



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 126

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, April 13, 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
Thursday, April 13, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: The Chair wishes to rule on a point of order raised during Question Period yesterday by the Member for Lake Laberge. The Member for Lake Laberge was responding to the Premier's statement — quote: "Does the Member for Lake Laberge want to pull up fear?" It appears to the Chair that the Premier was implying that the Member for Lake Laberge was deliberately seeking to cause fear. This is out of order.

Indeed, moments after I reserved my decision, the Premier, in referencing the Member for Lake Laberge's constituents, stated — quote: "In the end, they were in fear and that was what was trying to be instilled..." While this part was not called as part of the point of order, I will remind members that the term "fearmongering" was ruled out of order because of the deliberateness of the action component.

I will caution all members to be aware of their remarks around the word "fear" to ensure that they don't imply that a member is deliberately attempting to cause fear. It is a contravention of Standing Order 19(g) to imply that a member is intentionally attempting to foment fear as that is a motive unworthy of an honourable member. The Chair will remind members that all members are assumed to be honourable members.

I will revisit another issue that I have already addressed recently. In raising his point of order, the Member for Lake Laberge sought a specific remedy for the Chair. The Member for Lake Laberge stated — quote: "I would ask you to direct the Premier to retract the remark, apologize for it, and perhaps actually answer the question."

I have ruled that debate is not to continue after a point of order is raised and that members, while standing on a point of order, should not suggest the remedy that the Chair should use. The Chair does not require members' assistance with delivering rulings.

In addition, the Member for Lake Laberge, in his final remarks on the point of order, continued debate. This is out of order, and I will again direct the member to cease doing this when he rises on a point of order.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have a number of very distinguished guests here with us today for two tributes that we will be sharing here in the Legislative Assembly. First, I just

want to recognize a number of individuals who are here — individuals who served in UN tours with the Canadian Forces.

I would like to welcome: Mr. David Laxton, who is well known here, of course, and served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and was in Bosnia and Egypt as well; Joe Mewett, very well known here in the Assembly, served in the Western Sahara; Andrew McLeod is also here with us today, and thank you for your attendance; Paul Brais, who was a master corporal and served twice in Croatia and Bosnia; Jonathan Hall as well, a sergeant who served in Bosnia and Kosovo; Andy Rector, a captain and also very well known to the Assembly; Morris Cratty, who served in Cyprus on tour; Red Grossinger, who was in Cyprus, Egypt, Syria, Israel, Lebanon — thank you, sir — and Doug Burgis served in Cyprus.

Again, I want to thank everybody who has come today. If we missed anybody — I know my colleague across the way will also touch on a few people. I do know that there are some other individuals here today. Brienne Warner is here with the Chamber of Mines for our Joe Boyle tribute. I saw Max Fraser here as well, who is with us for our tribute to Joe Boyle.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: There are a couple more that I think the Premier missed. Al Parker is here as a Canadian Ranger and also a service member. No stranger to the House, Red Grossinger, over there — I think he is probably a veteran who spent more time in this House during tributes than many others, so please welcome Red too.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will ask my colleagues to help me welcome a visitor we have here today who happens to be my sister, Dr. Deborah McPhee.

Applause

Ms. White: I ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming a dear friend. John Walsh is here, and it is fantastic because this is a person who has been around in my realm since I first dipped my toe in politics and has had lots of good advice and suggestions along the way. Thank you for coming.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Joe Boyle

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Today I rise to pay tribute to Joe Boyle, a Yukon legend. Tomorrow, April 14, marks 100 years since his passing.

"Klondike Joe" Boyle was born in Toronto in 1867. He left his family at the age of 17 to work on freighter ships before dabbling in firefighting and boxing. In 1897, Joe Boyle was in the Klondike, having travelled over the White Pass. He mined Claim 13 and soon struck gold. In 1900, he gained the timber and hydraulic rights to eight miles of the Klondike Valley. He soon figured out that hydraulic mining methods were the most effective way to hit pay dirt. Instead of using a pick or a pan

and shovel, “Klondike Joe” began to mine by building gold dredges. Soon he was pulling millions of dollars of gold from the bedrock operating under his Canadian Klondike Mining Company. Joe became incredibly wealthy and a key figure around Dawson known for his fur coat and brand new car.

Joe’s adventures didn’t stop with the gold rush. In 1905, Joe sponsored a hockey team, the Dawson City Nuggets, and challenged the Ottawa Silver Seven for the Stanley Cup. The team would face transportation issues. They walked to Whitehorse and then missed the steamer to Vancouver after the train to Skagway was delayed. Following a detour to Seattle, the men eventually made it to Ottawa just in time. Despite their valiant efforts following this gruelling journey, the team lost but certainly gained notoriety for their bold and dedicated approach.

In 1914 following the outbreak of World War I, Joe established and funded a group of Yukon volunteers who would become a machine gun unit. The Yukon Motor Machine Gun Battery saw varied action throughout this war, including fighting at Vimy Ridge, a battle that has long gone down in Canadian history as a pivotal moment for our country and its military.

Later on in the war, “Klondike Joe” helped to get food and military supplies to the eastern front. He was then asked by the Romanian government to transport currency and diplomatic documents out of a newly Bolshevik Russia. Following the Bolsheviks’ declaration of war on Romania, Joe helped to negotiate a peace treaty and supported the release of prisoners of war.

Joe was also at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and negotiated a \$25-million loan from the Government of Canada to help Romania to rebuild their country. It was at this point that Joe’s adventures began to wind down. He spent his last years building a friendship with Queen Marie of Romania, the granddaughter of Queen Victoria.

Joe passed away on April 14, 1923 in London, England following a stroke. “Klondike Joe” Boyle led a large, colourful and boisterous life — one worthy of a larger-than-life territory.

He will be honoured tomorrow with a dinner held at the Whitehorse legion and will be recognized by Parks Canada as a national historic person. Though his days in the Yukon are but a part of his many accomplishments, I am proud to recognize him as an important part of our past.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: Joseph Whiteside Boyle was born in Toronto in 1867 and, 30 years later, he like many others sought adventure and joined the Klondike Gold Rush, travelling to Dawson where he mined claim 13 and struck gold. Known as Klondike Joe, Boyle sponsored the Dawson City Nuggets hockey team, which challenged the Ottawa Silver Seven for the 1905 Stanley Cup — although they were unsuccessful.

When World War I began in 1914, Boyle, who was a millionaire by that time, recruited and equipped a 50-person machine gun company composed of Yukon gold miners. The Boyle battery was incorporated in the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1915, and Boyle received the honorary rank of

lieutenant-colonel in the militia in 1916. He wore a uniform adorned with badges of Klondike gold, as did his unit.

Boyle accompanied the American company of engineers to Russia, a wartime ally of Britain, France, and the United States, and he coordinated the transfer of supplies to the eastern front, simultaneously working with the British secret service on undercover operations against German and Bolshevik forces. The Bolshevik government declared war on Romania on two separate occasions, and Boyle helped to negotiate a peace treaty between the two countries and the release of Romanian prisoners of war.

At the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Boyle negotiated a \$25-million loan from Canada to help Romania to rebuild after the devastation of World War I. In March 1918, Joseph Boyle befriended Queen Marie of Romania, the granddaughter of Queen Victoria. It is still debated today whether the two had an intimate relationship, but they remained close in his final years until he died of heart failure in 1923 in London. After his death, it was said that a lady would come once a year and visit his grave.

In 1983, Boyle’s remains were returned to Canada at the request of his daughter Flora. He was reinterred in the Boyle family plot at the Presbyterian cemetery in Woodstock. Joseph Boyle received many honours including the Distinguished Service Order from the United Kingdom, the Croix de Guerre from France, and three decorations each from Russia and Romania. Here in the Yukon, the military camp out by Wolf Creek is named after him, the Boyle Barracks, and the battle honours from the Boyle battery can still be seen in the Anglican church in Dawson.

Applause

MLA Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Joe Boyle, a larger-than-life Yukon legend. I particularly enjoyed learning about how he organized the hockey team — which was spoken about — in 1905 in Dawson. They were called the “Dawson City Nuggets” and they were a rag-tag bunch who went to Ottawa to play for the Stanley Cup.

But as much fun as that sounds, by his standards, it was only a minor accomplishment. He made a fortune on the goldfields; he ran a ring of British spies in eastern Europe; he may have even wooed the Queen of Romania. Joe Boyle’s life reads so much like an adventure novel that it’s hard to believe someone that colourful could be real, so it’s no wonder that, I believe, local filmmaker, Max Fraser, is planning a documentary about him, one that is sure to rival any work of fiction. We look forward to watching it and learning more about the remarkable life of Joe Boyle.

Applause

In recognition of the 75th anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping

Hon. Mr. Silver: Today, I rise on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 75th anniversary of the first United Nations peacekeeping operation. The establishment of the UN in 1945 marked a turning point in international relations and paved the way for a new era of cooperation. The

subsequent creation of the UN peacekeeping operations has been a cornerstone of these efforts.

The first UN peacekeeping operation was launched in 1948 in response to a Middle Eastern conflict. This operation established a model for future peacekeeping missions. Since then, these United Nations missions have become a key component of global efforts to maintain international peace and security. Over the past 75 years, the United Nations has deployed more than 70 peacekeeping missions to conflict zones around the world, including tens of thousands of military police and civilian personnel.

UN peacekeepers have played a critical role in protecting civilians, facilitating political processes, promoting human rights, and supporting humanitarian efforts in extremely challenging scenarios. Their work has helped to prevent the escalation of conflicts and established the foundation for lasting peace in many parts of this world.

Canada has a proud history of contributing to UN peacekeeping missions. Canada's first major involvement in UN peacekeeping was in 1956 when it sent peacekeepers to Egypt during the Suez crisis. Over 125,000 Canadian Armed Forces members, police officers, and civilians have served in international peacekeeping missions over the past 75 years.

Serving in peacekeeping missions can be challenging and demanding, and it requires a strong commitment to the United Nations values of peace, justice, human rights, development, and cooperation. These values reflect a shared commitment to build a more peaceful, just, and sustainable world and to ensure that the needs and rights of all people are met. The strength, dedication, and honour displayed by the Canadians who serve on peacekeeping missions stands as an example of courage to all of us.

We thank the Canadian Armed Forces members and veterans for their service in the pursuit of peace internationally. As we look to the future, it is clear that the need for effective peacekeeping will continue. On this important anniversary, let us affirm our commitment to the values of the UN and the critical work of UN peacekeepers.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: This year marks the 75th anniversary of the first United Nations peacekeeping mission.

The United Nations was formed in 1945 by 51 countries that shared interests and priorities. They were committed to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations, and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights. Resulting from these commitments, the first United Nations peacekeeping mission was established on May 29, 1948.

The UN Security Council authorized the deployment of a small number of UN military observers to the Middle East to form the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization to monitor the armistice agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbours. Following the first mission, there have been another 72 UN peacekeeping operations in which more than two million have served.

There are currently 12 operations for which UN peacekeeping deploys more than 87,000 military police and civilian personnel. These missions have a main objective: to maintain international peace, security, and to promote cooperation among all nations. They help to support issues in the areas of economic, social, humanitarian and human rights matters, and armed conflict.

Canada contributed forces to many missions around the world, with the Canadian Armed Forces being among the most respected peacekeepers in the world. More than 125,000 Canadians have served in UN peacekeeping operations and 130 have lost their lives.

Today in the gallery here in the Yukon Legislative Assembly, we have Canadian soldiers who have joined us and who have served in many United Nations missions. Canadian peacekeepers have made great contributions but their sacrifices have been heavy. These brave individuals take their honoured place in our country's proud military history.

On this 75th anniversary, it is important to take time to remember all those who have done so much for peace, security, and human rights in the world today. Thank you for your service.

Applause

Ms. White: I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the first United Nations peacekeeping operation.

Seventy-five years ago, the United Nations embarked on a mission to maintain international peace and security by establishing a peacekeeping force that would serve as a neutral mediator in conflicts around the world. Since then, UN peacekeeping has become a vital tool in promoting peace, stability, and reconciliation in some of the world's most troubled regions.

This anniversary marks an important milestone in the history of global peace and security and allows us an opportunity to recognize and celebrate Canada's contributions to world peace.

Since its very first mission in May 1948, more than two million people have served in 72 peacekeeping operations around the globe. The contributions and dedication of these uniformed and civilian personnel is nearly impossible to quantify. Millions of lives have been directly impacted, and countless lives have been saved by their efforts.

We thank and acknowledge the personal contributions of thousands of Canadians who have participated in peacekeeping operations around the world. We acknowledge the many Yukoners who have served in peacekeeping missions, including those in Cyprus, Bosnia, Kosovo, and beyond. Their commitment to the cause of peace is a testament to our shared values of compassion, tolerance, and respect for human rights.

As we mark this important anniversary, let us reaffirm our commitment to the cause of peace and to the principles of the United Nations. Let us honour the courage and sacrifice of UN peacekeepers, past and present, and pledge to do our part in building a more peaceful and prosperous world for all.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Cathers: I have for tabling two documents today.

