barrier in our hiring practices and processes for some Indigenous employees and others from under-represented groups, then we must act to remove this barrier.

When individuals are going through the hiring process and when they join the public service as employees, we want them to feel welcome and respected. As an employer, it is our moral obligation to build inclusive work places where people with diverse identities are free from discrimination and are fully able to participate at work.

It is also our legal obligation. Under the *Human Rights Act*, we must prevent discrimination in our workplaces and, under the final agreements with Yukon First Nations, we must develop and implement a plan for our representative public service to ensure that our government employees reflect the population they serve here in the Yukon. Our plan for a representative public service, called *Breaking Trail Together*, sets out objectives and strategies for increasing the representation of Indigenous people inside the government. We developed this 10-year strategy plan in collaboration with self-governing Yukon First Nations. Two key objectives of *Breaking Trail Together* are responsive and barrier-free recruitment and also culturally safe and supportive work environments. Removing the oath of allegiance requirement supports both of these objectives.

The effects of the oath of allegiance on marginalized groups was highlighted through the gender-inclusive diversity analysis of related human resources policies. This is the value of applying a gender-inclusive diversity analysis. It shows us how processes and policies affect people with different identities and helps us to be more intentional in building systems that work for everyone.

Integrating gender-inclusive diversity analysis, also known as GIDA, into our business-making processes is one of the commitments that we have made to be a more inclusive

employer. I am proud of this bill as a result of our work to bring that intersectional lens to our policies and to our legislation.

Now, I want to return to my earlier point that the oath of allegiance references the Crown as a symbol of our form of government. We do want public servants to affirm their loyalty to our system of government, including the principle of democracy and the foundation of that system, so to implement this change, we will also update the language of the oath of office that public servants continue to take. We will update the oath of office to say very clearly that public servants loyally serve the people of Yukon through their democratically elected governments.

Removing the oath of allegiance requirement also does not remove the responsibility of public servants to do their jobs ethically and keep information confidential. These responsibilities are already captured in the oath of office and in existing laws and policies like the *Public Service Act*, the conflict of interest policy, and also the respectful workplace policy. Removing the oath of allegiance requirement for public servants will bring us in line with most other Canadian provinces and territories.

Currently, Yukon and Ontario are the only two jurisdictions with legislation that requires the oath of allegiance for public servants. Other jurisdictions have updated their legislation in recent years to remove the oath of allegiance requirement. Manitoba, for example, brought a new public service act into force in 2022 that removed the oath of allegiance for public servants among many other changes. The Government of Canada removed the oath of allegiance requirement from its *Public Service Employment Act* nearly two decades ago. Making this change is about modernizing the rules for the public service to ensure that they reflect the reality we live in and work in every day.

I also want to briefly talk about the impacts that the amendments will have to the *Coroners Act* and why those amendments are included in this bill. Coroners are appointed from among members of the public service and are also required to take an oath of allegiance to assume their duties as coroners. Though this requirement only affects a few public servants who are coroners, removing the requirement also removes a potential barrier for anyone who might seek that job.

Coroners, like public servants, also have a job-specific oath of office in which they promise to fulfill their duties as coroners faithfully and honestly and to keep information confidential. The oath of office for coroners will remain in place.

As I wrap up here as the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, I am very proud to bring forward this act to amend the *Public Service Act* and the *Coroners Act*. Modernizing our approach to oaths for public servants will better reflect the inclusive, dynamic organization that the Yukon government is striving to be. Removing the oath of allegiance requirement for public servants supports our goal of responsive and barrier-free recruitment and also culturally safe and supportive workplace environments.

It is also another small step forward in our reconciliation journey, addressing the realities of our colonial history. With

that, I will say thank you very much, Deputy Chair, and open up the floor to questions.

**Mr. Cathers:** I am pleased to rise as the Official Opposition Justice critic to speak to this legislation. I would note that we are generally supportive of the legislation itself. Since the oath itself is not spelled out in the act, I would ask the minister if he could provide us with a copy of what they envision the oath to look like. I would be happy if he would either send over a copy now or provide that as a legislative return.

I would also just ask a question. As you know, Deputy Chair, for many years, MLAs have had the option of swearing their oath of office to God or doing an affirmation. Each member has the right to make that choice themselves. Many Yukoners are proud supporters of the monarchy. Canada's democracy, of course, operates as a constitutional monarchy. Our question would be whether the government is planning to offer an option for employees similar in principle to the one offered to MLAs, which would allow employees and the coroner to swear allegiance as part of their oath if they wished to do so, or choose the alternate option of not swearing allegiance to the Crown.

Again, the question is just whether they plan to take a one-oath approach or offer those two options to employees. If they are not currently planning to offer employees the option of choosing whether or not they wish to swear allegiance to the Crown, we would suggest that they consider just offering that choice to each employee and allowing them to choose themselves.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I appreciate the questions from the member opposite. I will start with: What if folks wish to continue to swear an oath of allegiance? In the current oath of allegiance, the reference to the Crown is generally understood as a symbol of our system of government. With these proposed changes, public servants will no longer take an oath of allegiance at all, but they will continue to take an oath of office, which will be updated to be very clear that public servants are pledging their loyalty to the people of the Yukon through their democratically elected governments. This will replace a reference to a symbol of our system of government with a direct reference to our actual system of representative democracy. Regardless of this person's beliefs about the monarchy, employees will clearly make a commitment to serve the public through the democratically elected government.

I believe that the member opposite also spoke about the option — there is still an option whether or not you want to reference God in a faithful commitment in the current oath of office. The current language in the oath of office for a government employee is — and I will quote it here: “I...” — then employee name — “... do solemnly and sincerely swear...” — affirm — “... that I will truly and faithfully and to the best of my skill and knowledge execute and perform the duties that devolve upon me by reason of my appointment or employment in the Public Service, including the duty not to disclose or make known, without due authority in that behalf, any matter that comes to my knowledge by reason of such appointment or employment. So help me God.” So, that last

piece of “So help me God” — that omitted line if the employee chooses to affirm, basically, so that last reference to God is a choice in that.

I will say as well that when the Member for Lake Laberge talked about the Members of the Legislative Assembly and our pledge, this would be under a different act. I guess maybe the question could be: What is the plan for addressing the oath of allegiance in other acts? Of course, the Members of the Legislative Assembly would be bound and determined by their act. We have the *Legal Profession Act*, the *Territorial Court Act* as well, and the *Municipal Act*. We have the *Government Organisation Act*. In those pursuits as to whether or not this oath of allegiance remains or will be taken out, that would require more consultation and more conversations for the members whom this would affect.

Of course, with Members of the Legislative Assembly, we have the Members' Services Board that could begin that conversation — if that were the intent of a political party to have that conversation about the MLAs and whether or not they want to have a conversation about the oath of allegiance in that capacity.

I hope I answered the member opposite's questions fully. If not, I will cede the floor and see if there any supplementary ones.

