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Monday, April 24, 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
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NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Deputy Premier Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Environment; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Minister of Finance; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission

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Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, April 24, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to ask my colleagues in the Assembly today to welcome a group of individuals here with us for our tribute to the late Dennis Schneider. If I could ask for a warm reception here for Yvonne Schneider, who is here with us today, Chris Schneider, Jennifer Szakszon, Michael Szakszon, and Gordon Steele — so, Gordon Steele along with all of Dennis' family, welcome to the Assembly today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Also in the Assembly today is David Jones, our conflicts commissioner, who is here listening in — if we could welcome him to the Assembly, please.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Dennis Schneider

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Today, I rise to pay tribute to former MLA and Speaker of this Assembly, Dennis Schneider. Dennis was born in Flin Flon, Manitoba on June 10, 1942, where he grew up and met his high school sweetheart and later his wife, Yvonne. He began his career with the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company before joining the Saskatchewan division of the RCMP in 1961.

Dennis worked for the RCMP in Saskatchewan for many years before moving to the Yukon to work at the Whitehorse detachment. After 36 years of service with the RCMP, he retired from the force in 1996. Dennis kept his career going by adding real estate agent and school bus driver to his resumé. He was also in the gold business.

He also started a political career in 2000 when he was elected as the MLA for Whitehorse West. He also served as the Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly from 2000 to 2002. During his time as Speaker, Dennis often played referee, using his training as an RCMP officer to give straightforward feedback when debate would get out of hand. He was also known for his empathy and was friends with folks on all sides of the political aisle. Dennis had the gift of the gab and would strike up a conversation with anyone and everyone. He was a hard person to go door to door with in the riding because he

would only do a door or two each night because he loved talking politics with his constituents.

Dennis and his wife, Yvonne, raised three children. The two loved to spend time fishing and boating with their friends and family on Anglin and Athabasca lakes and many others. After full careers in the community and at home, the couple retired together in 2004. They enjoyed their retirement as snowbirds, travelling to Arizona in the winter and coming back to the Yukon for summers.

Dennis was well known and well regarded by his community. Many of his friends and colleagues would describe him as generous and kind-hearted with a wonderful sense of humour. He often shared a hearty and contagious laugh that shook his whole body whenever he found something truly funny.

Dennis passed away in Whitehorse on January 31, 2023 at the age of 80. He is missed and held in the hearts of many.

Applause

Mr. Kent: Dennis Schneider was born on June 10, 1942 in Flin Flon, Manitoba. Flin Flon is a community on the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border known for some notable residents, including former Philadelphia Flyer great Bobby Clarke, the fiery coach of the Minnesota Wilds Dean Evason, and, of course, Dennis. For those who knew him, it makes sense that he is from Flin Flon because, like Clarke and Evason, he had a larger-than-life personality.

It was in Flin Flon that he met his high school sweetheart and future wife, Yvonne. They were married in 1963. Along the way, they had three children who tagged along as they moved from town to town.

Dennis began a career with the RCMP in Saskatchewan, stationed to places like Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Uranium City, and some of the smaller hotspots like Hanley and Climax. In 1986, he moved to M Division in the Yukon where he would finish his RCMP career.

According to a story that Dennis wrote when he purchased a brick that was placed on the Princess Royal Walk at the RCMP Heritage Centre in Regina — I will quote from Dennis' letter: "The C.O. instructed that his priority for me was to develop a modern Aboriginal Policing Program and I would be attending courses at Canadian Police College. By 1988 the update program had been approved by HQ and was well underway. One of the goals was to develop a relationship with Band Chiefs and seek out, with Detachment Commanders, candidates for the Force. I am proud to say that one of the candidates is now a retired female Deputy Commissioner and another is a retired Assistant Commissioner."

In 1996, Dennis retired from the force after 35 years and began a second career in real estate. He also drove school buses in Whitehorse and is remembered fondly by the students and families that he served.

He was elected in April 2000 as the Member for Whitehorse West, later becoming Speaker of the Assembly. I served in this House during that time and remember Dennis as a fair yet stern Speaker wanting to ensure that there was order and decorum in the House.