Mr. Kent: I have for tabling a motion as well as two letters with respect to the title transfer question that I asked yesterday. I quoted from those documents during Question Period.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees? Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 20 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 20 of the First Session of the 35th Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Leader of the Third Party on April 12, 2023. The petition presented by the Leader of the Third Party meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly. However, two pages of the petition that appear to use electronic signatures and an additional document will be returned to the Leader of the Third Party.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 20 read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, “The Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been received within eight sitting days of its presentation”.

Therefore, the Executive Council response to Petition No. 20 shall be provided on or before April 26, 2023.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Petition No. 17 — additional signatures presented

Ms. White: I have today for presentation additional signatures to the petition on hemodialysis services in Yukon.

Speaker: 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 Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to:

(1) revert to the previous policy regarding transfer of title; and

(2) consult with all stakeholders, including the City of Whitehorse, Yukon Contractors Association, Yukon Real Estate Association, and the public prior to introducing a new policy.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion: THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to form a working group to engage with stakeholders dealing with infertility to:

(1) understand the complexities of seeking fertility treatment from a rural jurisdiction like the Yukon; and

(2) understand what part existing services could play in the removal of barriers to access fertility treatment.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the City of Whitehorse to expropriate the property known as 2 Lodgepole Lane in Whitehorse for public use in accordance with the Yukon *Expropriation Act*.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to include a \$100 top-up to eligible social assistance recipients, retroactive to February 2023, in the next supplementary budget.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise today to provide an update to Yukoners on the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative. This important initiative is managed by the Yukon Development Corporation with the purpose of reducing our dependence on fossil fuels, developing local business opportunities in energy generation and distribution, building capacity in renewable energy generation and distribution, and increasing and diversifying Yukon’s energy generation capacity. Since its creation five years ago, the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative has already provided a total of \$7.8 million in funding to 16 projects. Half of this total has been provided to Yukon First Nation governments and development corporations. Once the Haeckel Hill wind project comes on line, these projects will be contributing nearly 20 gigawatt hours of renewable energy to the Yukon.

Including the projects that we have in the planning phase, we have more than 40 gigawatt hours, which is our target under *Our Clean Future*. Two of the projects under this initiative include: the Beaver Creek solar battery project, which is assisting one of the five off-grid communities to build a solar project and is projected to reduce the community’s need for diesel by 60 percent; and the Kluane Lake Research Station’s hydrogen storage project, which seeks to move away from diesel-based energy and transition to solar voltaic and hydrogen electrolysis storage, providing year-round, 100-percent renewable energy.

The Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative is concrete progress toward our goal of building stronger, more resilient Yukon communities for generations to come. This is just the beginning. Interest in the initiative has also grown each year. In response, we expanded and extended the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative in 2021, making it more accessible while further contributing to our government’s independent power

production goals outlined in *Our Clean Future*. Some of the funded projects include the Beaver Creek solar battery project, the Haeckel Hill wind project, the Old Crow solar project, the Teslin biomass project, and the Kluane wind project. Many of these community projects have seen rising costs and we will continue to work with proponents to identify as much support as possible under the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative to help keep the momentum going. Many of the funded projects have already made significant progress toward helping meet our emission targets.

Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to announce that the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative is now open for applications for the new fiscal year. As a reminder, the initiative is open to a broad range of Yukon-based organizations, including municipal governments, First Nation governments and development corporations, community societies or associations, and community-based businesses. The initiative focuses on established or proven technologies that use renewable energy sources for the generation of electrical or heat energy in the Yukon, including photovoltaic solar panels and solar thermal collectors.

The knowledgeable staff at the Yukon Development Corporation are available to provide support for applicants if needed. The Innovative and Renewable Energy Initiative represents an exciting opportunity for Yukon-based organizations to contribute to our government's objectives, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, diversifying our energy sources, and mitigating the impacts of carbon taxation. I believe that these projects are essential to achieving our climate goals and for building a brighter and more prosperous future for all Yukoners.

Mr. Dixon: This fund was created in the 2017-18 fiscal year and the minister has not announced anything new today; therefore, we do not think that this merits a ministerial statement.

MLA Tredger: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this statement about the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative and the energy projects that it has funded. I would like to congratulate all the recipients of past years that have put so much effort into ensuring a green energy future for the Yukon.

As my colleague pointed out, there is not much, if any, new information in this statement, just that a program that has been running for years is continuing to run, but while I am on my feet, I have a couple of comments. We are happy to hear that half of the total has gone to First Nation governments and development corporations, but I do wonder if we can do better than that. Would the minister consider requiring all the projects under IREI to have a First Nation share in the ownership?

The minister talked about the reductions in greenhouse gases due to those projects. Can he tell us how many tonnes of carbon have been reduced by the projects or what percentage of the territory's emissions have been reduced? The minister mentioned that we will soon reach the 40-gigawatt-hour target laid out in *Our Clean Future*. We know that the current version

of *Our Clean Future* does not even get us to a 30-percent reduction, much less the 45-percent target that we have legislated. Is there a plan to update this goal to help us meet our current climate targets? We look forward to answers to these questions.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: With this ministerial statement today, we just stood to let Yukoners know about the call that is going out to welcome people to apply for this project. Yes, it has been running for several years now, but we renew it each year and this is just an opportunity to let Yukoners know about it. We also let Yukoners know that with one of the big projects that we have in front of us, Haeckel Hill, we are going to be halfway to our target. We also let Yukoners know that half of the initiatives have been picked up by First Nation governments and development corporations, which I think is a pretty good piece of information to share with Yukoners.

For the question from the member opposite — should we do it all for First Nations? No, this project is about trying to generate interest across the Yukon. We had a review underway last year where we talked to Yukoners and proponents to discuss how we move forward when we get to our 40-gigawatt-hour goal under the independent power production policy. We will announce that as well. I hope that the members opposite will be interested to hear about that because it is an important project for Yukoners.

Two weeks ago, I was approached by the Chief of the Kluane First Nation to seek more support for his project and we will continue to do that work. I have also been approached by the Liard First Nation and the White River First Nation for more support. We will continue to do that.

I hope that this House is interested in hearing about those developments. I think that they are very important. I think it is critically important, but I don't know what the Yukon Party wants. I know that they have talked about building a diesel plant. I think that is their idea about how to address our energy issues here in the territory; I disagree. I think that we should be focusing on renewable energy, and that is what we are here to talk about today.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Communicating public safety measures

Ms. Clarke: Yesterday, a serious incident that involved an armed man breaking into at least one home in Whistle Bend caused some serious concerns for many of my constituents. Since the incident occurred, I have had several constituents raise questions and concerns to me that I committed I would bring to the floor of the Legislature.

The first question is in relation to school buses and children returning from school. Many people were blocked from accessing the community and were denied access to their homes because of apparent danger. Despite this, school buses were still able to drop off kids in Whistle Bend.

Can the government explain why kids were able to get off the school bus in Whistle Bend and walk home during this incident while some adults were denied access to the neighbourhood and their homes?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is interesting to me that the member opposite would make a commitment to bring this to the floor of the Legislative Assembly. The investigation of a very serious incident in our city is obviously still ongoing. I have not yet been provided with the details of that investigation, and I urge Yukoners to not speculate on what may or may not have happened during that incident.

Do we recognize it as an extremely serious situation here in our territory? Absolutely. Do we recognize it as a matter that is squarely in the hands of the Yukon RCMP? Absolutely. Their job is to keep our community our safe. They have demonstrated their ability to do so on many occasions in the last year and beyond that.

On more than one occasion, they have put themselves in harm's way to protect Yukoners. I think they should be able to continue their investigation, and ultimately they have been very strong in making public statements about their work, when they are able to do so, and I expect they will do the same now.

Ms. Clarke: Another question that I have received from constituents was about the lack of more general communication about the incident from either the RCMP or the Yukon government. Here is a concern that I received this morning from a constituent. I'm quoting: "In recent years Canadians have learned through tragic events the importance of public communication from the RCMP" — and government — "involving suspects with guns."

The fact is that yesterday's incident took place on a residential street when children were returning from school. There was no official communication, which meant that the public's only source of information was the rumour mill and citizens' posts on social media. This is concerning.

Can the government explain the lack of communication to residents of Whistle Bend during this incident?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I think that many folks were shaken after the images they saw posted yesterday on social media. What I will say to the member opposite is that we are taking this issue very seriously. I had a discussion today with the Minister of Justice concerning the investigation, just looking into finding out what details we can know throughout the day. I had a communication exchange this morning with one of the leaders from our community as well as with the Mayor of Whitehorse.

There are a number of things that we are still trying to find out — timing. We do know that there was some posting on social media — and still trying to figure out when information flowed into the public sphere and looking to find out when the police, who were made aware of the situation — and what protocols were followed.

We are taking this very seriously. Yes, of course, situations that have occurred across the country have all taught us lessons. I think everybody was very heightened with their anxiety yesterday — a pretty brazen situation that we have all seen —

and looking into it. We will bring those answers to the Legislative Assembly.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you to the Premier for that answer. Many people in Whistle Bend community found the lack of official communication about the incident worrying and unacceptable. Some have asked about the possibility of using broad outreach tools such as alerts sent directly to people's phones.

Can the government tell us when they use direct-to-phone alerts and whether such an alert was considered in this situation where a person armed with a gun was being pursued by the police in a residential neighbourhood?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I don't want to provide the House with any information that is not accurate so I am going to reserve the ability to have our Justice department speak with the RCMP. I think the questions that we are hearing today are good questions — significant questions — for individuals there. I think that the timing, as individuals will know, will help us to determine all the protocols that were followed in this particular case.

I will say to Yukoners, please, if you saw a situation yesterday that seemed out of the ordinary in Whistle Bend, if you are aware of information that could help in the investigation, please reach out to the RCMP and provide that information. I think it's important that, as a community, we come together and provide as much accurate information as possible.

I think that we will have a chance to come back to the House and to the member opposite on some of the pieces and the protocol — the timing and some of the things that were undertaken — because, as was stated by the member opposite, we are all aware of some sort of the hearsay on what has played out, but I want to ensure that the information that's brought back to the House is accurate. We will make sure we have that in place as soon as we have those conversations further with the RCMP.

Question re: Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport runway project

Mr. Hassard: The Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport runway project tender closed on February 22 of this year. Now, this was an invitational tender and the bid acceptance period is 60 calendar days. Contractors on this project have had little to no communication for weeks now and the 60-day deadline is quickly approaching.

We are hearing from contractors who bid on the airport runway project that many of the supply prices were only valid for 30 to 60 days. Those contractors, of course, are trying to plan hiring, organize other bids, and work on existing projects while they wait on the government to tell them who is the successful proponent.

Can the minister update us when contractors and all Yukoners can expect the contract to be awarded?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Government of Yukon is making crucial investments to ensure that we can continue to meet the needs of the Yukoners with safe and reliable aviation infrastructure for years to come.

A number of improvements to the airside of the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport are needed to replace aging infrastructure and keep the airport up to standard. This work will ensure that the airport can support the current and future airport operations. The improvements include work on the main runway, upgrading the parallel runway, developing airport land for commercial uses, and replacing apron panels. I can advise that the parallel runway project is nearly complete and we certainly do anticipate that it will be operational in the very near future.

With respect to the airport runway tender, the tender to reconstruct the main runway was advertised on October 12, as indicated, and closed on February 22, 2023. The department is still working through the evaluation process and, as such, I cannot provide additional information at this time. We will update the parties involved, including the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, once we have information that we can share on this project. However, we do anticipate that there will be news in the very near future. These are exciting times. The Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport is receiving a lot of update — attention.

Mr. Hassard: It would be much more exciting if these contractors could actually find out when the project will be awarded.

In the 2022-23 five-year capital concept, the Liberal government budgeted up to \$160.6 million for the runway, but everyone expects it to surpass the Nisutlin Bay bridge as the most expensive capital project in Yukon's history.

On March 23, here in the Legislature during Question Period, the Premier referred to the project as — and I quote: "... almost a quarter-billion-dollar cap ex project..." The airport runway project will cost almost \$250 million, according to the Premier — nearly \$90 million more than the Liberals have budgeted.

Can the minister tell Yukoners how the Liberal government will cover the budget shortfall on the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport runway project?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As indicated, I am receiving advice from the Department of Highways and Public Works procurement department with respect to the analysis of the bids and will receive advice with respect to moving forward on this project.

With respect to the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, we have a parallel runway project. We have the apron project, which involves, well, litigation from days gone by — of apron panels that were not installed correctly but now they have been. We have the aggregate below the main runway of the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, some of which is World War II era — once again, infrastructure deficit that was left to this government. The Yukon Party government from 2002 to 2016 had every opportunity —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would love to — had every opportunity to access the funding that we have dutifully accessed from Transport Canada and other sources to address the infrastructure deficit, which the three majority Yukon Party governments failed to address — 14 years.

Mr. Hassard: That was quite an answer from the minister but the question was actually about the budget shortfall.