**Mr. Cathers:** I just want to clarify, since the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission seemed not to be quite clear on what I was suggesting — that we are just suggesting that — with regard to the oath of allegiance for public service employees and the coroner, they be given the option of whether they wish to swear allegiance to the Crown or take the alternate path where they would not do so. I recognize that this is not what the government is currently planning on doing. It is what we would suggest but, in the interest of time and moving on to other matters of business, including the budget, I would just thank officials at this point and I will turn the floor over to the Third Party.

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I thank the officials for being here today. Just to echo some of the sentiments from the minister, I am glad that we are updating things. I remember the first time I was at a national meeting when there were conversations going on about swearing and pledging allegiance to the monarchy. I appreciate that there are monarchists in Canada — I do — but I appreciate that, for lots of folks, it is deeply uncomfortable — myself included, to be honest. I look forward to having conversations about what might be said by people taking political office as we progress down the years.

I thank the officials for the briefing. It was really helpful, including being able to see the drafts of what people would say when there was the pledge and the oath of office. To be honest, Deputy Chair, we don't have any questions. We are just looking forward to the vote.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further debate on Bill No. 24, entitled *Act to amend the Coroners Act and the Public Service Act (2023)*?

Seeing none, we will proceed clause by clause.

*On Clause 1*

*Clause 1 agreed to*  
*On Clause 2*  
*Clause 2 agreed to*  
*On Title*  
*Title agreed to*

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 24, entitled *Act to amend the Coroners Act and the Public Service Act (2023)*, without amendment.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that the Chair report Bill No. 24, entitled *Act to amend the Coroners Act and the Public Service Act (2023)*, without amendment.

*Motion agreed to*

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, 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 10 minutes.

*Recess*

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

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

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 208, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any further general debate?

#### **Department of Tourism and Culture — continued**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will just welcome back Deputy Minister Ferbey and the director of Corporate Services, Kate Olynyk. I am looking forward to further discussion. We left off, I think, one week ago today. I am looking forward to more questions.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Welcome to the officials.

We have a few more questions for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. Last year, the Dawson tourism operators had cancellations during the late shoulder seasons because the Little Gold/Poker Creek border crossing closed earlier than usual.

Can the minister share what assurances he has received from Canada Border Services about the operation hours and dates for both the opening and closing at the border crossing that I just mentioned, and for the Skagway-Fraser border crossing as well?

Are both crossings sufficiently staffed?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** As far as I know, Fraser is back to normal — the Skagway crossing. With respect to the Top of the World Highway and Little Gold, I was in Dawson this past

weekend and had some conversations with Mayor Kendrick. He asked me to track down some additional information for him. I don't have the dates yet, so I did speak with the Minister of Community Services because he has the most direct relationship with Minister Blair federally, who is in charge of the Canada Border Services Agency, CBSA. I also had a conversation with the Premier because he has our best contact with Alaska and the US federal government. Also, I talked with our chair of the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board because, during COVID times, they formed a border crossing subcommittee and we talked about whether we could reconstitute that in order to get some conversations going with the federal government and our CBSA agents.

I have no specific updates to give, just that the question has been raised with us as well from outside of the Assembly and we will continue to work on all fronts to see what we can get. I will say that it is not within our direct control, but we will do our best to advocate for staff and coordinate it to have longer openings.

One more thing I will mention is that, in order to do that, we also need to have a conversation with Highways and Public Works because we would need to make sure that the road is maintained for as long as the border crossing is staffed at the Top of the World.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I thank the minister for that answer. Realizing that borders are not under our control, advocating sure does help.

Also, in that same region, we know that the ferry has caused much grief in Dawson City, and we have asked many questions, but this ties directly to tourism. As we have heard, some companies will no longer book Dawson due to uncertainty, so the ripple-down effect for road tour groups is too costly to readjust if stopped for downtime on the ferry service. Can the minister advise companies who are worried and now bypassing this area on their itineraries?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The ferry is typically operating between May and October, and when you have a single vessel like the *George Black* ferry, there are times when there are issues that arise. I recall that the Minister of Highways and Public Works spoke previously this Sitting about building in redundancies so that the risk of the ferry being down would be diminished. But we can't predict what will happen with sea ice and all sorts of natural issues. So, I think, generally speaking, what we do is work to make sure Highways and Public Works and the team at the ferry crossing do all they can to make sure that the ferry is as robust as possible. We will continue to work with tourism operators to provide the same information to them about how we are supporting that ferry so that they can be informed. The performance was not so bad last year. I think there were some issues, but I also know that Highways and Public Works did some work to get things up and running.

We had other issues, of course, as there were some slides in the area and they did impact the road for a period of time, but I know that HPW and the Yukon Geological Survey worked very quickly to try to reopen those. As is sort of typical for the Yukon, we hit a season when there could be fires, et cetera, so there are challenges, and we will address those as they arise.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Deputy Chair, I would like to remind the member that the ferry was down several times through the season — once for improper paperwork, and then broken down, and then repairs — so, it was quite often.

As was mentioned in Question Period today — it was spoken about that big bird in the sky, Condor — and we were told that it is good for this coming season; however, we were also told that Condor is now reassessing coming to the Yukon.

Has there been a public announcement or any word for tourism operators on this statement?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** From the notes that I have from Highways and Public Works, this past July the ferry was on a reduced schedule for one day due to staffing issues. In August, ferry operations were temporarily halted due to a mechanism with the propeller shaft and that the crews worked quickly and the ferry was operational again within a few days. Those are the downtimes that I am aware of; I suppose that there could be others. So, yes, there have been some intermittencies but the performance was still quite solid for the ferry.

With respect to Condor, I have talked to the industry associations — for example, the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon and also the Tourism Advisory Board. The way in which I informed the industry was through those tables, who, of course, reach out further. I would have to talk with the chair or the executive director to know how widely distributed that information is at this point, but, as soon as I heard, I certainly made them aware.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Will it be the TIAY organization or the advisory board or will it be Condor who will be making a public announcement? Does the minister have any more details on this topic?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would have to talk to Condor to find out what their expectation is. They have indicated to us that they're considering moving to other aircraft. The current aircraft that they fly are fine, but they are considering moving to an Airbus. In that move, they know that there are different rules for the type of aircraft that they are thinking about using. Our firefighting facilities, the size of our terminal, et cetera, are a long way off from meeting those criteria for those types of planes.

They have indicated to us that they are thinking about moving in that direction. Whether or not they are wishing to make an announcement about when and timing on that, I leave that to Condor. In the meantime, for the coming year, during the next phase of construction over this coming season, it's fine. They will be able to land. So it depends a bit on their choices about when they make some of those differences. It just happens that those two things are occurring at the same time as we move through the phases of construction.

I leave it to Condor for them to make announcements about their decisions. I am relaying information that was given to me and that I passed on to the industry right away. It seemed to me that the industry was quite aware of it, especially when I talked to Air North. They were pretty familiar already with the things that I had been told and was passing on to them.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I thank the minister for that. That leads us into the federal government and the conditions they put on

our facilities and, as he said, it was a perfect storm, having construction as well as Condor reassessing their fleet. But you did mention in Question Period about the runway in Dawson and that there was a short-term exemption given by the federal government. Can the minister elaborate on that? Are there any long-term solutions to this issue?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I feel like I am being pulled into questions that are really within the purview of my colleague the Minister of Highways and Public Works and his relationship with Transport Canada and the rules that are there. It is not Tourism and Culture's area of specialty. We are, of course, advised by Highways and Public Works, but I am just not able to get into details around those requirements.