I won't name names, but the members in those days pressed the envelope when it came to language, phrasing, and heckling, but Dennis made sure we followed the rules and didn't stray too far.

As Speaker, he travelled to a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference in Great Britain, where he met Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip, and Yvonne was selected to have tea at 10 Downing Street. They met the Prince of Wales, now King Charles, in 2001 during his visit to Whitehorse — not too bad for two kids from Flin Flon.

His sense of humour was his greatest asset. His laugh would fill the room. He shared so many stories with me from his time in the RCMP, with the most memorable for me being when he used to dress up as the Safety Bear and visit Yukon schools. I am happy to tell anyone who wants to know this story, but it is not appropriate to tell it here today on the floor of the House.

In 2004, Dennis and Yvonne retired and split time between the Yukon and Arizona, with some time for halibut fishing in southeast Alaska.

For those fortunate enough to know Dennis, we will all miss him greatly. His passing on January 31, 2023 was a sad moment for so many. Dennis is survived by the love of his life and sweetheart of 65 years, Yvonne, sister, Donna Lee, and her husband, Gordie, and children Lorianne Hinton, her husband, Mike, Chris Schneider and Denise, Jennifer Szakszon and Michael, and his grandchildren Andrew, Daniel, Taylor, and Kalli.

So, please accept our sincere condolences for your loss and I hope that you all take comfort in the difference that Dennis made for so many during his life's journey.

Applause

Ms. White: I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to offer our condolences to the family and friends of Dennis Schneider. Dennis lived a life of service. We celebrate his dedication to the health and well-being of others, from his career with the RCMP to his work and time in this House and the many other ways that he put his passion and energy toward positive change.

He will be remembered for the kindness he showed and especially the power of his actions.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Ms. White: I have for presentation the *Final Report of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform*.

Speaker: Are there any further reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House congratulates Sharon Nelson on her election as Chief of the Selkirk First Nation as well as new Crow councillors Samantha Dawson and Ashley Edzerza, Wolf councillors Cody Sims and Patrick McGinty, elder councillor Amy Johnson, and youth councillor Keyshawn Sawyer.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House congratulates Dawna Hope on her election as Chief of the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun as well as Deputy Chief Roberta Hager and councillors Edward Brown, Helaina Moses, Geri-Lee Buyck, and Paul Profeit.

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

THAT this House congratulates Sean Smith on his recent election as Chief of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation as well as the new councillors Charlene Charlie, Charles Chief, Linda Moen, Jesse Ryder, Jolene Smarch, and Ray Sydney.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to request that the Yukon Utilities Board conduct a public review of the impact on ratepayers of the current plan of renting diesel generators to fill the dependable capacity gap indefinitely.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Justice to provide a public update on the government's response to the specific request of the community of Mayo for increased police resources.

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

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of documents showing the status of all tenders regarding seasonally dependent contracts for the 2023-24 fiscal year.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to engage with the Christ the King Elementary School Council to address their concerns with regard to:

(1) upgrades to address the safety of students and teachers due to the physical condition of the school and the inadequacies of the building in a seismic event;

(2) assessment and upgrades to reduce the school building carbon footprint; or

(3) prioritizing the replacement of Christ the King Elementary School in the capital plan.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Wildfire and flood preparedness**

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to update Yukoners about seasonal preparedness. Over the past six years, our government has been busy preparing for the 2023 response season. Signs of spring emerge such as ice melting, swans returning, and snow bulletins being released. We know that the response season is approaching.

As a government, we are monitoring conditions across the territory and we are ready to respond as needed. Emergency response is a team effort, and emergency preparedness is a shared responsibility.

In an emergency, government agencies such as Wildland Fire Management and the Emergency Measures Organization, also known as “EMO”, respond based on the nature and location of the situation. These agencies work closely with Environment, Highways and Public Works, and other departments to ensure a one-government approach.