We're hearing that contractors have been left in limbo on what could be the most expensive capital project in the Yukon's history. In the tender, there's an option for government to extend the acceptance period by an extra 30 calendar days by giving written notice to bidders. After 90 calendar days, the contractor has to cancel their bid in writing; otherwise the government can accept the proposal.

Given the delays from government and the rising supply costs, contractors are concerned that they may face more delays from the government. Can the minister indicate if the government will extend the acceptance period by an extra 30 calendar days? And again, when will the government award this tender?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just want to correct the record. The opposition is very comfortable providing information to sow seeds of doubt. Question 2 really focused on the capital expenditure of the airport, and I thank the minister of highways for providing the entire scope of work that's there, which is a series of projects — which is what I was referring to — and which comes up to almost \$250 million of expenditure.

That's important because what we inherited was a lack of infrastructure at the airport, a lack of planning at the airport, and now we're working with groups such as Air North that really need support. There was not a long-term vision for the airport undertaken. What we will do is do that important work. We will invest the money that needs to be invested.

But this is not just important for our tourism industry; it's not just important for commerce and our economy; but in the time we are in, when we think about the geopolitical pressures, it's extremely important from an Arctic security perspective that we are investing in this airport.

It is a big expenditure, overall. For the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, yes, if you add up all of the pieces that have to come, whether it's fixing the mess that was left behind or the new investment for the total package, yes, it is very expensive, but it's the right thing to do, and we need to do it when we focus on Arctic security, as well as our economy.

Question re: Civic addressing

Ms. White: Quick responses to emergencies, whether a health crisis or a structural fire, can be lifesaving, but that depends on responders being able to find your home. In order for emergency responders to get to someone's home, or the site of an accident, they need accurate information — a civic address — to be able to respond. The Yukon NDP have been raising this issue in this House since 2012. In fact, every party has raised this issue, including the current government. Without an accurate civic address, people and communities are left at risk.

What is the plan to complete civic addressing for Yukon municipalities, for unincorporated communities, and rural residents?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: A few months ago, I was out at the Ibex Valley talking to the local advisory committee about this

very issue. It is an issue that is important, and the Department of Community Services is working very closely to make sure that we have civic addresses across the territory.

Ms. White: That plan was light on details. In a recent article, Esri Canada, a company tasked with implementing a new emergency response in Canada, called “Next Generation 9-1-1”, pointed out that the Yukon is far behind when it comes to civic addressing. In 2016, when the Yukon finally had territory-wide 911, some work was done, but since then, no updates have been conducted and we have been left with a patchwork of civic addressing that does not cover the entire territory. Smaller unincorporated communities and First Nation communities have been left with a system that just won’t cut it anymore. Worse, some communities have no addresses at all.

In reviewing past debates, there seems to be some confusion on how civic addressing will be implemented in First Nation communities, unincorporated communities without a local advisory committee, and rural residences. With so many gaps in civic addressing and confusion about responsibility, will this Yukon government take the lead in planning and ensuring territory-wide civic addressing?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I was at one of the local advisory council meetings earlier this week and I saw that the new GeoYukon has the new layer up for civic addressing in our unincorporated communities. I know that there are still some gaps. I know that the community advisor team at Community Services is working with communities to identify if there are gaps, or some addresses that are missing, or need correcting. The new system is up online now, I believe, under GeoYukon, and it is a work across the territory so that we can prepare for next-gen 9-1-1.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that, but I was looking for a lead government.

A new 911 system is to be implemented in Canada, and it will require specific addresses, so there is lots of talk about this government supporting others to do the work, including municipalities and First Nation communities. What we don’t hear a lot about is one entity taking the lead and getting the job done.

Small communities are stretched financially. Rural residents living outside of any community simply do not have any ability to implement a civic address system. This needs to be led by a central government — the territorial government. This is about public safety and access to fast and reliable emergency response.

Will this government let Yukoners know when they can expect a territory-wide civic addressing system that will ensure that the new 911 system works in all of the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: If I didn’t make myself clear, it is the Yukon government that is the lead government on civic addressing across the territory. We have the new system. It is up on GeoYukon. Our teams are working to make sure that, if there any gaps in the addressing, we get those corrected. That is the whole point. Originally, this was initiated, I think, seven or eight years ago. I remember the Member for Klondike — who, at the time, was Premier — gave a Premier’s Award for

the group across the Yukon government who is doing the civic addressing.

There is a system up on the GeoYukon lands viewer right now. The team is working to make sure that, if there are any corrections needed, they are updated.

Question re: Whistle Bend development

Ms. Clarke: Yesterday, I asked about the fact that it appears that the terms of the agreements for sale of lots on green streets in Whistle Bend were broken. The minister simply went back to his old habit of blaming the city; however, as the minister knows, the agreements for sale are between the residents and the Government of Yukon, not the City of Whitehorse.

It is the government that is liable if the terms were broken, not the city. What is the government doing to address this situation that affects dozens of my constituents in Whistle Bend?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am almost 60 years old, and we are 24 days into this Sitting, and I feel great — invigorated — answering questions on issues, such as green streets and other things like this.

As a matter of fact, just this morning, I spoke to the Mayor of Whitehorse, and we talked about the green streets initiative. The City of Whitehorse is actually putting out correspondence to residents this week because, as I have said before, issues within a municipality are the municipality’s jurisdiction. The City of Whitehorse planned this development; the City of Whitehorse then gave those plans to the Yukon government, which executed the plans that they were given. We are — and now we have worked with the City of Whitehorse to find a solution.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I believe, in talking to the department and the mayor this morning, I believe we are actually going to execute the green streets exactly as they were envisioned the first time so the citizens of Whitehorse are going to get the green streets they paid for and wanted.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to talk about this again.

Ms. Clarke: Salamat. Yesterday, in response to my questions about the issue related to green streets in Whistle Bend, the minister told the Legislature that the City of Whitehorse had made some sort of decision about this. Here is exactly what he said — and I quote: “... the city has made a decision about the final design option to meet the need for the emergency vehicle winter access, address their policies, and adhere to the original design concept.”

The minister has said that a decision has been made. What was that decision, and how much additional money will need to be spent to implement this decision?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Happy to answer these questions. I mean, as I said, it is great to be representing my constituents in this House and answering questions such as this on their behalf — even after 24 days.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that, just moments ago, I said to the member opposite that I have — that the solution that has been settled on by the City of Whitehorse and the Yukon government

is to actually execute the green streets as they were originally envisioned. That work is going to go ahead. Correspondence from the City of Whitehorse, which is responsible for the development, and the planning, and the actual sign-off of these streets is going to residents in the next couple of days, I think — there was a meeting, actually, yesterday, a few hours before the member asked her question, between the City of Whitehorse and the Yukon government on this very issue, and they came to a solution. It was a timely question, apparently, and the solution is going out to residents in the next — almost immediately.

Ms. Clarke: Salamat. Thank you to the minister for that answer. When will the work begin, and how much will it cost, and who will pay?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said, the work is going to proceed. The work is actually the status quo. The green streets plan is not going to be amended, as was feared last year, to meet fire code. We have come up with a solution for that with the City of Whitehorse so the plan is going to be executed as it was originally envisioned. That should make residents happy.

The letter is going out to the residents almost immediately. We had the meeting yesterday just prior to the member's questions in the House yesterday, and I'm very happy to report that residents should be hearing the results of the work of the City of Whitehorse and the Yukon government on this issue momentarily.

Question re: Land disposition process

Mr. Cathers: Yesterday, I asked the Premier simple questions about the government's reported negotiations with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation regarding the potential sale of an 1,150-hectare parcel of land to them for a dollar. He didn't provide clear answers.

Our questions are prompted by what TRT said publicly in two newsletters, which I tabled today. In a summer newsletter, TRT said they were — and I quote: "... very close to concluding an historic agreement with the Yukon Government." This is regarding an 1,100-hectare parcel. Their winter newsletter says that the parcel is now 1,150 acres and says that the agreement "... will now be considered for approval by both the Yukon Cabinet and through a TRTFN Joint Clan Meeting."

We're asking the Premier a simple question: Is this an accurate description of the current situation or not?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think I would say that there is some more information that has to be shared. I would say that the process that the member opposite is speaking to — there are more steps involved in the work that we're doing with the First Nation. I think that if you're asking the questions because you want Yukoners to be aware of how we got here — so it's important that we share that.

I mean, this is from court proceedings. The Leader of the Official Opposition was moving to build a campground in Atlin. Because of the legal proceedings that have occurred, there is a settlement that is being negotiated. What has been read in the newsletter is language from some of the work around the settlement. It has not come to conclusion. There is consultation that still has to be completed with Carcross/Tagish

First Nation and there's consultation in that particular area with some private landowners.

Again, there is work ongoing. There is a large quantum of land and it is part of the proceeds, I would say, of the work that is being done to rectify a legal process — I think that the member asking the question would know it well from his time in Cabinet. Yes, the work is ongoing and I look forward to question 2 and 3.

Mr. Cathers: The Taku River Tlingit First Nation has been happy to share information publicly about negotiations with the Yukon government and, in contrast, the Premier seemed unwilling to share information with the public about what his government is doing.

Another question that he wouldn't answer yesterday is this — the 1,150 hectares of land that will apparently be sold to TRT for one dollar is in the traditional territory of some Yukon First Nations. Have Yukon First Nations — and in particular, Carcross/Tagish First Nation and the Teslin Tlingit Council — been consulted about the Yukon government's plans? And with reference to the specific changes to the lands act that were referenced in the TRT statements, what are those changes that are being contemplated?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: That is odd — I did just answer that. I touched on the fact that there is a consultation that is ongoing with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. Our team at Aboriginal Relations has not put that in the package so I don't know if there is an obligation for consultation triggered with Teslin — in this particular jurisdiction — unless there is something that the member opposite is aware of.

But let's get to the heart of this. Today's Question Period has been about the airport and one of the common themes is that, yes, we are dealing with litigation that we came to find when we came into it. Now, you are asking me about land. Yes, this is about litigation that was in place when we got here because of actions — so, there is a common thread —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No, there is. There is a common thread through Question Period: How are you fixing it? Are you fixing it well enough — the mess we made?

Yes, we are working on ensuring that we have those discussions. We will do the appropriate consultation with First Nations and we will do the appropriate consultations with private landowners. I am not going to lay out any other details. Again, this is the result of a legal process. I appreciate the information that has been tabled today. I will make sure, like I said, that I am accountable to the Assembly and to Yukoners and will bring that information forward as it becomes available.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do have to remind the Premier that this is this government's seventh year in office.

Yesterday, the Premier repeatedly dodged questions about this issue so I will ask him again today for some more clarity.

He made some reference to consultation with the public, but could he explain what plans the Yukon government has to consult with the public and affected landowners about this proposed sale of land, which, according to TRT, will be "... the largest fee simple land transfer in the history of the Yukon."

Hon. Mr. Pillai: To get into the details of the consultation, we do have an obligation to have a consultation process with the First Nations who are affected. In this particular case, we are talking primarily about the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. There are private landowners in this area we are talking about, where we saw the idea of this proposed campground.

In that area, we have an obligation to go to those landowners to make sure that the work we are undertaking here — that they are aware of it. I know there are things, such as access to their properties, that have to be taken into consideration. There are some things we have to figure out as well — how do we deal with some zoning issues on a private piece of property?

I think it's important. This is a large land transfer, and I think we are in a position where this is a fallout from a situation that has occurred. You have to go about these situations respectfully or you will find yourself in these challenging situations.

We will make sure that we can sell it appropriately. Yes, we have been in government for seven years, but it takes a long time to clean up what has been left behind — more than —

Speaker: Order.

The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 24, standing in the name of the Hon. Sandy Silver.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will be very brief today in third reading.

I appreciate the Members of the Assembly for their questions and contributions to the debate on the bill earlier in second reading and also in Committee of the Whole. We are proposing that Bill No. 24 be presented to remove the oath of allegiance requirement for public servants and for coroners. This change will support our efforts to be an inclusive employer and remove barriers in our hiring processes for those who seek employment in the public service.

It will also bring us in line with the approach to oaths for public servants in most other Canadian jurisdictions. Public servants and coroners will continue to take an oath of office in which they promise to do their jobs faithfully and to keep information confidential. The proposed changes will not affect the ethical obligations for all employees that already exist in policy and law.

We will also update the oath of office to affirm that public servants loyally serve Yukoners through their democratically elected governments. Again, I thank the members opposite, and I'm pleased to hear any further debate, if there is any.

Mr. Cathers: I would note that we are generally supportive of the changes. I would just reiterate the comments that I made on behalf of our caucus during debate in Committee of the Whole that, while the oath itself is not specified in the legislation, we are supportive of giving employees the option of whether they wish to swear allegiance to the Crown or not, rather than simply eliminating that swearing of allegiance, as proposed by the government. I would note that is similar in concept to the fact that MLAs, as well as government employees, have the option to choose whether we wish to swear an oath of office to God or make an affirmation. That choice, for many years, has been left open to MLAs, as well as to government employees.

We support the similar concept of giving employees, in this case, the option, rather than simply eliminating the oath of office to the sovereign.