I rose on a question today. I didn't raise it myself; the question was posed to me. I was talking about Condor and then suddenly I had a question about the Dawson runway. So, yes, I stood up, but I don't have the detailed information about our federal aviation authorities and what those rules look like.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I appreciate that, and we will ask the Highways and Public Works minister when the department comes up again.

Now, on that same note, has there been concern posed by Air North and their continued agreement with Holland America in transporting their customers through to Alaska from Dawson City?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have not been made aware of any of those issues. I will have to inquire further, but I am unaware of the concerns that are being raised.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** As a former small tourism operator, I know that would be of huge concern to me on the ground, just knowing that those two entities were still going full force.

Now, we have been apprised, as has the minister, of a number of challenges that applicants are facing when applying to the tourism cooperative marketing fund. Can the minister please confirm how long the backlog is in processing applications for this fund, the reasons for this backlog, and how long it will take to process applications for the current year?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** There is always a bit of a backlog when you get to year-end because everyone will have to submit their reports and review all of those reports at year-end, so it adds a little bit of a hump of work.

What the department has indicated to me is that they are going to assign another staff person to try to address the backlog. I think that the backlog now is in the range of a month — it might be one to two months — and the department is working to address it.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Now, I understand that there are going to be some changes made to the intake process in the future. Can the minister confirm if applicants are going to be part of the consultations on any changes so that maybe they could provide some invaluable feedback to make the process more efficient?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We are always happy to take that type of feedback. I can let the member opposite know that the department has been working to streamline some of the reporting requirements. Those sorts of things where we try to do continuous improvements — I am not always trying to look



for a big engagement. We are happy to take it. We will contact the businesses and ask for their perspectives, but I think that for those things where we see process improvements, we should just go ahead and do them and then continue to work with the applicants to make sure that it is helping them out as best as possible.

So, yes, there is work to hear from the businesses. We will work it as a continuous improvement process.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** My final question is on the Beringia Centre. The government announced that it closed for renovations at the end of December. Can the minister provide an update on the renos — what work has been done, when it should be completed, and if the building will be ready to welcome visitors this coming tourism season?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The work is done on the great hall — the entry area, the place where we all come in and gather before going into the theatre space. It's working to have more space for gatherings. It's also working to have more interactive elements to it.

I am just trying to check on the timeline for reopening, and if I get an answer while we are still in debate, I will pop up and share it with the floor.

Okay. We are tracking for May — that is what I am being told by the folks who are overseeing the work being done — so this spring.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I thank the minister and his staff for answering my questions.

**Ms. White:** Hello to the minister and his officials. It is delightful to be back here again.

For a great number of years, I am sure every political stripe in the Assembly has had conversations with Air North about the importance of interline agreements — that is the ability to transfer luggage between air carriers. My colleague from Vuntut Gwitchin has been working with our federal counterparts on trying to advance Air North's request to have mandatory interline agreements to especially support small and northern airlines.

Can the minister provide an update on this work from his side?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Yes, the interline agreements are important. I talked a bit about them today when I was discussing changes that might be coming with Condor. We have written to the federal government talking about them — in support of interline agreements — and referencing the Senate report that talked about their importance. I know that the last one that was signed by Air North was with Philippine Airlines.

We work in support of interline agreements although they are not under our direct jurisdiction. They are seen as business-to-business agreements. As I mentioned earlier today, I have talked to the Tourism Advisory Board about their use and how we can support them.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate the minister for that and I do hear him saying that it's between businesses, but Air North's point was that there is a federal government role to play, which is to allow a business — for example, if we talk about northern airlines or even airlines located on the east coast trying to connect their passengers to other airlines and being almost

blocked out of the market — because if you can fly with one of the bigger guys that guarantee to move your suitcases along, then the decision actually becomes one of, kind of, the sheer panic of trying to transfer your luggage as opposed to trying to support the local airline.

The point that Air North has made with me, I know, over time is that they feel that there should be an obligation for government to play, which is why I'm asking the minister who is responsible for tourism. Although I heard what he said, I do believe that there is a role for him to advocate to his federal counterpart and have that broader conversation. It's about levelling the playing field for smaller airlines coming from smaller jurisdictions. I am sure that he will keep that in back of mind. We all know how we are all cheerleaders of Air North, so I know that he is interested as well.

*Our Clean Future* has a couple of points, actually, about tourism. *Our Clean Future* measure I10 calls for establishing a framework to measure the sustainability of tourism in the Yukon, and the latest report says that the framework has been created. Can the minister provide any results from that work, has the monitoring begun, and when will the first report be made available?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We established the Yukon sustainable tourism framework last year. We have become a member of the United Nations International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories, or INSTO. There is a new acronym. We are also planning our first Yukon sustainable tourism summit this spring and will use that to try to pull together an annual report. Our plan is to, after the summit, put out an annual report. I understand that the department is building a dashboard to try to keep current information so people can track as we are moving along.

I am not quite sure whether we make our annual report just ahead of that summit or just after, but it would be some time this spring or summer when the first report is out.

I have just been informed that the summit is in the fall, so we will get the report out and then have the summit this fall.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. Growing up here, one thing that I was always told by my dad is that you leave nothing but footprints and take nothing but photos, so tourism seems to me to be one of the most sustainable economic actions that we can take in a place as beautiful as ours. We know, for example, that Fishing Branch — the number of photographers who go in to do nothing except to really watch animals in their natural habitat. Last week, we heard about Peter Mather and his film "Ice Bears" and that it is going to tour and what that could do, even for that bridging tourism — not necessarily that people will follow grizzlies but they will see Yukon for what it is and want to visit.

My real hope, honestly, is to see the sustainability of tourism kind of grow. We know that it is an incredibly sustainable industry as it stands. Tourism operators are very thoughtful about where they go because, really, they don't want to change the landscape because the landscape is what brings the people in.

I look forward to that gathering this fall, and maybe it won't be during the Sitting and members here can even attend after lunch.

The second *Our Clean Future* point in there is measure I11, and it calls for a system of tracking greenhouse gas emissions from the sector. Can the minister provide an update on that work and the latest emissions estimates for the sector?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** There is a model that was developed to attribute the greenhouse gas emissions to tourism. You have to use some way to measure it. That work was completed a year or more ago, I guess, now, and the plan is to release that information publicly as we get into that summit. I think that the actions I10 and I11 will just be reporting them in concert. I don't have information in front of me right now about that but they will come together in that annual report.

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

One thing that I think is a really important part, especially in the Southern Lakes area — so the minister's own riding — when the White Pass & Yukon Route train stops in Carcross, one of the concerns that I have heard highlighted from the folks who run the businesses in Carcross is that the train stops for such a short amount of time and there is not an opportunity for people to look around. I wanted to know: Does the Yukon government — because they have previously — still give any money toward the White Pass & Yukon Route?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** My understanding is that we do have a marketing agreement with White Pass so there are some dollars flowing to them. Maybe there will be more questions. I can answer further.