Last week, the Emergency Measures Organization, Wildland Fire Management, and Water Resources shared a flood, wildfire, and weather update with First Nations, municipal government partners, and opposition parties. They also heard what each community is doing to prepare. Emergency Measures Organization is supporting communities as they take the lead on updating emergency plans, assessing hazards, and providing emergency training. Emergency Measures Organization, First Nation governments, and municipal governments have held joint planning meetings in Mayo and Dawson, and more meetings are planned in the coming months. We are sharing materials across the Yukon to prepare for possible flooding this season. We started in January and have been adding to the materials brought to communities last year. We now have more than twice as many sandbags and superbags across the Yukon as we did last spring. We are also ready with Tiger Dams and two sandbagging machines and we have standing offer agreements in place for more flood-response material if needed.

We are working closely with partners to prepare for and respond to landslides and other hazards caused by high groundwater levels across the territory. Our wildfire crew leaders are ready and we are training this season’s crew members in Whitehorse before they go to fire centres across the territory. As we head into spring, we acknowledge and thank our partners, including Yukon First Nations Wildfire, First Nation governments, private contractors, and response partners in the Yukon and across Canada. I urge Yukoners to visit prepareyukon.ca for more information on how you and your family can prepare for potential emergencies.

With regard to wildfires, I encourage Yukoners to check out the new online wildfire hub that provides information about individual wildfires, wildfire season statistics, fire danger ratings, wildfire smoke, highway delays, and fires near your location. On a final note, Emergency Preparedness Week is coming up, so stay tuned for more information and resources to come.

Ms. McLeod: First of all, I want to start by thanking everyone involved who are preparing for the upcoming wildfire and flood season. Yukoners rely on efforts from staff at Wildland Fire Management, the Water Resources branch, and the Emergency Measures Organization to know what to expect in the months ahead. The information from these groups allows Yukoners to prepare accordingly, whether you live on the greenbelt in Mary Lake south of Whitehorse or near the Klondike River outside of Dawson City.

Every Yukoner lives with one of these two threats. As part of the government’s budget this year, the Liberals announced a \$50-million contingency fund to deal with emergency situations such as fires, floods, and, according to the minister, potential landslides. Now that we are at the end of April, I am wondering if the minister can tell municipalities how exactly the fund will be used. Have clear parameters and criteria been established for the fund’s use? How can municipalities affected by floods and fires access this fund?

Now, as opposition MLAs heard from staff last week, we understand that the preliminary risk forecast for both floods and wildfires this spring is low, but as we all know in the Yukon, that can change with just a week or so of hot, dry weather. In February, we put out a news release outlining the concerns that we have heard from Yukoners in regard to flood preparation. We suggested 15 actions that the government could take to address flooding in the territory. From preventing shoreline erosion on the Takhini River north of Whitehorse to working with Yukon Energy on managing their facilities during high-water periods to developing a territory-wide flood mitigation plan, we put forth ideas on behalf of Yukoners.

Can the minister tell us how many of these have been addressed so far? What type of consultation has taken place with residents in flood-prone areas? Will the government focus on flood mitigation measures in non-emergency response years? I know that there have been both flood mitigation and FireSmart measures undertaken by residents across the territory, and I am wondering if the minister can tell us what FireSmart measures are in the works for this year not only in Whitehorse but across the territory. Will there be a focus on one particular community? Have contracts gone out for this work?

Last fall, Parks Canada announced that it was collaborating with the Kluane First Nation and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations on an initiative to make forests in Kluane National Park and Reserve more resilient while respecting First Nation traditions and culture. This initiative, which includes \$2.5 million in funding over five years, includes prescribed burns at several sites near Haines Junction. So, can the minister tell us what role the territorial government will play? When will this work be done, and how does the government plan on communicating with Haines Junction-area residents about when burning will take place?

Now, I will end by acknowledging the work of and thanking Yukon’s partners when it comes to facing these threats. These include, as the minister mentioned, Yukon First Nations Wildfire, First Nation governments, private contractors, and other partners in the Yukon as well as across Canada through inter-agency agreements. I thank you, and I

note that, on this side of the House, we are hoping for a below-average flood and fire season.