Ms. White: We indicated our support for this bill previously, and we look forward to the vote.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thanks to the members opposite. I look forward to the vote on this important bill.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. 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 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: I think the yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 24 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 24 has passed this House.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 594

Clerk: Motion No. 594, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Pillai.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier:

THAT the House hold a Special Sitting in Dawson City, Yukon, on Tuesday, June 13, 2023, in the original chambers of the Legislature, to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the establishment of the Yukon Territory; and

THAT the Speaker set the time at which the House shall meet on June 13, 2023, and give notice to all Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today to speak to government Motion No. 594, which reads:

THAT the House hold a Special Sitting in Dawson City, Yukon, on Tuesday, June 13, 2023, in the original chambers of the Legislature, to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the establishment of the Yukon Territory; and

THAT the Speaker set the time at which the House shall meet on June 13, 2023, and give notice to all Members of the Legislative Assembly.

This is an important milestone for our territory. In 1896, George Carmack and Shaaw Tláa, also known as Kate Carmack; Keish, also known as Skookum Jim Mason; and Káa Goox, also known as Dawson Charlie, discovered gold at Bonanza Creek, Yukon.

This, of course, triggered the Klondike Gold Rush, which, at its peak in 1898, brought tens of thousands of prospectors to the Yukon. The massive population influx led to the separation of this land from the Northwest Territories and to the formation of the separate Yukon Territory.

This officially happened on June 13, 1898, with the signing of the *Yukon Territory Act*, bringing the territory into Confederation. One hundred years after that date, the *Yukon Day Act* was passed in a Special Sitting of the Legislature in Dawson City, the original territorial capital, formalizing the recognition of every June 13 as “Yukon Day”.

This is a significant milestone for our territory, although we know that the Yukon’s history did not begin with the gold rush. The Yukon has been populated by Indigenous peoples for tens of thousands of years and holds some of the earliest evidence of human presence in Canada. The Indigenous people in the Yukon have been part of this land since time immemorial. They travelled every corner of the territory, gathering resources, visiting friends and family, and trading with neighbours near and far.

Over time, people have adapted to changing environments, new people, ways of life, and new technology. In the Yukon today, there are 14 distinct First Nations, each with their own traditional territories, cultures, and political organizations. As we commemorate this anniversary, it is important to be aware of both the positive and negative effects of Confederation. Indigenous people continue to experience the impacts of colonization and the painful legacy of institutions, like residential schools. That is why it is so important that we maintain our commitment and efforts toward reconciliation. We have come a long way since 1898, and we are committed to working with First Nation governments to build a progressive, respectful, and equitable society.

This year also marks the 50th anniversary of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* — the landmark document that was delivered by First Nation leaders to the Prime Minister in 1973 and which articulated a vision for a fair and just future where First Nation people would be equals in Yukon society, economy, and governments. It began a 20-year negotiation between all Yukon First Nations and the federal and territorial governments that culminated in the signing of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* in 1993 and the 11 final and self-government agreements that followed.

Again, we are proud to continue to make advancements through high-level meetings, like the Yukon Forum, and groundbreaking initiatives, like the First Nation School Board. To commemorate Yukon 125 — there was a good dialogue about this yesterday — the public service has been working on several initiatives. One that we announced yesterday — and there was debate on the subject, which was supported from all areas of the Assembly — was a fund of \$400,000 — the Yukon 125 fund — to support community-driven initiatives that mark the territory’s 125th anniversary.

While the Yukon 125 logo, which the Minister of Tourism and Culture’s team has been working on over the last number of months, was a logo to be shared with local businesses to promote the anniversary, they will be rolling that out, and it’s something to be shared with other retailers in the Yukon so individuals can purchase items from local businesses and have that logo on them, as well as a social media campaign to promote the awareness of the rich and cultural historic resources in the Yukon; and the commemorative Yukon 125 coins to recognize the 125th and Yukoners’ contributions to our vibrant and diverse territory, celebrating leadership and reconciliation.

There are a lot of things that are moving. Hosting a Special Sitting in Dawson City on June 13 would allow the Members of the Legislative Assembly to commemorate this important milestone with the importance it deserves. It’s our honour and privilege to lead the territory, as we work to be able to build a stronger future together.

Of course, I urge all members to support this and look forward to conducting important business in the House. I want to be respectful to those from across the aisle, specifically to the leaders of both parties. The dialogue, which I think was important, was extremely supportive. I think everyone understands the importance of this event. There were good

ideas brought forward by both other leaders on different ideas and things they wanted to see integrated into this. I will leave it to them to touch on those items.

It felt like a very respectful process that we undertook. I know that, as well, it is important to put onto the record — we know there are some special folks who we will leave it to others to touch on — who we are going to have an opportunity to tribute. The Clerk has to work to prepare us and take a look at what this would undertake. I know it gives us an opportunity — all of us. As well, there will probably be different business that will be undertaken. Members — you know, leaders — spending time there to meet with local businesses, NGOs, and others, as well as with constituents.

I think there is a chance — we will figure out some of the details on logistics, but I think having us come together on this one — and I have to say, the dialogue was really — as you can see, we can get into some challenging conversations sometimes with a little bit of vigour inside the Assembly. But really, I just want to thank both members opposite — both leaders — for the way they approached the subject. I think, in the end, it is coming out, because good ideas — truly, we do get into some vigorous debate, but good ideas from all sides of the floor — some of that has flowed into some things that will help us celebrate in a number of ways around 125. I think it is an absolute honour and privilege to be able to be — and I say that — with all of the other members of the Assembly and to experience this, on this particular time in June, is an extreme honour.

I think that listening to individuals yesterday, which was very positive across the floor from all members, around the 125 anniversary. We understand the sensitivity; we understand the history; but what I heard yesterday, overwhelmingly, was about let's celebrate, and let's pull our communities together; let's look at all of the positive things that we have an opportunity to hold up; let's talk about what we are doing in the next 125 years and what we have to share.

I have an opportunity, as well, about a week after the House rises, to speak to the Canadian Club Toronto. The theme that was chosen is about the next 125, and it is really just sharing information to the Canadian business community around the opportunities in the Yukon that we see, whether it is in resource development, whether it is in clean energy, whether it is in tourism, whether it is investment in real estate, knowledge-based economy. Then, what is our role in the next 125, when it comes to Arctic sovereignty, and where we are in a circumpolar world, and what we have to contemplate — and what are the opportunities?

Lots of things we are all thinking about in the House as we celebrate the 125th anniversary. I say, with all sincerity, it is an absolute honour and privilege, if we get this motion passed today, to be sitting with all the other members for that moment in Dawson City — even the ones I battle with the most — all of us.

With that being said, I hope we get support from across the House. It's a real opportunity to speak to this motion today.

Mr. Dixon: It is a pleasure to rise today to speak to this motion put forward by the Premier.

I will start by saying that I really believe that the 125th anniversary of our territory is something that deserves to be celebrated, and I appreciated the Premier's opening remarks, where he outlined all of the actions, measures, and activities that are already planned for this coming year to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the creation of the Yukon Territory.

I also think that the addition of this event — the Special Sitting of the Legislative Assembly in the original chambers in Dawson City — is a wonderful addition to that series of events and activities that will celebrate our territory.

I will be very brief in speaking to this motion and will simply say that we are supportive of the motion. We will be voting in favour.

I had a chance to visit the former chambers last summer, I believe, with the Member for Porter Creek North. We had a chance to enter the chambers and reflect on some of the work that was done there so long ago, and the different layout of the chambers and the different function of the Council at the time. I think it will be a very powerful opportunity for us to reflect on the past of our territory and, as the Premier said, reflect on the future and the next 125 years.

We will be voting in favour of this motion. I support, very much, the idea of a Special Sitting here to commemorate the anniversary of the creation of our territory, and I look forward to joining colleagues from this Legislative Assembly in Dawson City on June 13 to have that Special Sitting of the Legislative Assembly in the former chambers.

Ms. White: Today, the NDP will also be voting in support of this motion.

I think it's an incredible opportunity and the luck of the draw, actually, that those of us in this Chamber will have this opportunity to celebrate this big anniversary in this really special way. I have been in this Chamber for 11 years and haven't set foot in the historic chamber in Dawson City, so I look forward to that.

I also think it's important, as we debated yesterday the importance of marking the 125th, that this is part of it, so we look forward to that celebration in Dawson City, and we look forward to being part of that history, knowing that my colleague, Lois Moorcroft, was involved in the last special Sitting in Dawson City. We will be voting in favour of the motion and look forward to the trip in June.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am thrilled to be debating commemorating our 125th anniversary with a Special Sitting in my riding. As I mentioned in the House just yesterday, Dawson is an interesting mix. Our history is vibrant, tangible, and alive. We live in such close proximity to history that we sometimes forget how unusual that is — sometimes — and we shouldn't. We sometimes forget that we are living and working and going about our daily lives in a historical site — a history with a very rich political background as well.

To be able to return to the original capital of this great territory 125 years later is a historical milestone. I believe the original legislators and political figures would no doubt tip their hats to us for the effort. It was their efforts that established the

foundation of how we govern ourselves today, and it is incumbent upon us as legislators today, working with Indigenous governments, municipalities, federal governments, businesses, and non-profits, to learn from our history, apply these lessons, and help shape our future.

Again, there is a rich, political history from the Klondike. A little bit of context — a lot has been written about the Klondike Gold Rush, but by the 1940s, the spectacle of the gold rush had dissipated. At the height of the rush, my community was populated by roughly 30,000 souls from around the world. It was the largest Canadian city west of Winnipeg. In the 1920s, less than 1,000 people remained, and by the 1960s, a few hundred people called the Klondike home.

The designation of capital had come and gone by 1953, when that responsibility moved south to Whitehorse. The administrative offices were mostly already in Whitehorse at that time. There were no connecting roads out of the community until 1951, when the road was built to connect us west to Alaska. The connecting road to Whitehorse followed in 1955, but by then, the logistics and logic of being the capital was mostly gone. It was the capital for just over 50 years and, in that time, saw unimaginable change to the Indigenous way of life for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in.

Our collective story, after the gold rush, is one of resilience, of character, and strength in the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in community, and also in the settlers who stayed, despite destitution.

Although Dawson became the Yukon capital in 1898, it lacked municipal institutions until after the turn of the century, when it received its charter as a city in 1902. The ties to federalism in this half-century were complicated and under-resourced. The small territory struggled under colonial rule until post-World War II. Welfare colonial policies attempted to make up for decades of placid relations and timid investments.

A new federal building was constructed in Whitehorse in 1952, and a year later, we saw the formation of the Yukon Territorial Council. Dawson seemed bound to the usual fate of a boom-bust economy and was beginning to look a lot like a ghost town at that time. With decades of restorative help from Parks Canada, and a passionate obligation of Klondikers to preserve and to learn from our history, there are still standing federal buildings from these boisterous early days. St. Andrew's Manse is a great example. The quality of the original building is that of legend, especially among local carpenters, who grew up playing in a slew of abandoned buildings and who have a real commitment to making sure that our heritage gets preserved. Its name can't be uttered without reference to Rev. Dr. S. Grant, an early pioneer in Dawson City's history.

There are other buildings, obviously, that are still standing — I'll only mention one, which is the old administrative building, designed in 1899 by Thomas Fuller, who worked as an architect for the Department of Public Works. The building was constructed in 1901 as the legislative and administrative building. I spoke a bit about where we will be sitting just yesterday. I want to state, for the record, what an honour it will be to speak on behalf of Klondikers in the same hallowed halls as our region's original political figures. I had the amazing

opportunity to be sworn in there, in that building, with Hähké Joseph and Mayor Potoroka, at that time — sworn in as Premier in the chamber that we will be going back to.

It is great to be able to get back there in an official capacity. I think that it is a great way to commemorate the 125th anniversary, and I look forward to this motion passing in the Legislative Assembly and the good work beginning on the preparations.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will just rise for a brief moment. Yesterday, we passed the motion supporting our communities. We launched the Yukon 125 fund. I had my first community meeting last night and I was happy to talk about it. I am not surprised that the community folks were interested and keen to do something to commemorate our 125th anniversary.

I also happened to have the opportunity last weekend to be in Dawson. I was being toured around by Mayor Kendrick. We were talking about many things, of course — many issues — but one of them was about some of the historic sites.

Like others who have risen to speak today, I am looking forward to this opportunity to be part of the history of the Yukon, to reflect on those who have come before us, and to do it in a good way for those who are coming after us in this beautiful place we call "home".

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I first just want to thank members for sharing their comments, which seem to be in full support of the motion. I want to thank all individuals in the House, and specifically the leaders of both other parties for their collaboration on coming up with a plan that, I think, works for everybody and for keeping this about the importance of the anniversary and looking back at the incredible individuals — all leaders who have helped us get to the place where we are today.

I want to thank everybody. I want to thank the Clerk's Office too. A lot of work was done to make sure that this could be undertaken. I know they are looking forward to us getting the motion passed so they can continue to do that work.