**Ms. White:** How many dollars?

I believe that right now the minister's officials are doing their best to reach out to get that answer, so I will just add other questions. When they get back with that answer, I will be happy to get it.

One of the reasons why I was bringing up whether or not there were still marketing dollars going to the White Pass & Yukon Route is that I have asked previous ministers whether there is a conversation, for example, about how long the train would stop in Carcross. I spend a fair amount of time in Carcross in the summertime, riding my bicycle, and I know that for the shops at the Commons, it is a huge deal. The first train is on May 30; the last one is on September 16. That is a really big deal for businesses there. They will make their year's salaries within that very, very busy time, but they feel that the train isn't there for long enough.

Really what we see is a big rush of people off the train toward the bathroom facility, which I will have questions about, but one of the things I hear from Carcross businesses is if there is a way to get the train to stay for longer. Knowing that the Yukon government is putting money toward marketing the train, I wondered if there were conversations. That will be the second follow-up to: How many dollars, and are conversations happening about extending that trip a bit? It would really be to the benefit of the businesses in Carcross.

That will bring me to the next question about the Carcross Commons area, which is, of course, the bathroom facilities. My colleague before, Kevin Barr, actually was a big driving force

in making sure that the bathroom facilities were open sooner in the year because by the time they were opening, the buses and trains had already arrived in Carcross, which meant that people were getting off and — well, it wasn't a good scene.

One of the challenges with that bathroom facility is that it is on water delivery and sewer pickup and that is, at times, quite challenging in the summer because it involves multiple both deposits and withdrawals, I suppose, in a day. I wanted to know if the minister has any insight on whether that process will be smoother than when it has been less smooth and what we can expect with the washroom facilities in the Carcross Commons.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I want to correct myself. When I stood previously, I said that we continue to have a marketing agreement with White Pass. We do not.

But that doesn't take away from the fact that we have a conversation with White Pass and what they can do. I should also note that it isn't just White Pass that we need to talk to. I think that 10 percent or less of the visitors to Carcross who are coming from the cruise ships come up on the train, 90 percent or more are coming on buses. With all of them, we need to have several conversations. It's about staying longer. It's also about where they go within the community because the community is very concerned with some of the down exhausts of the buses, so we have worked to try to make sure that they are not like people living in a fishbowl. We have talked to the operators about that, but there are complications around it as well — like their own schedules that they have to adhere to. It is a conversation. It is ongoing. It isn't just White Pass that we are having the conversation with. There are logistics that have to be sorted through around it but, yes, it is a conversation.

With respect to the washroom — man, if I had a dime. I have volunteered many summers in that very building that we are talking about. We have, in the past, opened it earlier. We have also, in the past, frozen the pipes because the building is not insulated. There is, again, some balance at work there, trying to deal with that pressure.

The member asked about water delivery. "Deposits and withdrawals", I think, was the phrase she used. The service delivery is done by the private sector. It's a business of Carcross/Tagish, I think. I would have to check whether it is the Carcross/Tagish Management Corporation or the government itself. We do work to try to assist on that side too. We think our lead on this in the community is the Carcross/Tagish Management Corporation because they have the lead around the Commons. We sit down with them and other businesses and with the community to talk through how we can make Carcross a destination and alleviate some of the pressures that are on the community itself. Washrooms are a key one; garbage is another one. There are a range of issues that we are trying to deal with.

In fact, in some ways, it is just because this one little place gets so many visitors and, to be fair, they are not all visitors who are coming from Skagway and the cruise ships; there are a lot who are now coming from Whitehorse as well because it is a lovely place to go and be for the weekend.

One of the things we have done is that we have provided some support, in terms of dollars, to the Carcross/Tagish Management Corporation toward their downtown master

planning as part of this overall initiative to get to a solution. The other thing that we have done is we have tried to coordinate across a range of departments — notably Community Services, Highways and Public Works, and Tourism and Culture — to try to coordinate some of these issues and pressures so that we can try to find joint solutions.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that answer. I can't imagine, actually, the amount of pressure on private businesses trying to maintain the Commons during its peak season because, as people in the Assembly know, it can be wild there at peak train, bus — and the rest of the time, so it can be quite an interesting time.

Can the minister remind me what entity owns that washroom facility building?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** It is still the territorial government's building. I think it is probably Highways and Public Works that has the main role. The building is called "Art House" and the washroom facilities are in the back there.

**Ms. White:** Now that it has been confirmed that Art House is owned by Yukon government — but the minister has said that with earlier openings, the washrooms have frozen. Is the minister talking to his colleagues about some insulation, possibly, to make sure that this is not an ongoing concern when we talk about making sure that there are amenities for tourism?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Yes, Deputy Chair, there is conversation about that and, amazingly, even that gets complicated. I am not trying to make excuses. I will say that this is one of those ones where we have worked to try to find longer term solutions, not just short-term ones, but it is somewhat complicated. For example, there has been conversation ongoing about whether the Carcross Tagish Management Corporation would take over the building, but there is conversation around the land, et cetera.

It is an ongoing conversation. I wish that there was a simple solution but we have not yet found one.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate the complications and just will really put a pitch in that we make sure that the pipes are insulated so they don't freeze if we do transfer over the responsibility of the building to another level of government. I think that it would be a kind thing to do.

The minister received a letter in February of this year from the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture. I can say with a fair amount of confidence that KIAC reached out to me, to, I imagine, the Leader of the Yukon Party, and to the then-Premier to lobby for an increase to their funding. I know that they met previously with the previous Minister of Tourism and Culture, who happens to be the current Premier, and the issue has to do around core funding.

The Klondike Institute of Art and Culture has a huge role that they play in the community of Dawson City. They have a really, really important role. They do really incredible work in the community. In their February letter, they were asking for an increase of their core funding of \$75,000. They went through and they justified the increase but, more than that, they continued to show why this organization is so critical to the fabric and the cultural makeup of Dawson City. I can't help but notice that, in the budget, they are still at \$425,000. They did

say that: If you are not going to increase our core funding, will you continue with the \$25,000 bridging funding that they got in the COVID relief? I see that it is still at \$425,000 so they also didn't get an extra \$25,000 bump.

Can the minister explain to me the reasoning behind that? Why, despite KIAC having asked many times over, over many years, that there has been no change to their core funding?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I mentioned earlier that I was in Dawson this past week. I had a great sit-down with the Dawson City Arts Society and the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture to talk through this very issue. I had written to them a couple of weeks ago, but they hadn't received the letter so I gave it to them verbally. We have confirmed that the \$25,000 is there for them in their current funding agreement plus a two-percent increase.

The reason that we didn't get it in the budget yet is because we are trying to do an overall review of our creative strategies funding. We have been seeking to do that work this fiscal — the spring and summer — and then we will get back. What we have said to the groups that we have provided funding for in the interim is that, even though we might have longer agreements with them, we will go back once that review is done and we will update agreements after the review is done and has made it through Management Board.