Ms. White: I would like to thank the minister for the statement of seasonal preparedness. It is important that the government, and we as a community, prepare for emergencies such as wildfires and floods. This is especially true when you consider the rapidly changing weather patterns that we face due to climate change. I am pleased to hear that this government is working with agencies such as Wildland Fire Management and the Emergency Measures Organization to ensure a one-government approach to emergency response. It is reassuring to hear that EMO is supporting communities to update emergency plans and provide emergency training and that the Yukon government is working with First Nation governments and municipal governments on preparations.

However, I do have some concerns about the government's response to the increased risk of landslides and other hazards caused by high groundwater levels in the territory. So, what specific measures are being taken to address this issue and what plans are in place to protect communities that may be affected?

This is an increasingly regular occurrence and I hope that the government is working on new guidelines for assessing and clearing landslides. Slides like the one on Robert Service Way or last year's slide on the north Klondike Highway would often be cleared the same day even in remote areas of British Columbia.

It is also encouraging to hear that our wildfire crew leaders are ready and that this season's crew members are being trained before they go to fire centres across the territory. High water is nothing new for Yukoners. Many will remember the flooding of 2007. The government commissioned a report on how to respond better to these situations by interviewing those affected and those involved. In 2021 and 2022, again we had widespread flooding in the territory. So, what are the lessons learned from the last two years of floods? Has such a report been completed for the 2021 and 2022 flood seasons? What lessons were implemented this year and which are still in progress?

So, while the minister's statement does make it seem like the territory is much more prepared this year, is the plan to leave sandbags in flood-prone areas permanently? What is the plan moving forward? What are the lessons learned from these years and what new infrastructure is being planned to prevent floods and washouts?

I would also like to emphasize the importance of community involvement in emergency preparedness. People are looking for information, and I am glad to see a new website with more publicly available information. I encourage all Yukoners to visit prepareyukon.ca for more information on emergency preparedness. Yukoners want to make informed decisions regarding their property and their emergency preparedness and this will help.

I did check out the new online wildfire hub and it looks like a promising tool for informing Yukoners about fire risk around the territory. So, thank you to all of those who worked on these projects and are continuing to keep Yukoners and their properties safe.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to begin today — my response to this ministerial statement and the comments of the members opposite — by thanking them for their thoughtful responses to this ministerial statement. It is an important subject and I really do appreciate the time that the members opposite took in responding to this, because it is an important subject and it is one that is near and dear to all of our hearts, especially as we come into the spring.

I have a few answers for the members opposite. I know that when it comes to wildland fire, we heard about the work we are doing in firesmarting. We are taking proactive measures to limit the impact of wildfires through fuel management such forest thinning, conversion of coniferous stands to deciduous stands, and prescribed burning. We are also promoting wildland fire prevention through education campaigns to reduce human-caused fire ignition and help property owners to protect their homes from wildfire risk. There are some community groups that have some speakers coming up in the near future and I look forward to participating in those.

As an important step for developing community wildfire protection plans that will offer a road map for reducing community fire risk through forest-fuel treatments and community FireSmart projects, plans are prepared in partnership with community leaders and with public feedback to identify fuel management priorities and give guidance to addressing wildfire hazards.

We are proud to have endorsed the community wildfire protection plans for Teslin and Haines Junction in 2022. There are three more communities engaged in this planning process which will help our communities.

As for landslides, which the Leader of the Third Party mentioned this afternoon, it is an emergent topic as we have seen certainly in Whitehorse and on the north Klondike. In many cases, I know that Highways and Public Works is working on some of the north Klondike stuff where it happens outside of municipal boundaries.

Within the City of Whitehorse, the municipality is doing a great job. We just had our quarterly meeting on Friday and they outlined some of the measures they are taking to protect residents. They are doing some cutting-edge — and I will leave it for them to talk about it in more detail — initiatives to measure the cliffs in Whitehorse and it is really good to see.

There is a lot of work happening on this and we are better prepared. We have had an immersion in floods in the last two years. We have learned an awful lot and we continue to take those lessons from a yearly basis, assess them, and then move forward.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to keeping people safe and I think that is important to highlight. As mentioned last week, government representatives shared a technical briefing about flood and fire risks. The purpose of the ministerial statement today is to reiterate that information and once again urge Yukoners to take the necessary steps to prepare for the upcoming flood and fire season.