Thanks to the Members of the Assembly, and I look forward to seeing a positive outcome in our vote today.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the questions?

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 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 594 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 10, the Public Service Commission, 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: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

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

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 208, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any general debate?

Public Service Commission

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is great to have this opportunity to speak to the House today about the 2023-24 O&M and capital main estimates for the Public Service Commission. I am joined today by two of my officials from the department. I have Sasha

Gronsdahl back representing us and also the deputy minister responsible, Sherri Young. Thank you to both of them for being here today and for their dedication to public service.

As the central agency department and responsible for the public service, the Public Service Commission delivers a range of government-wide human resource programs and services. Over the past year, the Public Service Commission has worked to respond to the organization's evolving human resource management needs. The work of the department is primarily guided by the *Breaking Trail Together* strategy and also the *People Plan*. *Breaking Trail Together* is the Yukon government's 10-year strategic plan to create a public service that is inclusive and representative of Yukon First Nation people.

As part of the plan, the Government of Yukon launched an Indigenous hiring preference initiative in 2020. The hiring preference is given to qualified candidates who self-identify as Yukon First Nation or other Canadian Indigenous ancestry. In 2022, the decision was made to extend this program through to 2029 to coincide with the expiration of the *Breaking Trail Together* strategic plan.

Extending the timeline of this initiative allows the Yukon government to continue to address our Indigenous recruitment goals and serves as a demonstration of our serious commitment to Yukon First Nation final agreements.

The Public Service Commission is continuing its work to ensure that the Government of Yukon's public service is strong, engaged, and has the capacity to effectively deliver programs and services for Yukoners.

Over the past year, the Public Service Commission has worked collaboratively with all government departments and corporations to advance multiple projects identified in the *People Plan*. The *People Plan* is intended to guide the way we recruit, retain, and sustain the public service. These projects have included streamlined human resource practices across government, developing new leadership training for managers, launching a new recruitment marketing website, conducting an assessment of psychological health and safety in our workplaces, and establishing the government's first employee resource group for LGBTQ2S+ employees. Also, employee research groups are voluntary, employee-led groups for employees who share a common identity. These important groups foster inclusion, support employee psychological health, and build a sense of belonging among its members. Establishing this support network for LGBTQ2S+ employees supports not only our government's *People Plan* but also the LGBTQ2S+ action plan.

The Yukon government has taken several steps to identify psychological health and safety in our workplaces. General anxiety and stress caused in part by the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising costs of living have increased our understanding that all people are susceptible to changes in their mental well-being.

In 2022, we worked with a lead expert in psychological health and safety to assess Yukon government workplaces against the 13 factors of a psychologically safe work environment. The assessment provided information and

recommendations to inform program development and delivery as we continuously strive to improve the safety of our workplaces.

This year and into future years, we will focus on building upon our strengths as an employer through enhanced engagement and improved safety practices while developing our organizational culture and fostering civility and respect in the workplace. A critical part of our work forward — creating an engaging and inclusive workplace experience — is supporting employee well-being and health and safety. The employee and family assistance program is a cornerstone of our efforts, offering our employees and their families access to professional health and well-being services to help them respond to the mental and emotional stressors that life and work present.

Data gathered in 2022 shows that the use of these psychological health services has nearly doubled since 2019. Due to increased demand, we are increasing the services to provide additional supports to employees routinely exposed to trauma through the course of their duties.

Our work continues to build the capacity of public service managers and supervisors to lead effectively. Supports for managers and supervisors include essential training in management responsibilities and development opportunities to grow leadership and talent from within the public service.

Over the past year, we designed and implemented new learning initiatives including a learning pathway to support new leaders within the public service and an in-person experiential workshop that incorporates First Nation values and awareness for cross-cultural mindfulness and safety in the workplace which is available to all employees.

In 2023-24, we will be further expanding our capacity to deliver and enhance on the cultural safety learning series. In all of these initiatives, we strive to use evidence and data to inform the way forward. The Public Service Commission continues to develop a comprehensive human resources metrics framework for use within the Yukon government. By developing this human resources metrics framework, the commission can provide leaders within the government with consistent, timely, and meaningful data to inform decision-making.

With all of the projects that are underway to support the long-term capacity of our public service, we will continue to help keep employees safe in Yukon government workplaces and manage human resources to ensure that the public service can continue to deliver services and programs to Yukoners.

The current iteration of the *People Plan* will expire at the end of 2023. Over the next fiscal year, we will be conducting a review of the plan and work on the development of a successor plan to ensure that this important work continues and evolves with a changing workforce.

I will now turn and provide an overview of both the O&M and capital budgets for the Public Service Commission. The commission's overall estimated budget, including capital, is \$56 million. This overall budget is comprised mainly of the operation and maintenance budget, which is estimated at \$55.9 million. The capital budget, comprised of office furniture and operating equipment, is estimated at \$115,000. The O&M

amount is an overall decrease of \$2.7 million, or five percent from the 2023 main estimates. This difference is mainly due to changes in the two funds administered on behalf of all Yukon government departments. The employee future benefits fund is estimated to decrease by \$3.7 million, and the workers' compensation fund is estimated to increase by \$720,000.

Employee future benefits are paid to employees when they leave the government or retire. This amount is determined by actuarial review and takes into account a variety of factors such as accumulated service, wage rates, and demographic factors such as rate of retirement. Retirement benefits are also affected by extended health care cost trends and the rate at which retired employees participate in the benefit program. The employees future benefits fund is the largest line item in the PSC's budget. This item totals \$24 million, or 43 percent of PSC's O&M budget.

This decrease of \$3.7 million, or six percent from the 2022-23 estimates is due to a few factors, which can vary year over year, including extended health premium rates, discount rates, and actual benefit payments. The discount rate increase from three to four percent resulted in an actuarial gain, which has superseded the loss resulting from actual benefits paid being higher than expected.

The other fund — the Workers' Compensation Payments — is the largest line item in the PSC's budget. This line item totals \$9.3 million, or 15 percent of PSC's O&M budget. This represents an increase of \$720,000, or nine percent from the 2022-23 estimates for this program. Though the WSCB premium rate is going down by three cents, from \$1.87 to \$1.84, WSCB costs overall are anticipated to rise as recruitment efforts are enhanced.

The next item to highlight refers to \$106,000 funding to convert an existing term position to a permanent one. This position is imperative to the continuation and advancement of the *Breaking Trail Together* plan through planning and developing the education programs that support cultural competence, safe and inclusive workspaces, and helps address racism and bias across this organization.

The estimates include an additional \$100,000 to expand the offerings of the employee and family assistance program to include enhanced supports to employees in high-risk occupations, who are routinely exposed to trauma, violence, and stress as part of their profession. We have allocated an additional \$60,000 to increase our ability to receive independent medical examinations for employees who are struggling with physical and/or psychological limitations. Using this early intervention service, we are better able to ensure that people can safely continue to work, or return to work, after illness, injury, or disability and reduce long-term disability for our employees.

We are also allocating an additional \$40,000 to corporate training to increase our capacity to deliver training to leaders and employees across the government in the areas of cultural safety, diversity and inclusion, anti-racism and discrimination.

With all that said, I want to thank you all for this opportunity for speaking about the Public Service Commission's 2023-24 operation and maintenance and capital

main estimates budget. I welcome questions from my colleagues and look forward to speaking in more detail about the innovative programs and initiatives undertaken by the Public Service Commission.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you to the minister for his introduction. I would also like to thank the officials for their briefing last month. I only have one question for the minister this afternoon. The Yukon government does the employee engagement survey every two years. The survey last happened in 2021, which means that it is scheduled for this year again. I was hoping the minister could tell us when the Public Service Commission will be conducting the employee engagement survey and when we can expect those results to be made public. If the minister is able to share that information, I will hand the floor over to my colleague from the Third Party. Thank you to the officials for joining us today.

Hon. Mr. Silver: The employee engagement survey is extremely important. It helps us measure the health of the work environment within the government public service. The survey is conducted every two years. The survey planned for 2020 was postponed to the fall of 2021 so that the organization could focus on the pandemic response.

The overall employment engagement score in 2021 remained relatively stable at 72. This is a one-point decrease from the last survey in 2018. The results of the 2021 survey at the corporate and department level are publicly available on yukon.ca. Each of the departments receives a report of their engagement levels, and the deputy ministers have the primary responsibility for addressing the results inside the departments.

The next employee engagement survey will take place in the spring of 2024. Federal-provincial-territorial counterparts are working together to examine a survey model nationally that could potentially inform the way we do and conduct our surveys so, in the interim, targeted surveys can be conducted.

Ms. White: I welcome the minister and the officials today for the debate on the Public Service Commission, which, to be super clear, is a really important — I would say, overarching — department of Yukon government, where a lot of the issues of fairness go so, for me, it's one that I am very interested in.

The first thing I want to talk about is the employee and family assistance program. I know that, over the years, there have been different conversations in this House about which company holds that contract, so can the minister tell me who holds that contract now and where they are based?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The company responsible is called LifeWorks. We are searching right now — we believe that it is in British Columbia, but we will get that data. If that is not the case, we will give that to the member opposite at another time.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Does LifeWorks have counsellors who are based in Yukon or are they contracted out to do the employee and family assistance program here?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I guess the short answer is both. The way that the process usually works is that the initial contact would be a phone-in counsel, which is most likely from Outside but, at the same time, depending upon the requirements of the

individual calling, there would be a mix, basically, in relying on both local resources and also the counsellors who are based down south.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. We all know that counselling is a deeply personal thing and there has to be a good fit with the counsellor in order for there to be movement or positive growth.

Is a Yukon government employee able to choose their own counsellor if they don't participate or are not contracted out by the employee and family assistance program?

Hon. Mr. Silver: This would be based upon the individual need, based upon the services that we have, the human resources that we have in the Yukon, compared to the company's ability to rely on their resources as well.

But, again, it's not a rule; it's based upon the particular call.

Ms. White: If an employee was to have an existing relationship with a counsellor and they wanted to be able to use the seven appointments that they have through the employee and family assistance program, who would they contact about arranging that?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, it's very specific to the individual who is reaching out, but they absolutely can discuss what they currently have available and determine those options based upon the connections they have already made.

I completely agree with the member opposite. I have seen it time and time again, in my previous life as a teacher, the importance of connectivity with someone you can be open with and trust and being able to utilize those resources. Out of the 20 local providers that we do have, we do our very, very best to keep those conduits together while, at the same time, based upon the call and the condition and the situation, having the ability to be flexible within that is important as well.

But I do agree with the member opposite that continuation with individuals, especially when we are discussing very personal matters, is extremely important and that is a discussion that is welcome, and the department and the folks will do their best to meet the clients where they are and provide them as local a service as possible.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that, and I appreciate that answer. It is hopeful because, again, we know that the right relationship makes all the difference, so I am glad to hear that.

I wanted to move on to what happens in a case of overpayment with a Yukon government employee. Maybe I will just start with that — what happens if a Yukon government employee has been overpaid, and how is it decided about repayment, and who is involved in those conversations?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am going to ask the member opposite to be a little more specific. Overpayment happens in different ways and depending upon the situation — if it is fraudulent or not, or certain circumstances — it all depends, so if the member opposite has a specific case or situation, maybe we could start with that.

Ms. White: I will remind the minister that he doesn't like when we speak about specific situations, so I will make one up that will highlight the same issue.

Let's say that there is a situation of overpayment that has to do with an employee who has been absent due to illness, then

goes on to an extended leave due to illness. How is repayment sorted out in that case? If there was an accumulating amount of time that was paid for — that the employee missed — how does the government calculate a repayment plan?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, the member opposite should know by now that I'm Goldilocks. I like something just a little bit more general and not too case-specific so that's what we're looking at here. Again, with the Minister of Finance hat on as well, there is a plethora of different circumstances where an overpayment or underpayment could have happened — those types of things — but in general, if an individual government employee was overpaid, there are guidelines that would have been set out and agreed on by the collective bargaining agreement for this process, which would usually be a letter to begin with, stating the facts of the situation, and then from there, contact would be made on a situational basis giving options for repayment.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. With those options for repayment, is it normal to ask an employee for 50 percent of a paycheque until the amount is repaid?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, this is case-specific. Based on the situations, options will be decided.

Ms. White: Well, I guess I will just highlight that if, in a repayment plan, Yukon government is asking an employee for 50 percent of their take-home pay, it often can leave someone in a position of not being able to meet their requirements — either mortgage payments or rent payments — or the cost of living. I just wanted to know how flexible or how that part could be negotiated. I'm speaking very frankly about knowing that someone has just been told that 50 percent of their paycheques will have to go to repayment. At this point in time, they are not sure how they will survive during that time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, there is a procedure that is set out based on the collective bargaining agreement. There is a letter that would be sent. Not knowing the specifics of the case, I would say that options of payment are on a situational basis. If the member opposite would like, we could talk offline as well about a specific case. If there is anything I can do to help facilitate more specific answers that may not be debated in the Legislative Assembly — but going directly to the individual — I could do that.

Also, I am advised that individual public service employees can identify financial hardships, and those parameters will be taken into consideration.