We did have several creative conversations about ways in which they and we could work together to try to find them support. I haven't yet had a chance to debrief with my deputy ministers, so I just told them on the phone this morning that this conversation was coming.

But it was a fruitful conversation and I was happy to get the information to KIAC while I was there.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate then that the minister has responded to the second part, which isn't actually an increase to the core funding. Can the minister confirm that the \$25,000 that is not listed in this budget will be added to their funding in future years, or is it one-time, off-again funding?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What I have said to the Dawson City Arts Society, which is the main society behind the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture — but also the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and others — is that the creative strategy review will consider it all and that we will ultimately land with something.

We know that their request is significant. We won't have any more of this bridging. We will get a new base for them, plus — I hope — an indication about how things will adjust over time. That's what we are looking to do. They understand that we are trying to go through this process not just for them but for the whole of the sector.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. When do we expect that work to be finished?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will ask the department or the deputy minister to give me a sense. I know that the work is ongoing as we speak. I will get a sense of what the timeline looks like, but what I have said to the various groups when I have spoken with them directly or written back to them is that, first of all, I would encourage them to be an active part of that review and, second of all, I would make sure to inform them once Cabinet had taken the decisions based on that review.

**Ms. White:** I guess I will look forward to a clearer timeline when maybe an announcement is made and when we have the pleasure of doing a response to a ministerial statement. I will look forward to that.

The amount currently for the Dawson City Arts Society will be \$459,000. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Correct. The member can take some satisfaction in that this was a question that I was asked very specifically by the society as well — whether the two percent was also on the \$25,000. The answer is yes, and it is \$459,000.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate that from the minister. I was going to assume and if it wasn't, then I was going to give him a hard time about it, so I do appreciate that.

Can we expect to see the additional funding, then, in the supplementary budget this fall?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We can, Deputy Chair. Those changes will appear in the supplementary.

The team is working right now on a review, so as soon as that review is done and as soon as it clears that might also make it into the supplementary; it just depends on timing. But I have committed to the organizations that once that review is done and once it clears through Cabinet, I would indicate to them what the results are.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that clarification. When we look at the funding for museums, can the minister clarify that museums are only getting a two-percent cost-of-living increase this year despite the high rate of inflation — or the costs that we have seen and that increase of living?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The conversation that I had with museums — and I think we even talked about this during the debate on the supplementary budget. But it is two percent, but it is also wrapped up in this review. As I indicated in my earlier responses, what I have said to those organizations is that even if we have longer term agreements with them in place for funding, we will adjust those agreements with them once the review is done.

**Ms. White:** Thanks to the minister for that answer, and I do look forward to hearing more about it and wish it Godspeed through the Cabinet process. The quicker we can get the information out to folks, I think the better it is for everyone and all those things.

The art and heritage resource centre appears to have been deferred to a future fiscal year, which is really quite sad and a little bit disappointing. Currently, it only has \$100,000 in the capital budget. What is the minister's plan to get the project back on schedule?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Deputy Chair, this is the project that I was talking about earlier — where the capital dollars for the planning has moved over to Highways and Public Works. It is not that there is no planning there; it is that this is where the dollars live right now. Just as, I guess, the department that deals with a much more capital expenditure, period — Highways and Public Works — will assist us with that. What we are planning to do over the next year is to confirm a location, site planning, and the design work for the facility. That is the planning work that is envisioned in our current fiscal period.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. In an interesting twist, I will now ask a question that we asked of Highways and Public Works department and were told we needed to come back with to the Tourism and Culture department, so I will just play it in the opposite direction.

Letters went out entitled “Lease Agreements for Government of Yukon Signature Buildings”. It says: “The departments of Highways and Public Works and Tourism and Culture are developing a strategy for the use of Yukon government signature heritage buildings. The strategy aims to ensure that signature buildings are leased in a manner which prioritizes tenants who meet criteria that is compatible with the heritage values and character defining elements of the buildings.

“The proposed strategy involves publicly advertised expressions of interest for the opportunity to occupy the signature buildings and long-term leases will be offered to those who are selected. When the departments are ready to move forward with the strategy, the process on how to submit an expression of interest will be clearly communicated to all our current tenants and a minimum of six months' notice will be given for any change in occupancy.

“While the strategy is in the developing stage, your lease will not be renewed at the end of its term but will remain on overhold (month-to-month) as per our lease agreement.”

I am hoping that the minister can fill me in about the new strategy — when we can expect it, what we can expect to see in it, and what it means for leaseholders within these buildings.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will have to ask the department about specific timing, but we have been in dialogue with the tenants so they are aware. We have written to them. We have been in contact with the tenants. What we are looking to do is to just make sure that the way in which we utilize these heritage resources has some public accountability against it — that there is the ability for organizations to apply — and we will make sure that those tenants who are there have a fair shot at it and lots of lead notification.

I don't know the date when we are going out but I will try to get that information for the member opposite.

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

In the letter, it talks about prioritizing tenants who meet criteria — and then it says in the line: “... that is compatible with the heritage values and character defining elements of the buildings.” So, I am hoping that the minister can help me understand what that means. What kind of organization or what kind of work does he imagine being in these buildings that would meet the term “compatible with the heritage values and character defining elements of the buildings”?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** This is not about trying to move people out — just to make that clear. It is about trying to make sure that we have a process around how the heritage resources are used. It may well be that the chamber of commerce is a great fit for the TC Richards Building and organizations like the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon or the First Nations Culture and Tourism Association are great fits for the White Pass Building. It's not necessarily about moving folks out; it's

about having accountability and process around how our heritage resources are utilized.

I think this is an important step as a government, but it is not about, “Hey, you don’t belong here.” That isn’t what we are talking about.

**Ms. White:** Has there been any thought about grandfathering in current tenants and allowing them when they are ready to move and then bringing in the policy for future tenants?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The purpose is to regularize it. If grandfathering was thought about for an indefinite term, no. We are looking to make sure that if there were to be a change — and we’re not certain there is to be a change — it would be enough time for the current tenants to be able to find a new location.

Now, I think once those criteria are developed and they are shared, then everyone will be able to see how the fit looks for organizations that currently are there or could be there.

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

The Yukon Film Society has been operating the Yukon Theatre for a while now and they have added in some incredible value to our community. We could talk about the film festival, we can talk about their throwback Mondays, or we can talk about the fact that they are still bringing blockbusters and art films at the same time.

Has the minister considered additional funding at all for this project?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I just had the opportunity to sit with the artistic director — I am not sure if I am going to get titles correct — of the Yukon Film Society and we had quite a conversation about the building. I agree with the member opposite in her characterization of the contribution back to the community. It is the Department of Economic Development that has been working most closely with the society in support of the work that they are doing. Some of it depends on the society’s plans around the building. I know that they have also been working with CanNor around potential funding.

I guess we are in conversation with the society — which is the best way to frame it right now — and that dialogue is ongoing.