We want to assure as many people as possible that emergency preparedness planning is well underway across the

territory and we are monitoring conditions very closely. Emphasizing this information also promotes a culture of preparedness and encourages individuals and families to take proactive steps to protect themselves, their homes, and their communities in the event of an emergency. Government will do what it can, but it's up to individuals as well to take some of that load.

As I mentioned, Emergency Preparedness Week is happening in the second week of May and, as always, it's a great time to prepare ourselves and our families for emergencies. This year's theme is "Be Prepared. Know Your Risks". The week begins with Wildfire Community Preparedness Day on Saturday, May 6, and on Wednesday, May 10, there will be a nation-wide test of the Alert Ready emergency alerting system, including here in the Yukon.

The Yukon government will be hosting an information session about how to prepare for emergencies of all kinds. This is an important subject. I thank the members opposite for their interest this afternoon.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Orthopaedic surgery wait times

Mr. Cathers: In a recent letter to patients on the current wait-list for joint replacements, the Yukon Surgical Clinic outlined problems currently facing the local orthopaedic surgery program. According to this letter, the wait time for joint replacement has increased from about 12 months to between 18 and 24 months. This increase of up to 100 percent in the wait time for these surgeries is causing significant hardship for many Yukoners.

Can the minister tell us what the Yukon government is doing to reduce the growing wait times for orthopaedic surgeries?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the question. I have recently met with one of the signatories with respect to the letter that's being asked about. I recently met — actually, earlier today — with the chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board and the CEO of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. One of the topics of conversation was, in fact, this letter and the response that will come.

There is a joint committee set up that includes surgeons, Hospital Corporation staff, and Yukon Health and Social Services staff to deal with exactly the questions that are raised in this letter. I have indicated our appreciation for the letter coming forward and we will be responding in due course. These are issues that we talk about, both in the joint committee and at other meetings like the ones I have described today, on a regular basis. It is part of providing the service that we need to and want to provide to Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: In a letter sent to patients, the Yukon Surgical Clinic team of doctors makes it clear that they are not happy with the significant increase in wait time for these important surgeries. According to those surgeons, the fault for this increase falls squarely on the Yukon government. The factors they cite include — quote: "... the need for further

surgeon support, a lack of beds causing delays in booked procedures, and a lack of funding for joint replacement surgery."

We know that the government shortchanged Yukon hospitals over \$14.5 million last year based on what the CEO told the Legislature last fall and that the hospitals are underfunded again this fiscal year.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the minister listen to the Yukon's orthopaedic surgeons and provide increased funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation to address the rapidly increasing wait times for surgeries?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As I said many times in this Legislative Assembly, we work very closely with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to provide the appropriate funding with respect to the services that they provide to Yukoners and the incredible service that is provided by not only our local surgeons, but by the Hospital Corporation itself.

What I can indicate is that we work very closely with Yukon Hospital Corporation for the purposes of providing the service that Yukoners need. I appreciate that the member opposite doesn't agree with the process, but I can tell you that the Hospital Corporation and our relationship with them — in addition to the budget that we provided to them, which is over \$93 million this year for the Hospital Corporation funding — is a delineation of the value of the relationship that we have with the Yukon Hospital Corporation — but also our expectations that they will provide service to Yukoners that Yukoners need. Much more of that service is being provided here in the Yukon as opposed to people having to travel and the difficulty of having to travel Outside for those kinds of services. Our orthopaedic surgeons are just one of the very valuable services.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the minister that the number she just gave — when the hospital CEO says that they need \$103.5 million, \$93 million doesn't cut it.

In a letter sent to many Yukoners on the current wait-list for surgeries, the surgical clinic team makes it clear that responsibility for this rapidly growing problem rests on the Yukon government's lack of proper support. They specifically highlight a lack of sufficient surgeon support, lack of beds, and lack of funding for joint replacement surgeries as the source of the problems that are affecting so many Yukoners who are waiting for surgery.