Ms. White: I appreciate that answer from the minister, and I will look at caseworking it. This isn't the first time in my time here that I have heard of those kinds of similar plans, and I wanted to know if that was the standard or if there was room to negotiate, which it sounds like there is, so I appreciate the minister and his officials for that.

One of the things that I think is great with the diversity and inclusion — knowing that what was a term position has now been made permanent to continue to support cultural competence, safety, and inclusion. I was hoping that the minister could tell me more about what that program is and how that position relates to the rest of the public service.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As an employer, we are absolutely committed to providing culturally safe, diverse and inclusive workplaces for all of our employees. Some of the government's initiatives to further diversity — I briefly touched on in my opening comments: extending the Indigenous-hire preference and action under the representative public service plan, *Breaking Trail Together*, all the way to 2029; leading a corporate research project to understand the barriers of Indigenous employees; and also ensuring that the public service is a welcoming place for our 2SLGBTQ2IA+ community and inclusion actions by creating and supporting a new employee form.

We have launched the conversations with diversity speaker series, which features speakers in a variety of diverse groups — locally and outside of the Yukon — who are available virtually to all Yukon government employees. There is lots of change within the parameters of what we are trying to accomplish as a government, including supporting the Indigenous Employees Forum, IEF, which provides members with opportunities to network or to access a cultural support system and build relationships with Indigenous role models, and the organization of the annual Indigenous Employees Award of Honour, which is a tremendous honour that I have had the privilege of being involved with in my former role.

The member opposite is speaking specifically about the establishment of the Organizational Development branch and Respectful Workplace Office, which are dedicated to cultural safety and inclusion and Indigenous priorities. Reserving seats in our leadership pathway program for Indigenous employees is another initiative. I would be remiss if I didn't add, finally, providing regular government-wide training in the areas of anti-racism, unconscious biases, cultural safety, intercultural competencies, and residential school awareness. We also put on Indigenous leadership conferences this spring, and so all of this is important work. Being able to have the human resources in the department to coordinate these efforts, especially with their work with other governments, is an extremely important initiative. I am glad to see the Public Service Commission, in their role, promoting cultural safety and addressing racism through the training, through the capacity building, and also those leadership programs.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I am looking for him to expand now. What does that training that is offered to employees cover? I appreciate that we are talking about the anti-racism and those things, but who has developed the training? How is it delivered? I want to know more about the training. I am not offered it as an MLA.

I have done the correctional officer training when I was at Corrections, but I would like to know what that program looks like, the amount of time that it takes, and whether it is a two-hour course or seven modules on the computer. How does it look and how is that rolled out?

Hon. Mr. Silver: This isn't a course or opportunity. This would be a multitude of different approaches — online courses. There is a list. What we can do for the member opposite is get together an information note about that. I don't know how it has developed, necessarily, because it isn't one

thing. It's a whole bunch of different opportunities. When you take a look at government-wide training and those areas of everything from intercultural competencies, residential school awareness, unconscious bias — these are all not just one offering and not just one classroom but a whole-of-government approach to diversity and inclusion.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I think it would be helpful, honestly. Again, I did First Nations 101 when I was in Corrections and I did other training that was required there. Although I wasn't an officer, I did the training that was required for an officer so I'm familiar with some of those programs. The reason I ask is that the common Yukoner without access to anything other than the Yukon government public website can't find those programs, so I am on the website and going through, looking for more details, and they just don't exist in the public realm. I think it's actually a really positive thing to be able to have that kind of information for people to take a look at. That is the reason why I was asking about it.

One thing I have heard often as feedback is that it has been very helpful for folks after the interview process to do the post-interview — the debrief. I wanted the minister just to walk us through that — understanding that someone could go for an interview with the Yukon government and may not be the successful candidate. Can you walk me through what happens after that?

Hon. Mr. Silver: This would be specific to the department in which the hiring process would be with. Speaking from my experience within my departments, if an individual who did not get the opportunity — did not get the job — reaches out, then it is usually an HR representative who will walk the person through, either on the phone — mostly on the phone — or even sometimes in person, to take a look at why they weren't successful or as successful as the person who got the opportunity to be employed. Sometimes that is not necessarily enough for some individuals, and sometimes the conversation then goes to a hiring manager, which is an opportunity we also provide. Again, dependent upon departments and their abilities to provide these services and their human resources as well — it would vary depending on the department.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. There is one line item where it talks about the decrease of \$2.959 million for corporate funds, but it has \$720,000 for WC premiums expected to increase due to reduced vacancies.

Is the Public Service Commission at the point where policy-related grievances are brought by the Yukon Employees' Union?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The answer is yes, this would be through the Labour Relations region of our department but would ultimately be dealt with by the commissioner at her desk.

Ms. White: Can the minister tell me how many grievances are currently sitting with the Yukon government?

Hon. Mr. Silver: This is a complicated question because if we're talking about whole-of-government policy or discrimination grievances, then that absolutely sits at the commissioner's chair, but there are many different types of calls, I guess. It could be health-related, it could be injury-

related, or a whole plethora of different ones that departments would specifically work with, so just to qualify from the member opposite what is she specifically looking for?

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Let's just say anything that falls within the purview of the Public Service Commissioner and the commission office.

Hon. Mr. Silver: There is a list, and those numbers need to be counted, and that is what the staff are doing right now, so we will get that number to the member opposite.

Ms. White: Thank you very much, and I appreciate that someone is in the background counting — so thank you to them.

Just one question — well, one of many questions, I guess — what will happen to Yukon government employees if they share a work site or if they share a building or — for example — with federal employees, where there is a picket line, and they choose not to cross? How will Yukon government employees be affected if they choose not to cross a picket line at a shared workspace with federal government employees who do have a picket line in place?

Hon. Mr. Silver: If a Yukon government employee chooses not to cross a picket line of another bargaining agent, the provisions within the Yukon Employees' Union collective agreement speak to this issue, and so, those conditions would apply.

Ms. White: Can the minister explain and walk me through what those provisions are?

Hon. Mr. Silver: This would be article 52 of the Yukon Employees' Union collective agreement, and that states that an employee may refuse to cross a legal picket line. Any employee who refuses to cross a legal picket line shall be considered to be absent without pay, and employees who refuse to cross a legal picket line and who are not designated "essential" will not be subject to disciplinary action for such refusal.

Ms. White: I appreciate that clarification from the minister. The agreement is 160-some-odd pages long, and I never would have found clause 53 on my own by trying to word search, so I do appreciate that.

I will look over and see if we have that number of grievances, and if we don't, if I could just ask the minister to do a legislative return for that.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Maybe not a legislative return, but we will definitely get that information to the member opposite.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission?

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 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, 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 10, Public Service Commission, 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 \$55,941,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$115,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$56,056,000 agreed to

Public Service Commission agreed to

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

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: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

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

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — continued

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to welcome to my left Heather Mills, Assistant Deputy Minister of Sustainable Resources, and to my right, Stephen Mead, Assistant Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources and Geoscience Services.

When we were last debating Energy, Mines and Resources in Committee of the Whole for the budget, the Member for Copperbelt South had asked a question about funding for land use planning. The budget for land use planning for this fiscal year is \$1.8 million. A significant portion of that — \$470,000 — is to support First Nation governments for their participation and consultation on land use plans.

I will stop there. I am looking forward to more debate today.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister and welcome his officials here today.

I will just jump in with the response that the minister gave on the \$1.8 million for land use planning and \$470,000 to support First Nation governments in their role. Is that \$1.8 million for the accelerated land use planning or does that include the Dawson regional land use plan as well?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It is for all of the land use planning, so that includes regional land use planning, the work that we are getting ready to do with other nations, and local area planning. Yes, it is all-in.

Mr. Kent: I am not sure if the minister has the number with him or not, can he break that down for us? How much of it is for the accelerated land use planning initiative that is part of the original confidence and supply agreement that has been carried forward to the new one?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: My mandate letter, which directs me to accelerate land use planning — what we have been doing is reaching out to First Nations to initiate the process with them and to sit with the Land Use Planning Commission and talk about an interest in accelerating and look for ways that we can create some synergies. We don't have specific dollars budgeted for that acceleration. We have noted, both on our side and in our conversations with First Nations, the federal funding allocation for regional land use planning that is still remaining. What we have said is that we will work to get these processes started and that we will identify resources as necessary once they are underway and we see a planning horizon on those regional land use plans.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that. I just wanted to ask a quick question for my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge. I believe he touched on this in the supplementary estimates debate, but it's with respect to the Shallow Bay zoning initiative. If the minister can give us a status on that. It was my understanding at the time that he mentioned that there was a flood assessment being done as well, so if the minister could give us a status update on the zoning initiative and the work on the flood assessment.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The flood risk mapping is expected in 2024. That is when it's scheduled to take place. What I have said and still say is that, given the risk levels in this area that we learned through our experience in 2021, it's important that we deal with the issue of flood risk first because there are some low-lying areas around Shallow Bay. Well, even the name of the bay kind of gives you a bit of a hint. That is what we will concentrate on, so we have not done further work on the local area plan. Once we get the flood risk mapping, we will re-engage with the committee and the folks from the area.

Mr. Kent: I will pass that on to my colleague and he can follow up with the minister if he needs to.

I do want to now turn our attention to one of the policy initiatives that we have been discussing in Question Period in recent weeks and that is with respect to the title transfer.

The minister has mentioned during Question Period that the policy, I think, was brought in in 2022. Maybe that is where I will start. I will just ask him to confirm the timing of when the policy changed from being able to transfer title at the clad-to-weather stage to now requiring final occupancy plus an up-to-30-day period for that — beyond final occupancy — before the title is transferred.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, the policy came in in 2022, so this is the second lottery where this new policy has been in place.

Mr. Kent: Can the minister tell us what precipitated the change? Was there a problem with the policy as it existed? I mean, the contractors, home builders, and various stakeholders that I have spoken with about it don't seem to think that there was a problem with the policy as it existed, so I am curious what precipitated the change to this new policy.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The Land Management branch was looking at the situation from the perspective of homeowners. That was where they sought to make this change. The policy — or how it used to be — was that once the building was clad to weather, that is when title could be raised on the property.

The way the lottery works is that it is supposed to be for individuals — Yukoners — to put their names in. It has been, especially as we have had so much pressure on the building system, that contractors have also put their names in the lottery and so they will often get buildings. They want to be able to sell those buildings as quickly as possible, and so the point at which it was previously was at occupancy. If the lottery had been taken by a homeowner, then the situation is different. They would have typically — not always, but you could have a homeowner build the property, but often what would happen is that they contract out that work anyway and they are already doing that contracting work.

The question will still come around title in terms of working with the banks, but when the title was given at clad to weather, what was sought was a couple of photographs. But it's not yet at a point where it's okay for people to be in the building, really. Once title is given, it is our understanding that this is what is happening. Occupancy, then, is a much more standardized moment. It's not final occupancy; it's once the building is considered safe. Occupancy requires an inspection by the city, so it was something that we could piggyback on. That's when we spoke with the city about our decision to make this change. Overall, the change was looking to support homeowners and making sure that things were safe for them.

Mr. Kent: Can the minister tell me then: Were there a number of homeowners who came to the department or to the lands branch and indicated that this was a problem? Is that what precipitated the change? I think, through the motion from one of the Whitehorse city councillors and some of the letters that we have received from industry associations and individual contractors I have talked to, there wasn't any degree of consultation on this before it was changed. Was this precipitated by homeowners or prospective homeowners coming to the government to ask for this to be changed?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will check in with the branch to find out what sorts of conversations precipitated it, but it was a proactive move by the department, from their perspective, to ensure that there was safety. In the first season, when it was out there, we didn't get a lot of feedback. I did get a letter from the member opposite. He asked a second time about whether there was conversation with the contractors — the building community.

Then I sat down and talked with the councillor who brought the motion. Of course, that councillor is also very heavily involved in the construction industry himself and is a

past public servant who has worked on this file over many years. I asked him if he would recommend names within the contracting community to connect with, and he gave me a few names. The department also reached out to the Contractors Association. It was after the fact, but it was when the issues were raised to us by the member opposite and by the city.

What precipitated it was that there were some conversations that were happening around ensuring that this was going to be safe for homeowners, and that it would be consistent and standardized, and that the way that it was happening should try to land somewhere where it would be safe for the homeowners.

Mr. Kent: I think that the minister mentioned in Question Period that his deputy minister was out leading some of the consultations with individuals who are concerned about this policy change, so I'm just curious if he can tell me when he expects that consultation would be finished, from the deputy minister's perspective. Obviously, the City of Whitehorse, I think, has voted in favour of the councillor's motion and is referring it to their housing committee, so there will be work underway there.

When will the deputy's consultation be done? Will the Yukon government participate with the city's housing committee on their review of this situation? Also, just quickly, with respect to the proactive move to this new policy for safety concerns, I am just wondering — if the minister doesn't have this information here today, I would welcome to get it, hopefully before the end of the Spring Sitting — what safety concerns there were? Were there specific safety violations that were done that precipitated the branch to move to this new policy?