I would note, as well, Deputy Chair, that we provide \$89,000 from the Department of Tourism and Culture to the film society in support of their creative work, but our lead work on the building side is with Economic Development.

**Ms. White:** I look forward to having a conversation about that in Economic Development.

The Advanced Artist Award is way over-subscribed. Some have asked for the creation of different categories to apply to and to reduce the barriers for application. A lot of the funds have been redone recently and I am curious to know if there are any changes coming for this one.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Could I just get the member opposite to repeat which fund she was referring to please?

**Ms. White:** I apologize to both Hansard and the minister. It’s the Advanced Artist Award.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We don’t currently have any plans to adjust this. We have two levels within the Advanced Artists

Award. They are up to \$5,000 and the second level is up to \$10,000. There is a jury struck each time to award those funds.

What we have done is create the creative and cultural career advancement fund, which is a similar sized fund to the Advanced Artist Award fund, but which really allows for much deeper development. Those awards are for up to \$50,000. Rather than adjust this fund, what has happened is that we have added a fund that complements the Advanced Artist Award fund.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. You know, I am hopeful that if there is an opportunity to take a look at it and see if there is a way of splitting categories or making it more accessible, the department would consider that.

There is a lot of demand for arts programming in places like continuing care, but Health and Social Services doesn’t have a budget for this. Is there any funding targeted at audiences living in facilities like Yukon government-owned facilities?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Can I just ask whether the member is talking about Yukon artists wishing to share their work at facilities like that where they might perform, for example, or put on a show? Or is the member asking about whether people who are in those facilities are able to apply for some of these funds to work on their own art and use art as a medium for continued cultural expression?

**Ms. White:** Although I think that the second suggestion is a great one, I am suggesting more the first — so, making sure that facilities, for example, like the Whistle Bend facility, the Thomson Centre, or group homes, have the ability to bring artists in. Whether it’s for performances or creation workshops, is there any funding in the Tourism and Culture budget for that?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Maybe I should have also mentioned in my last response that we also have the micro-grant fund, which deals with smaller grants. Now, it’s a great suggestion that the member has put up about artists going into venues like our long-term care facilities. We don’t have anything that is specifically trying to promote it, but neither do we have anything that would limit against it. Artists, as they apply for any of our funds — whether it is the micro-grant or whether it is the creative and career advancement fund or the Advanced Artist Award — all of them — they would allow for support if people were putting in to showcase their work or their performance at our long-term care facilities, but there is nothing that is specifically targeted for it.

**Ms. White:** Maybe there could be. I would just put that out into the world: Maybe there could be. Maybe there could be specific funding to target to make sure that our friends and family and neighbours who are living in care facilities have that opportunity to see art in a different way, and maybe this will be the minister to help make that happen.

Deputy Chair, I thank the minister and his officials today for the time. It has been a pleasure to talk about something as glorious as tourism and culture. I look forward to future conversations.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Deputy Chair, I would just like to thank the members opposite for their questions and, like them, I thank the department officials who were here supporting

getting that information to folks today, and I thank the member opposite for her suggestion.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture?

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

**Ms. White:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried**

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Deputy Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures***

***Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$31,884,000 agreed to***

***On Capital Expenditures***

***Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$2,702,000 agreed to***

***Total Expenditures in the amount of \$34,586,000 agreed to***

***Department of Tourism and Culture agreed to***

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

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Deputy Chair:** Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

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

**Department of Community Services — *continued***

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate?

**Ms. White:** Welcome back to the minister's officials for the Department of Community Services and the minister himself. The last time that we debated this was on March 22, and we were actually talking about psychologists and the importance of them being registered. I would like to take us back to that March 22 afternoon and we are going to maybe

recap some of the questions that I asked and kind of dig a little bit deeper into it.

One of the challenges that the minister has highlighted as being a barrier to getting psychologists registered in the territory is the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*. The minister said last time that we have a legal opinion that says that the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* prevents us from specifying that you have to be regulated in another jurisdiction. The minister has referenced this legal opinion on more than one occasion. Is that something that the minister is willing to share with other members of this House?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have said it several times in the House that I appreciate the question and it's good to be back talking about Community Services this afternoon. I too thank my officials for being here this afternoon.

The member opposite has asked for a legal opinion and, unfortunately, we don't share legal opinions within the Government of Yukon. They are protected so we're not in the habit of giving out legal opinions; however, the problem in the territory right now — and we do want to regulate psychologists. There are no two ways about it. This has been something that I have been working on for a couple of years and my predecessor worked on it as well. It is a file that we want to bring into true. I understand, as I have said several times in this House — and last time when we were discussing it in March — the danger that this poses to Yukoners seeking the services of psychologists. I also understand the risk that it poses to psychologists themselves — as a profession and undermining their credibility.

I understand the importance of this issue. Had the seemingly simple solutions proposed by the psychologists association when I first came into this role and met with members of the executive early in my tenure here — I explored that, because I understand these things and I would like to solve this, but things are sometimes not as simple as they seem. The problem is that we have no legislation in the territory governing psychologists. There is no mechanism to regulate them in the territory until we have some sort of legislation to fill that vacuum that we have in the territory. It just doesn't exist.

The solution would be to go to, say, Alberta, but because we have no trigger to force the psychologists — to regulate them in any way, shape, or form — we can't send them to Alberta and tell them that they have to be registered in Alberta. We can't do it because we don't have that authority here in the territory in any way, shape, or form.

The *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* comes in, so we are relying on case law. Some of the best advice that I have from our legal advice says — pulling on examples from the Northwest Territories, which has been used as a model, perhaps, to get this done quicker. They found that the Northwest Territories could not say somebody has to be regulated in Alberta, for example, because that would force psychologists from other parts of the country to go through Alberta and they may not want to do that. Under the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*, Northwest Territories couldn't do that. In the territory, we can't do that anyway because we don't have

any authority over psychologists at the moment to tell them to do anything.

We have a list that we pulled together, working with the psychologists association in the Yukon, to try to provide some of the protections and give some added credibility to the profession. We have an online tool that we have worked on with the psychologists association, which is starting to be populated with psychologists who have the proper accreditation.

We heard the concerns that the psychologists association had with our initial take on that. We listened. The department worked very closely with the psychologists and came up with a solution. That solution has been put in place, and now we do have psychologists starting to populate that voluntary, online registry. It's voluntary because we have no mechanism to force psychologists to use the tool we provided, but they can voluntarily join and they are starting to do that.

**Ms. White:** Can the minister tell me, to the best of his knowledge through his legal opinion, if there were any examples when there was a challenge to the system in NWT that highlighted the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* as the reason?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The answer to the question is no.

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

What examples were highlighted in the minister's legal opinion that told him that we couldn't try to regulate psychologists in the same way as the NWT because of the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The example cited in this case involved naturopaths to be licensed by the College of Naturopathic Doctors of Alberta to practise in the NWT. However, that was cited as an example where you couldn't force a profession to go to a specific province's licensing college. You couldn't force naturopaths — in this case, the NWT — to go to the College of Naturopathic Doctors of Alberta because that would be in violation of the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate the minister for indicating where that is. I will look for it and read up on it and try to understand where he is coming from.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, he said — and he said something similar now — just quoting him from March 22: "... we can't compel anybody because we don't have any control over them. We have to get that regulation in place. The NWT has a regulation in place governing this that changes the whole — we don't. So, we have to get that regulation in place and then we can. We have to have some sort of regulatory framework and then we can use a model — another jurisdiction's standards — but until we have the regulation, we can't go to another jurisdiction."