The Yukon Surgical Clinic even strongly encouraged patients to contact MLAs directly to raise concerns about the need for more funding.

Will the Yukon government finally agree to develop a wait-time reduction strategy and increase hospital funding to ensure that Yukoners needing surgery don't have to wait up to two years for necessary orthopaedic surgery?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate that the question is somewhat repetitive and that the member opposite isn't prepared to accept the answers that I am providing, but we are working exactly on these issues. I have spoken with the individual — one of the signatories to that letter — personally with respect to the issues that are raised there. We have a joint committee set up for the purposes of dealing exactly with these

kinds of issues — surgical wait times. Surgeons participate in that committee. We have provided the Yukon Hospital Corporation with funding as requested. During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we have budgeted \$93.64 million for the Hospital Corporation O&M services as well as \$12.2 million in capital expenditures for a combined total of \$105.84 million. Unfortunately, the members opposite will vote against that budget.

Question re: Capital plan for schools

Mr. Kent: The Christ the King Elementary School Council has written to the government regarding concerns that they have with the state of their school. Christ the King was built in 1960 and was flagged in March 2022, along with three other schools, by the Department of Education for being at high risk for seismic events.

We know that École Whitehorse Elementary School has been chosen for replacement, but we have heard nothing about the three other schools — being Christ the King, Wood Street Centre, and Takhini Elementary School.

How much money has the minister included in the 2023-24 Education capital budget to address seismic concerns at Christ the King?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will defer to the Minister of Education on the education question, but I saw the letter received today from Christ the King Elementary School Council.

Highways and Public Works is aware of the issue raised about Christ the King Elementary School seismic retrofit and capital infrastructure investments. I have advised my department to look into the matter further with the Department of Education.

The Yukon government takes great pride in maintaining school buildings. We ensure that the safety and well-being of children in our schools is always the highest priority. Over the years, we have invested in and maintained Christ the King Elementary School and we will continue to do so throughout the life of the building. We are committed to working together to plan for future Whitehorse-area upgrades and school replacements.

Mr. Kent: I heard no answer as to how much was included in this year's capital budget to address seismic concerns at Christ the King Elementary.

In 2018-19, the Liberal budget promised that work would commence on Christ the King in 2020-21 and be completed by 2023; however, in the 2019-20 budget documents, the Liberals flipfopped on this promise and removed it from their five-year capital plan and it has not reappeared since.

What work at Christ the King was contemplated in 2018, and why did the Liberals break yet another promise to Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Our government is working to invest in Yukoners by investing in school infrastructure. I spoke quite extensively earlier in this Sitting about work that is underway to work with the Whitehorse school community around longer term capital planning. It is important that we ensure that the portfolio of schools meets the demands of our

growing population and provides modern learning environments for schools to learn and grow for years to come. The government recognizes the fundamental role of schools as healthy, thriving communities. We have consultation underway now that goes through to May 15, 2023. We are certainly looking to work with the Christ the King Elementary School as one of our Whitehorse schools along with the broader community.

We inherited an infrastructure deficit, really, in schools from the Yukon Party. They sat in government for 14 years, Mr. Speaker, and we have a lot of catching up to do. The work at Christ the King Elementary School is one of those schools.

Mr. Kent: And still no answers to the questions that we asked today.

The letter sent to the Liberal government this morning from the school council states — quote: “Over the past several years CKES Council has tried in various ways to engage the Department of Education to improve school infrastructure in a coordinated fashion, from the Catholic Schools Building Advisory Committee, to direct engagement with Ministers and senior departmental officials. However, the communication from the department has been inconsistent and non-committal.”