Are there some statistics or something that the minister can point to that we can relay to those who are concerned? Obviously, everyone wants to ensure that the homeowners are safe, but I am just wondering if there is some specific data or statistics that the minister can point us to in that regard.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The committee that we are talking about within the city is their land and housing advisory committee. That is a city committee, but I know, from conversations with EMR and Community Services, that they engage with our folks from the Land Management branch and also the Land Development branch. I know that they work back and forth. I am not trying to control how that committee will do its work, so — that motion was passed this past Monday evening at city council. I certainly had several conversations with Councillor Boyd, who was bringing that motion forward. Last week, I sat down with him to go over his concerns. I also had some touch points with Her Worship Mayor Cabott to talk about it, and I said, "Look, we would be happy to hear from the land and housing advisory committee to get their perspectives." I emphasized, when I talked with them, that we would like to hear the city's perspective there, but also from contractors' points of view, and also homeowners' points of view, how long will it take us to do work that we are doing to engage with the building community?

After I spoke with Councillor Boyd, I asked for his suggestions about who he thought within the industry would be

good to connect with, and I passed that list across to the Land Management branch. They are working through that right now; I don't have a timeline in front of us, but what I will say — and I said this on the floor during Question Period yesterday, I think — and my apologies if I have that wrong — but it was during one of the questions that was raised by the Member for Copperbelt South. He now has a motion on the motion paper, as well, to ask us to revert to the pre-existing policy.

I have given the department the direction to please be open to any outcome, based on that dialogue that they have, including reverting — if that is the correct thing — and looking for some other ways to try to protect homeowners to make sure that they are safe. But what I have also said is to look for that — I do not wish to interrupt the current lottery process which is underway, okay. While I appreciate that there are contractors who believe that this is not good from their perspective, it is also true that this is a lottery that, in its original intent, is for Yukoners — not necessarily contractors — to enter into, and then, normally, what should happen after that, is that, once the lottery is done, if there are remaining lots, we put them out to the contracting community at that point. We also have the multi-use and townhouse lots, which are also in the lottery and which are specifically for contractors. Okay, so, I am just trying to make it very clear that the work is underway right now. I will ascertain timelines shortly.

Respectfully, I will just work — I will direct the department to work with the City of Whitehorse land and housing advisory committee so they will have their own timeline. All of this, we will take as feedback on the policy, although I do not wish to change the policy while we are in the middle of a lottery because that could disrupt the lottery.

What I have heard is a shared sentiment from everybody who has spoken on this issue — opposition members, the City of Whitehorse, and our side — that we all want to support getting more lots in Yukoners' hands during this time.

Mr. Kent: Yes, I agree. Obviously, we don't want any disruptions to getting lots to market. If changing this somehow would do that, we certainly wouldn't want to see that happen.

There's just one part of my question that the minister didn't get to, which was on safety statistics. Is he able to perhaps respond to that?

I am going to jump over to some questions on mining. Again, this is a topic that has come up in Question Period recently with respect to the Michelle property. The Michelle property is in the Peel watershed planning region. They had applied to have a YESAA assessment done. The recommendation was sent in December from the YESA board to the decision bodies. I believe EMR is the decision body for the Yukon government on this and there is a federal decision body as well. They recommended that the project not proceed, due to wildlife and First Nation issues that could not be fully mitigated.

My understanding, and the last I checked, the last correspondence on this was from Energy, Mines and Resources — an official in EMR — who said they would be extending the amount of time required to issue a decision document for a

couple of reasons. The first was to conduct an internal review, and the second was to consult with First Nations.

When I asked the minister about this in Question Period earlier, I don't think he had the information at that time, so I am curious if he can give us an update on the status of the internal review and on the First Nation consultations, and when he expects a decision document to be issued for this project.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am not going to have a lot of extra for members today. We are in that internal review. We are thoroughly reviewing the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board assessment and the Yukon Land Use Planning Council analysis before we initiate next steps. Some of those next steps would be the consultation with First Nations. The work is still underway, and I'm not able to go much further today in terms of an update.

Mr. Kent: That letter from the EMR official was posted to the YESAB online registry on this. It's the last document that we can see posted to the YESAB registry with respect to this. It was in early February. It said that First Nation consultations were going to start within the next few weeks. It doesn't sound like those have started yet, so maybe I will just get the minister to confirm that the First Nation consultations haven't started yet, and perhaps ask him if he would instruct department officials to provide an updated letter to the YESAB online registry. Obviously, this is an important issue for First Nations and the company — the proponent — as well.

As well, we heard at Roundup from a number of companies that are watching this as it's the first project to go through the YESAA assessment that is partially located in an integrated management area, which is an area in the Peel watershed that is supposed to be allowed for some levels of development. Again, industry is watching, First Nations are watching, and environmental NGOs and Yukoners are watching, so perhaps an update on this project from EMR to the YESA board on the decision document status — I'm just wondering if the minister would instruct his officials to do that.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I will reconfirm my earlier remarks that we have not begun consultation with First Nations. I thank the member opposite for his suggestions, and I will take it under advisement and talk to the department about that as to whether we should issue an update there.

Mr. Kent: One of the other things that we've been talking about in Question Period is a compensation policy with respect to mineral claims that are alienated because of Yukon government decisions around protected areas or land use planning. I think it was last year, during Roundup, that a number of claims were relinquished in the Peel watershed for relief from assessment on other projects that those companies had in other parts of the Yukon.

But, as I mentioned in Question Period and at other times, that is not going to work for every project — that type of relinquishment. Some will be seeking some other remedy, whether it is monetary or otherwise. I think that one of the issues that I think we would like to see addressed is how the assessment of the value of those claims is done. Obviously, claims that are staked recently won't have seen the same amount of work and investment as those that are historic.

Again, this is something that came up — was brought up to us at Roundup in our meetings, and in meetings in September, when I and the Leader of the Official Opposition travelled to Vancouver to meet with mining companies there. As the land use planning moves into areas more historic and increased investment — like the Dawson area, for instance — you know, there may be other remedies that are sought. When I talk about a claims compensation policy, it is about having an independent assessment of the fair market value of those claims, so that it is not the government deciding and it is not industry deciding — if there is some sort of an independent agency, or however that would work — to assess the fair market value. Is that something that the minister would consider and begin consultations with the affected parties on with respect to a compensation policy?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Okay, a few things. The way it is working at the moment is on a case-by-case basis, where the department sits down with the claim holders to consider their compensation request. I hear the member opposite, who believes that there should be an independent process for fair market value, but in the six and a half thousand claims that have been relinquished, that has been done, working with those claim holders.

There are different ways in which those negotiated agreements land. Sometimes it is opportunities for eligible claim holders to relinquish their mineral claims in exchange for non-monetary benefits. It could be relief from assessment on mineral claims in other reaches of the territory but, to date, we have not expropriated any claims.

I always get a little bit — when I hear the question about the policy, I am careful in talking about it. I will note a couple of other things that may be of interest for the members opposite. The first one is that, under the work that we are doing right now to develop successor mining legislation, the committee is considering how to incorporate clear and fair rules for claims impacted by changes and how they live within the land use process.

The new legislation is considering how these things will change over time, and we will continue to work under our land use planning processes. So far, that system has been working. I am not going to suggest that it is perfect or that it couldn't be improved, but we haven't had that need, as of yet, to develop some sort of policy that the member opposite is discussing, but I don't want to close the door either. I just want to say that it does feel like the department has been working to resolve this on a more one-on-one basis.

Mr. Kent: I think the Premier mentioned, when he was responding to one of these questions in Question Period, that he would look at some of the Hansard from my comments with respect to a compensation policy, and I found some but it goes back to 2002.

At that time, there was a compensation policy developed and in place — put in place by the Yukon government of the day. I was the minister at the time. It was recognized at PDAC that year with an award just because it established fair market value. Obviously, we are not going to get into the specifics of it today, but the minister can dig into the archives somewhere

and find some older documents. Perhaps that policy is still on the books, or it may have been altered or changed, but I know it was in place. I will give a shout-out to a former EMR official, Lori Walton, who was the author of that policy at the time. It formed part of the mine plan that we put forward in 2002 as well.

Again, there is a policy out there that was widely recognized by industry associations, and I would invite the minister to take a look back if he has an opportunity.

I do want to jump over to a quick question about the resource road regulation. The minister will recall, of course, that in the fall of 2021, we made enabling changes to the territorial lands act, I believe it was, at the time, so that this regulation could be developed.

He had said that they were aiming to get it done in the spring of 2022. I know there was recent consultation on it and engagement, so I am just looking for a status update from the minister on the development of the resource road regulation.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will have to look back to what I said. I thought that the last time I rose to talk about this I was saying 2023. We are currently right in the middle of our last public engagement on it. That engagement is due to end a little less than a month from now, on May 8 — that is when that engagement is done — so, hopefully, then coming out after that. So, this year, for the rules.

I thank the member opposite for pointing out about the 2002 policy about fair market value, and I have asked the department to try to dig back through the archives to find that — or if the member has it, please, by all means, please point it out to us. That would be great. I sometimes have trouble finding last week's receipts but that's okay.

I will point out that, more recently — I am looking at an article from 2014. In this article, the Member for Copperbelt South — at that point, I suppose it was Riverdale — at the time was the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. He is talking about cancelling claims in the Peel, and I will quote: "It's something that we think would send shockwaves through the investment community if we were to expropriate or compensate." I think that was what the Premier was referring to. It's around the notion that we have found a way in which to support the relinquishment of claims, and we are doing so right now in that way I was talking about with the one-on-one negotiations.

It has been going well so far. It doesn't mean that we won't have challenges or that we can't improve the system, but overall, I think it's working pretty well. I am happy to see that because it is an important piece of land use planning. I think that some of those early worries when people were trying to understand what this would mean when we got to a final plan for the Peel, or other plans as they come up, is starting to resolve, in terms of Yukoner confidence, investor confidence, et cetera.

Mr. Kent: The last thing I wanted to touch on before I pass the floor over to my colleague, the Leader of the New Democratic Party, is something that was brought to our attention by a project proponent who was doing work in the Ross River territory.

They were sent a note from, I believe, the RRDC, that as their project was located within the Tu Lidlini Dena area of the Kaska Nation and has the potential to impact — and I quote: “Our inherent and constitutionally protected aboriginal title and interests. It is subject to the Tu Lidlini assessment process (TAP), which process must be carried out before you proceed with your proposed project.” It says — quote: “Unlike the Yukon environmental assessment process (YESAA), which is from the Umbrella Final Agreement (to which we are not a signatory) the TAP is grounded in our Dena values, laws, and governance.”

I think that the minister can understand some of the challenges that this is presenting to some of the industry proponents. I just wanted to ask the minister if he is aware of this e-mail going out to proponents who are working in these areas and what the response that we should give to proponents who are reaching out to us should be.

Mr. Kent: Thank you, Deputy Chair, just while the minister is getting some advice from his officials, I would just like to thank those officials for appearing and will now cede the floor, after this response, to the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, the Yukon has the YESAA process. That is the process. I did meet with the Ross River Dena Council and so did the Premier. I am trying to recall whether we met with them together or separately but we did have a conversation with them. They did talk to us about their interest in planning processes, and I said to them then — and there was some correspondence which we followed up with afterwards — that we are very open to having a conversation with them about what those processes can look like. But that is just a dialogue to happen or that is ongoing. To the specific question that the member opposite asked about — what should he suggest to folks who reach out to his office or his team and express these concerns? My suggestion is to please direct them to the department. The reason is that the department works with proponents to support them through the process — how to work on these issues respectfully and understand some of the history and ongoing situation.

I know that it can be challenging but one of the things that we always say — whether that is the Premier, me, or others within the department — is that we want proponents working in a community’s traditional territory — in this case, the Ross River Dena Council — and we want them to have a good working relationship and be supportive of the community itself and be respectful of those governments, so we always encourage that they develop that relationship.

I appreciate the question. I understand the challenges that the member is hearing. I just encourage them to reach out to the Mineral Resources branch as we work to assist proponents.

Ms. White: It is a delight to be back with the minister and officials today, so thanks for being here.

I just want to follow up to start on a point that has been brought up and questioned before. I am not sure if it is going to be the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources or the Minister of Community Services who will need to answer, but I will ask here and move on to put it in the other department if that is the

case. There was a conversation around the development of 6B and 8 in Whistle Bend and how they have gone out to lottery before they are ready to be built on.

I wanted to know if the three-year building requirement will be adjusted to reflect that timeline. For example, if those lots aren’t ready for construction to begin until later this year, will the three-year point start when construction can begin, or does the three-year timeline start when the lot is purchased?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will start answering the question. I know that the department officials will get a little bit more information. Currently the lottery is set to conclude next week, so the folks will get informed and then there’s a little bit of time as some people accept and don’t accept and you move down through the ranks. At some point, the agreements for sale are signed and that’s when the three-year clock starts ticking.

I will just take the other question under advisement and check in with the department.