Can the minister tell me what the barrier is right now to creating the regulation that we would be able to use to regulate psychologists in the territory?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It is not a barrier. I mean, we are doing that work right now. We are currently working with psychologists to figure out their identified needs in terms of licensing requirements, scope of practice, continuing competencies — all of those very specific details. We are working with the psychologists on it. Once we get that done,

we are going to a public consultation in drafting this so we actually have the regulation we need to govern psychologists. That work is ongoing; it takes time; we are working it through right now with the psychologists and hope to have it done as soon as we possibly can.

**Ms. White:** Just for those of us who may be looking for maybe a bit more of a specific timeline as opposed to "as soon as possible", can the minister give us a bit more of an accurate timeline than "as soon as possible"?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It takes generally between one year and 18 months to get a regulation in place. I guess that the quickest we could get it done is 12 months and the longest it would generally take is 18 months. It depends on the complexity, really.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. For the start date of that 12 to 18 months, have we started that process? Did it start a month ago or two months ago? Is it going to start in two months? Did it start today? When do we expect that process to start so I have a better idea of our 12 to 18 months?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The process began in mid-February of this year. We are working directly with psychologists on their needs. That's when the process began. We collected data and now they are providing advice to Cabinet. That's going ahead and as soon as that is done — so we are aiming for some time in 2024, I guess.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. It's just really helpful. I appreciate that it takes time and it can take 12 to 18 months, maybe longer, but knowing when we start gives us a better idea of when we might finish.

I appreciated that, in the minister's opening points, he mentioned the website so I would just like to talk directly with the people in the department and thank them very much. When we were last here — on the 22<sup>nd</sup> — I was reading from the website and the line that really stuck was — and I will quote from my own notes from Hansard from March 22 because the website has changed — but the line that was an issue with the Yukon psychologists was the line that says: "They identify themselves as licensed or eligible for a licence in another Canadian province or territory." Today, going on the website — and this is a really big deal — it says: "There is no official list of psychologists in the Yukon. On this page, you'll find a voluntary list of psychological practitioners who are licensed in another Canadian province or territory."

The reason why I wanted to highlight that again — even though I know the minister already mentioned it — is that it is a really big deal. I really appreciate that folks in the department were working with the Psychological Society of the Yukon — I may have gotten the name wrong. But it just shows that the psychologists in Yukon were heard.

Also, something that the minister mentioned, which I think is also a really big deal, is that on March 22, there were no psychologists on this list, and today there are three. That is a big change and a positive step in the right direction. I do thank the minister and his department for that — and the people who did that work and had the conversations that had to be had. That is a really important thing. I thank the minister for that. I thank

his department and the officials for that because that is a really exciting thing.

I had indicated that I would share the floor today with my colleague who is always so gracious to share the floor with me. I will sit down for now. If we have the opportunity to have further discussions, I will look forward to it, but I do thank the minister for the conversation today.

**Ms. McLeod:** I want to thank the Leader of the Third Party for letting us step into this and, of course, welcome back to the officials.

I did have some more questions about EMS but I will now let my colleague from Lake Laberge ask those questions. No worries — we will direct those questions to the right spot.

I want to talk a little bit about wildland fire. It's my understanding that the season starts on April 1 and ends at the end of September. The minister can just confirm that, but what is the timing for when the air tankers arrive and when they leave, and what does that mean for our fire season?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The air tanker program begins each year on April 1. The aircraft, though, actually arrive traditionally on May 1 — that is when we expect the aircraft to be in place — and they stay until mid-August. That said, if the fire season is still active in mid-August, we can actually extend the aircraft to stay longer if we have to.

**Ms. McLeod:** I thank the minister for that.

With regard to the contracts for the Yukon First Nation fire crews, what are the start and end dates for those contracts?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** There are actually two contracts. There is the initial attack, and that is an agreement with all 14 First Nation wildfire crews. Those contracts begin on April 1 with the crew leaders, and then the general crews start in mid-April — around the second week of April — to begin their seasonal training.

The other contract that we have is the unit crew with the Yukon First Nations fire. That begins in mid-April and, again, coincides with the seasonal training that happens with all wildland fire folks.

**Ms. McLeod:** If I could ask the minister to speak into his mic because he is fading at the end there. Thank you.

The minister made reference to the secondary fire crew — I forget the term he used, but outside of First Nation fire crew. I presume that was the wildland fire crews that would start mid-April. I didn't hear when the contracts end. Do they end mid-August or do they run to the end of September?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The vast majority of our fire crews wind up in mid-August but, of course, that depends on the season — what the season's outlook is and what the fire danger is. Also, in the late season, there is sometimes an opportunity for our teams to be exported to other jurisdictions that are having wildfires, which provides excellent experience for those teams.

Can you hear me? Am I loud enough?

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Yes? Thanks.

So, yes, most of the crews go until mid-August — unless there is a lot of activity in the fire realm in the territory — and then the crew leaders will actually stay later, until the end of

August or into September, generally speaking. The crew leaders begin earlier and stay later. The crews themselves begin in mid-April and stay until mid-August.

**Ms. McLeod:** I thank the minister for that.

Can the minister give us an update on the air tanker base project and/or a contract?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Wildland Fire Management's air tanker program is comprised of two air tanker groups and six air tanker bases located in the communities of Whitehorse, Watson Lake, Haines Junction, Carmacks, Mayo, and Dawson. The Whitehorse air tanker base has been identified for replacement, and Wildland Fire Management is working with Highways and Public Works to plan for future replacement options. This will be informed by a program review in the years ahead on the air tanker program and will also be considered alongside future plans as they relate to the airport expansion. Right now, the airport is undergoing major runway work and that is playing into our plans to fix the air tanker base. That upgrade will have to incorporate, in the future, the new air tanker base.

In the meantime, our team at Wildland Fire Management works hard to ensure that the seasonal needs of our air tanker program are met. I commend them, of course, for their work because it is quite incredible what they do.

**Ms. McLeod:** Now, can the minister give us a bit of a timeline, I guess, on the Whitehorse air tanker project and maybe a little information about the several air tanker bases and programs that we're running outside of Whitehorse and what the terms of their contract are?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Right now, we are working very hard. I know that my colleague in Highways and Public Works is working very hard to get the improvements — the extraordinary investment in the Whitehorse International Airport expansion — done. That is, as I said, playing into the air tanker program. Once the work on the airport is done, we will have a better idea how to proceed with the air tanker base.

On the air tanker contracts, Wildland Fire Management uses two types of aircraft — light and heavy air tanker groups — to aid in wildfire suppression activities in the territory. These types of aircraft are suited to operations in the Yukon; however, with modernization of the industry combined with the aging infrastructure in the Yukon, it's time for a comprehensive program review.