They go on to ask — and I will quote again: “... CKES would like to partner with the Department of Education to complete a building assessment that will prioritize capital investments...” They have even offered to co-fund the assessment. So, will the Liberals agree to this request made by the school council and partner to complete a building condition assessment at Christ the King — yes or no?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we are conducting right now a long-term capital plan for Whitehorse-based schools. That work is underway. The public can participate in this. One of our school communities, of course, is the Christ the King Elementary School. I received a copy of the letter today, which was cc'd to me. I look forward, of course, to working with the Christ the King Elementary School Council and school community. I have met with them previously earlier in my term, and I met with them through a broad communication prior to announcing the replacement of the École Whitehorse Elementary School and committed to them at that time that we would continue to work with the school communities and that we would be taking the approach that we are in right now, which is looking at the long-term capital planning for our Whitehorse schools.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we did inherit a deficit in attention to our schools in Whitehorse and throughout the Yukon, and we are trying to catch up on that work.

Question re: Dental care program

Ms. White: The dental plan brought in by the confidence and supply agreement and the Yukon NDP is already changing lives. Every week, I hear from Yukoners who are able to go to the dentist for the first time in years and who are able to access dentures and much-needed work on their teeth. This is fantastic, but it could be even better. Some folks have dental benefits through their work, but the amount that they are eligible for is less than the \$1,300 a year available via the new public dental

program. Seniors who have less coverage than the \$1,300 a year already have the ability to apply to the dental program for a top-up. It would make so much sense for people who could also do the same.

So, will the minister open the public dental program to anyone in the Yukon who is under the income threshold and who has less coverage than what this program offers?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The dental program available here in the Yukon Territory is, in fact, a leading service for Canadians and for Yukoners. It is an opportunity for individuals who don't otherwise have coverage. It has been designed, as the member opposite well knows, as a payer of last resort.

There are a number of other dental programs here in the territory that permit coverage for Yukoners — for seniors, for children, and for others who are of lower income — and this is an opportunity to provide dental services for individuals who don't otherwise qualify for one of those other programs. This is again leading edge. We have heard recently that the federal government will also participate in a national dental program. We look forward to the impact that it will have here in the territory as well.

As the member opposite has noted, there is an opportunity to pay extra for seniors in order to provide a top-up to the \$1,300 per year that's available for individuals under the dental program. That is the design that has occurred. At this time, we are not contemplating an additional top-up for individuals who have private dental care.

Ms. White: The dental program is income-tested. People are only eligible if they earn below a certain amount per year, but there is an issue with the way that amount is calculated. Currently, the dental program uses line 150 of the tax assessment to decide who is eligible. For people who are splitting income for tax purposes, which many couples do, this line doesn't adequately represent their earnings; it actually counts the split part of their income twice, resulting in incorrect information when determining eligibility. The pioneer utility grant has already adjusted to this issue and uses another line of the tax assessment to show accurate income. It would only make sense to do the same for the dental program.

Will the minister direct her department to fix this issue?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As I noted earlier, we are very proud of the design and the service that this is providing to what could be up to 8,000 Yukoners through this dental program. It has been designed as a payer of last resort. There are details with respect to individuals who are eligible and the information that they should provide to us. This issue has been raised previously, and we are reviewing the details with respect to the program to make sure that it serves Yukoners to the widest amount and that Yukoners who require critical dental services — which are, of course, health services — are eligible to be covered.

Ms. White: The minister is right. There is lots to be proud about with this program, but rolling out a program this big for thousands of Yukoners is a huge task, so it's okay that it has hiccups. The department has said that it has had this issue pointed out to them and agreed that it is a problem. On line 150, a person who splits their income with their spouse shows their income before the split. On that same line 150, the spouse who

receives that amount from their partner shows their income after the split. It basically counts the split part of the income twice. That results in a total that is more than the actual income of the couple, so I am happy to hear the minister say that there is going to be a look into it.

So, what is the timeline for this government to fix the issue and use the same tax assessment line used for the pioneer utility grant to calculate eligibility for the dental program?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Yukon's dental program provides \$1,300 per year in dental benefits to Yukoners who do not otherwise have coverage. The program will cover dental treatments that are necessary to relieve pain and infection, prevent disease, and restore chewing and social function and will offer coverage for preventive care such as routine dental cleanings and restored chewing functions that may be affected by a dental issue. We will offer full coverage for preventive care, and this is critically important so that individuals can have care before there is a problem. To be eligible for the program, the applicant's gross income must be \$60,000 or less for individuals and \$90,000 or less for individuals with two children or a family of three.