By the way, I will just make a small comment that I’m sure it is very delightful to be with the folks who are here supporting. We have a good relationship but I am sure that’s the delightful part.

Ms. White: At this point in my time in this Chamber, it’s all delightful. Budget debate is my favourite.

Off-mic, I was reminded — I finally found the word I was trying to say, which is “phases” 6B and 8. “Phases” — I could not find the word to save me.

I guess the reason why I was just asking if there was a consideration of an extension is just understanding that sometimes organizing financing and getting things together and finding a builder — if there was a delay because the lots weren’t quite ready for building — I just wanted to put that out there, also knowing that Whitehorse residents are able to apply for the homebuilding loans — the bridging loans — that used some of it.

I just wanted to put it out there on the record and to let the minister know that was something that we have heard and had been thinking about.

The Hecla Mining Company now owns Yukon’s Keno Hill silver district — the mining in that area. I was under the impression that the expectation is that royalties from that project would start to come in this year. Can the minister confirm if my understanding of that is correct?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Backing up for a second — and I will still seek a little bit more information from the department — but I am pretty sure we just recently went from two years to three years on the building side, so that actually is also a good thing. I still think there is a question to be answered here, and I will ask the department to think it through.

With respect to Hecla, the time at which they move from development to production is their call. Right? But once they are in production, and once ore is being produced, then royalties will start to flow. As well, when they start production, it doesn’t automatically trigger the royalties piece. It depends, as well, on the amount of production, so they will hit a threshold, at some point, and then those royalties will start.

The folks at Hecla have talked to us about roughly when they think they are moving from development phase to

production phase, but that's still their choice. Those are the two triggers that we would need to see for it to happen.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. You know, that is one of the great topics of conversation through the minerals legislation that is currently being discussed as to whether or not we should talk about the extraction or where the royalties should lie. I think it is a really interesting topic of conversation that maybe I will go back to.

Understanding that they are in the process of doing that mine development, Alexco Resources, which owned the property prior, did they ever get to a point where they were producing and that there were royalties paid from that company?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The department is just checking to see whether, under Alexco, they did trigger that threshold. I will say — just one second. Apparently, the department is letting me know that, in 2011 and 2012, they did hit that threshold.

Going back to the conversation around royalties in how we think about the future of mining, there has definitely been a lot of really healthy discussion at the successor legislation committee tables, and yes, there is a lot of conversation about royalties. It is one of the — I don't know — 11 or so themes that is there in thinking about how we shape the legislation on a go-forward basis.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Just because now we are talking about the development of the new minerals legislation, I will just jump right back into that. I was going to touch on it later, but it seems like a good spot.

I went to the first open house in Whitehorse, and I am on the website right now, and I am really happy to see the number of meetings that are still coming — so, Mayo is April — oh, Mayo is tonight — there is a team in Mayo tonight for the minerals legislation conversation, and they continue on, actually, all the way into May.

What I wanted to know is kind of where we are in the process, how all this information is going to be brought back — and the minister can absolutely go back and he can talk about the tables, and which tables will have this information, and where that information will be disseminated, and how that will get shared out — but I wanted to know where we were in the process right now of developing that new minerals legislation.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I went to that first opening night as well, and I saw the member there. I went to the next night to try one community visit as well. I happened to go with a crew down to Carcross, and they were pretty excited. They are a really tight-knit group, that group that's going around. They have a lot of rapport with each other, so they were excited to be going to the communities to talk to folks.

We are effectively in phase 3 of the whole process. The previous phase was identifying needs and interests. This phase is really about engagement and consultation, so what's going to happen is, after the public-facing part of that finishes in the next month or so, there'll be a "what we heard". That will be out there for the world to see but that information will go to the steering committee, which will consider it. Then, based on that feedback and the work that they have done to date, they will recommend a framework and that will go to governments,

meaning the Yukon government and the First Nation governments. That will be at a high level: what the legislation could look like based on all of that feedback.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer, and I think there will be a lot more exciting conversation to be had in the fall about this process, knowing that we will be further along the way.

Just knowing that there is an increase of \$385,000 for the wetlands policy, can the minister just let me know if the wetlands policy falls under EMR or if it falls under the Department of Environment?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The answer is both. Environment, I think, is our first lead on it, but the two departments work pretty closely on it — in a similar way for land use planning. Except, for land use planning, it's EMR that is the first lead, but Environment is very closely involved. Both departments work very closely on wetlands.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that, which means it's fair game. The reason why I just wanted the clarification, understanding that \$385,000 for a policy that didn't fall under EMR would be a lot of money for that; so, when that policy came out at the end of last year, there were two First Nations who came out in opposition to the policy.

On January 17, there was a joint letter from the chiefs of the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation condemning the new wetlands policy, saying that it didn't go far enough. The minister has quotes and news articles saying he is not going to throw it out, but I wanted to know what has happened since those chiefs came out against the wetlands policy, saying that it doesn't actually respect chapter 14 of the Yukon First Nation final agreements that defines the right of First Nations to use water for traditional use.

The Chief of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun is quoted as saying, "The rights to water enshrined in Chapter 14 of our modern treaty are being eroded. This continues a pattern of Yukon First Nations being treated — at best — as stakeholders on our own lands and in our own territories. This policy is inconsistent with a respectful, government-to-government relationship among the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the governments of Canada and Yukon..." That is pretty strong language.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the wetlands policy. Of course, there has also been criticism from environmental groups, so I would just like to open it up right now, and say: How does the minister respond to the criticisms from both the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in? In this news article from the *Yukon News*, it says that the minister says that "... it doesn't make sense to rescind it."

Hon. Mr. Streicker: When we heard those concerns, there were a few things that happened pretty quickly there. The first one was that my colleague and I looked back through the engagement to see how those specific concerns had been raised, considered, and even addressed. We saw that there had been good work going on by the departments in that engagement with the nations around their perspectives. It was clear that both Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in felt that the policy didn't go far enough.

The member is right — let's say the concern — when I talked with Chief Joseph and Chief Mervyn following their press release about it, I did say to them, “Your concerns are saying that it doesn't go far enough and we're not doing enough under these specific issues.” But if we were to withdraw the policy, that would put less protection in place. We are trying to be respectful of a couple of things at the same.

For example, their perspective is that it does not go far enough in certain areas. We then immediately set up teams to work with them and their nations about those concerns to see if we could adjust the policy or improve it from their perspective. That work is ongoing right now. I continue to be in contact with both Nations, although they are both in elections at the moment so I need to provide some space and time there.

The other thing that we did was that we initiated some research. One of the specific issues that was identified as problematic was whether there would be a release of carbon once you disturb the wetlands. Of course, the climate is warming already so we anticipate that there could also be some carbon release as a result of the warming itself. But would the activities that are undertaken release carbon, and is there any way to mitigate that — to plan some remediation that would diminish that or stop it?

We sought to do some research work, working with the environmental non-government organizations, working with the industry, and welcoming the First Nations to work with us on that as well. That outreach happened. We haven't finalized it but those are the ways in which we tried to address the concerns that were raised by the chiefs through their press release following the wetlands strategy launch.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

I guess that one of the challenges becomes — having been elected here for the first time in 2011 and when I was door knocking leading up to that, I had heard from multiple people who had worked on wetlands strategies and had gotten it all the way to the Cabinet table and they had always been denied, because if you said that you are going to protect wetlands, it means that you also have to say that mining can't happen in every area. I am going to go out on a limb and say that it is still the conflict.

CPAWS Yukon came out with a report called *The Yukon's Climate Blind Spot: How mining in peatlands could amplify our carbon footprint*. Even the language that the minister was using today — that disturbing wetlands “could” release carbon — right? There has been research around the globe that says that disturbing wetlands does release carbon, but I guess that we are waiting for other additional information here.

When will the destruction of wetlands be included in the government's greenhouse gas emissions targets? What research has to be done to say that, yes, disturbing wetlands does release carbon? I thought that we — well, I thought that maybe outside the Yukon the reality was that we recognize that disturbing wetlands does release carbon. When will we get to that point in Yukon to either say: “Yes, it does” or “No, it doesn't” — understanding that “No, it doesn't” will be against a lot of other scientific and traditional knowledge and research that has happened. Where are we in that process?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I bet you one of us tabled that report here. I am not sure if it was me or members opposite, but the report that the Member for Takhini-Kopper is just referring to — by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Yukon — I am just going to read right from the front of that report, where it says, “We aren't soil scientists or climatologists — and researching this report proved to be a steep learning curve.”

No one disagrees that, when you pull carbon out of the ground — soil or material that has been in a wetland and set it out on the banks — that there won't be some carbon release. What's really trying to be understood is whether you can re-establish the system that stores the carbon. Some of that has to do with — the scientists who work on this tell me — whether or not you can re-establish permafrost.

Look, those are really important questions. In the meantime, you also have to weigh this against the fact that we have warming happening and there is going to be some release. Okay, if the issue is about this, what I have said, and will continue to say, is that we should discern what that looks like. That is why we are carrying out the research project to guide our best practices.

I respect that the member opposite feels that the policy still doesn't go far enough from her perspective, but there are ways, right within the policy, to designate wetlands of interest or concern. Once that designation is there, then they are no longer areas where you could have any mining activity. Then, it has a hierarchy within it, as well, to deal with the various thresholds and approaches.

Following the launch of the strategy, I wrote to — I think it might have been a joint letter by me and the Minister of Environment — but letters were sent to the First Nations, the environmental organizations, and industry to establish that research. Part of it, for us, isn't just answering the question about whether carbon is released or stored, or whether it can be in the future, it's also that we have already had disturbance of wetlands. It has happened. What do we do now with that? Is there a way to improve those areas through remediation such that they could start to store carbon again?

The purpose of this research is, one, to understand — I won't get into the black-and-white conversation. It's fair to say that, whenever you have disturbance, you are going to have some release, but rather, what are we talking about? We just don't have a good understanding of what that looks like. Number two, are there ways in which to improve or help these areas to become carbon sinks again or in the future? That's important to learn because we have disturbance already that has happened over the last century. We need to know what we can do with that. Is there a way that we could sequester carbon through practices of remediation? Number three, will it help us to understand ways in which we can pull carbon back into the ground, which is so important in how we work around these areas.

We have initiated the research, we are doing it jointly so that we can — what I've said to the environmental organizations and the industry is that I don't want competing research. What I want is that we're all at the table deciding what the appropriate research questions should be and who the

appropriate research team should be so that when we get an answer, it comes to all of us at the same time, to all of the interested parties. That's how we're trying to set it up.

I just want to give a bit of a shout-out to both industry and the environmental organizations for agreeing to come to the table around that. We have agreed to do the funding of that, of course, but it's going to be a shared responsibility to set up that research and select who the team should be to do that work.

Ms. White: I thank the minister. I learned in 2012, when I said that the residential landlord and tenant legislation was 100-percent better than having nothing at all, that I wore "100 percent" every time when the Yukon Party and I disagreed about the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. So, yes, better than nothing, but I learned my lesson there.

I am going to switch right over to the Wolverine mine. Just a reminder to everyone in the House, I actually worked out at the Wolverine mine project for just about a year. When the now-Premier told us that he didn't expect it to stay on as a liability on the Yukon government books because he expected it to be sold, it didn't get sold, so here we are.

What is the cost to Yukon government of the Wolverine mine — I guess we are going to call it "holding" right now, before we start the remediation project?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The amount that we have in the budget this year is just under \$9 million for the site. That \$9 million is for the care and maintenance, as the member has pointed out, but also, part of that \$9 million is to go toward the planning around how a full remediation of the site would take place and what the full steps and price tag are.

I will also note that, in last year's fiscal 2022-23, we invested more significantly up front in water treatment, and the reason for that was to get the cost down on an ongoing basis so that the costs over time would be much less. I am not for a minute suggesting that \$9 million is not a big number — it is. But what we were looking at would have been an even larger number had we not invested more significantly last year.

This is the second time, in my role as a minister, when I use an acronym to refer to — I talk about the water treatment facility as the WTF in Wolverine — because it should not be this way.

We went through a series of very challenging situations with the current owner of the equipment at the site, which got sold to the current owner just as the mine was going into foreclosure and made it so that we couldn't, in that moment, deal with the environmental risks that were building, and thus costs just went up significantly. That is the situation. I am sure we will have more questions. This time I will not say that I am happy to answer; I will say that I care about these answers but am frustrated deeply by this whole situation.

Ms. White: It is frustrating — the whole Wolverine mine, where we are, where Yukon is — knowing that this is a mine that was permitted by the Yukon government and now — due to its bankruptcy, its foreclosure, and its current state — will be the responsibility of this Yukon government and future Yukon governments for possibly a very, very long time.

When I was at that mine site, we dealt with a lot of troubling water issues. I am familiar with what that looks like

out there. It is challenging. I don't expect there to be an easy answer, but I appreciate that there was a big investment last year so a smaller investment is needed this year, but every year there will be the same question: How much is the Wolverine mine costing Yukoners now? That is the unfortunate truth.

I could keep going about Wolverine for quite awhile, but I won't. What I will do right now, though, is — Deputy Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.