The air tanker contracts are now in place for the next six years, allowing Wildland Fire Management time to conduct a program review prior to the next iteration, so that's where they are at now.

The light tanker group was contracted for about \$14.6 million and the heavy tanker group total contract amount was about \$10 million. That's where we are at right now with our air tanker contracts.

**Ms. McLeod:** I thank the minister for that.

Can the minister give us an update on what the government is doing in and around communities with respect to wildfire risk mitigation activities?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We are taking proactive measures to limit the impact of wildfires through fuel management such as



forest thinning, conversion of coniferous stands to deciduous stands, and prescribed burning. We are also promoting wildland fire prevention through education campaigns to reduce human-caused fire ignition and help property owners to protect their homes from wildlife risk.

Up in my — no pun intended — neck of the woods, up in Whitehorse West, we have very active FireSmart advocates. They are actually bringing an expert in who is going to be working with Community Services on public awareness about what people can do to reduce the risk of wildland fire in their own neighbourhood.

Plans are prepared in partnership with community leaders and with public feedback to identify fuel management priorities and give guidance for addressing wildland fire hazards. We are proud to have endorsed the community fire protection plans for Teslin and Haines Junction in 2022 with three more communities engaged in the planning process. These plans will lead to landscape-scale projects such as the Whitehorse south fuel break, which is currently underway. This partnership with the City of Whitehorse is treating 395 hectares of forest while providing opportunities for biomass industry growth. To date, 211 hectares have been worked. We expect to finish the Copper Haul Road portion of the fuel break in the fall of 2024 and the Mary Lake shaded fuel break portion in the fall of 2026.

This is some of the work that we are doing to make sure that our communities are protected from wildland fire.

**Ms. McLeod:** Are there FireSmart contracts in place for all of Yukon's communities?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** FireSmart is actually led, at this point, by community groups that can receive funding for local wildfire hazard-reduction projects. In 2022-23, the Yukon government in partnership with the Government of Canada invested \$1.55 million in 32 projects across the whole territory.

The FireSmart programs are basically led by community groups. With communities, we are doing community wildfire protection plans. We have two of those in place, as I just mentioned, in Teslin and Haines Junction, and we are working on Burwash Landing, Destruction Bay, and Dawson City. Those plans will be presented — the schedule is for public comment in 2023. That will bring it up to five. We are working with communities, specifically on community wildfire protection plans, which are comprehensive plans for wildfire protection. The FireSmart program is basically led by community groups. As I said, we got \$1.55 million in projects out the door — that was invested in 32 projects across the territory.

**Ms. McLeod:** I thank the minister for that, but I'm going to move on right now to — well, I have a lot of questions about flooding but I'm running out of time.

Protective Services decreased \$1.7 million in O&M funding this year. I'm wondering if the minister can confirm what they were doing last year that will be different from this year and maybe give us a sense of what the government's analysis is in terms of the flood threat for this year?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I understand, certainly, the interest in predictions — speculation — about this year's flood season — if we had more snow, less snow, all the rest of it. Nobody

wants there to be fewer floods than I do — and, more to the point, probably the people in municipalities across the territory who experienced them last year.

The potential for flooding is always top of mind — and certainly at this time of year. It is incredibly difficult to predict at this time what the season will bring. We are coordinating with local and federal partners to prepare and be ready.

The flood forecast is going to become clearer as the Water Resources branch continues to do its work from late March through to May. But, as I said, it's too early right now to determine the flood risk for the whole territory. Spring weather will play a role in this, and we also have the high-water saturation that we are seeing. These are variables that we are monitoring. We will have a much better idea at the end of this year.

Emergency Measures is planning and coordinating with local governments and agencies, ensuring an inventory of sandbags and necessary response tools and materials. We are trying to improve our training capacity and ensure readiness. We are also encouraging people to prepare for their own floods this year. Make sure that you have kits available at home — have quick-carry kits that will get you out of the house. Look at your house in terms of what you want to save and what you want to preserve of your house and your personal belongings. Make sure that you know where these things are and that you are ready to leave on a moment's notice. This is not only for floods but also fires. It's important that we take some personal responsibility for these things to identify how we can make our homes safer in terms of both these natural disasters, which are becoming much more common in the territory.

When we are travelling through the territory, I am also encouraging people to drive through the Yukon in the summertime, much as you would in the wintertime, with a little bit of food, water, perhaps a sleeping bag or a tent, just to guard against any washouts or road closures that you may experience this summer. It's incumbent upon you to take some personal responsibility for your safety. We have been lucky in the territory to have a relatively safe passage through the territory for many years. Things are changing now and I am encouraging people to really plan for the worst and hope for the best.

The budget item that the member opposite was talking about had to do with a decrease in the budget. It actually has not decreased. We had one-time funding last year that has expired, and we have replaced it with the \$50-million contingency plan in the budget now, which is being used to cover the "act of god" occurrences that we might have in floods, fires or, in some cases, landslides. We now have a pool of money that we have allocated as a contingency. The \$1.7 million has come out but we actually have a contingency of \$50 million to deal with those immediate and pressing needs that will inevitably crop up this summer, although my fingers are crossed — I hope it doesn't happen but we have some money there to deal with these emerging and unexpected events that we will face this summer.

**Mr. Hassard:** I know that the day is coming to a close quickly, but I was just hoping to get a question or two to the minister about community pools. On March 22, my colleague

from Watson Lake asked about the pool in Ross River. The minister said that he confirmed that the pool was ready to go and they just needed to hire someone. I have been told by community members that the pool, in fact, is not ready to go, so I was wondering if the minister could confirm whether or not it is — and if, in fact, it is ready to go and they are just waiting to hire a lifeguard. Has that work begun? Is there a job posting or has that person been hired, or where are we at in the process?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It is always great to speak with my good colleague from Pelly-Nisutlin. I welcome him to the debate this afternoon. Yes, the information that I have from the department is that the repairs to the Ross River pool have been completed and the pool is scheduled to open for the 2023 aquatic season. I don't have information right now on the recruitment efforts but that process is underway right now and hopefully we will find qualified people to run our pools — not only in Ross River but in other communities across the territory — because the recruitment of those staff is always challenging. But we are working on that, and the most up-to-date information that the department has is that the Ross River pool is ready to go.

If the member opposite has information to the contrary and if he wants to send me an e-mail or give me more specifics, I would be happy to look into it for him, but as far as the department is concerned, the pool is ready to go.

**Mr. Hassard:** I appreciate that confirmation from the minister; however, I didn't quite hear — did he say that the recruitment process was underway? If so, where does a person find that job posting?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can report that on the YuWIN website, there is currently a job posting for people across the territory. It actually closes on the 14<sup>th</sup>. If you are interested, get it in soon — a big opportunity for a summer job for you.

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse West that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

**MLA Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 24, entitled *Act to amend the Coroners*

*and the Public Service Act (2023)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.*

### The following document was filed April 11, 2023:

35-1-144

*Family and Children's Services Annual Report 2020-2022*  
(McPhee)