As you can see, this is a calculation that will allow a lot of Yukoners to be covered if they don't otherwise have Yukon dental care. The calculation with respect to how this is done has been set out in the program. As I have said, the issue has been brought to our attention and we are reviewing it right now. I do not have a timeline.

Question re: *Whitehorse Correctional Centre Inspection Report recommendations*

MLA Tredger: In 2017, the Correctional Centre was in crisis. The choices made by the Yukon Party and then the Liberals have led to years of human rights violations at the jail. In response to the scandals, the Yukon government commissioned a report by David Loukidelis to inspect the policies and practices of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre that affect the mental health of clients and to make recommendations to improve the day-to-day operations. There were 40 recommendations made to the government.

It has now been five years since that report's release. How many of the 40 recommendations have been fully implemented?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I was asked about the David Loukidelis report. First of all, I don't agree with the way it has been characterized with respect to the "crisis" upon which it was initiated. I, as the minister, initiated Mr. Loukidelis to come to review what was occurring at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre so that we could — as we do with all such reports — improve services and situations at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

The response that I gave in the review and to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin in Committee of the Whole with respect to the Justice budget was that all of the recommendations from Mr. Loukidelis had been implemented and that, some time ago, we produced a chart with respect to each of those recommendations and the actions that were taken. It was done

by a joint committee of a number of individuals who were responsible for implementing those recommendations.

We have provided that to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin as part of the conversation that we had in the Justice budget and I am pleased to get one for the other member if necessary.

MLA Tredger: Well, I would like to drill down into that — that all of the recommendations have been implemented — because recommendation 35 was about allowing clients to make free phone calls within Canada instead of charging them for local and long-distance calls. This would make it easier for clients to stay connected with their families and communities and to prevent the cycle of incarceration that we often see when folks have no support network in place.

Can the minister explain why this recommendation has not been implemented in the last five years?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, I spoke about this as part of the questions during Committee of the Whole regarding the Justice budget. As I indicated, improvements were made with respect to the telephone service available. There is a requirement to record the calls that are made from the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. Those recordings are kept for a period of time. There is no recording of phone calls that are made by an inmate or by someone who is staying at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre with their legal counsel. A process and a program are necessary for the purposes of recording and dealing with telephone calls to and from the Whitehorse Correctional Centre for individuals. As part of that, there is a nominal fee for those calls.

MLA Tredger: A nominal fee does not sound like free to me.

Another recommendation is recommendation 11, which directs the government to immediately remove the designation of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre as a hospital. As it stands, the jail is technically also a hospital and individuals can be incarcerated as patients without being charged with any crime.

The recommendation was clear. This designation should have been removed regardless of the timeline for a psychiatric secure unit at the hospital.

Individuals being sent to the jail due to mental health issues are not going to get better when isolated and incarcerated. Jail is not the place to expect individuals with mental health issues to get better, no matter what supports might be provided. It's still a jail.

So, why, after five years, is the jail still designated as a hospital?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The *Criminal Code of Canada* has designated the Whitehorse Correctional Centre as a hospital service here in the territory, as I have noted in my opportunities to answer questions during the debate with respect to the 2023-24 budget. Although these don't necessarily relate to that budget, I was pleased to answer questions regarding this.

I spoke personally to Mr. Loukidelis about this following the recommendations back in, I think, 2018 or 2019. I don't recall the date at the moment, but the Whitehorse Correctional Centre statutory designation as a hospital has to be maintained for the purposes of detaining individuals who are found not

criminally responsible or unfit for trial on a short-term basis, because we are currently in the process of building a unit that will better serve such individuals. However, it should be noted that, even with the mental wellness unit that will be built at Whitehorse General Hospital, individuals who require complex care and more appropriate services at accredited psychiatric facilities will still be required to attend or to stay at those facilities. Currently, the Whitehorse Correctional Centre is being used in a very rare capacity to hold individuals who are being moved.

Question re: Seniors housing

Ms. McLeod: Throughout this Sitting, we have raised concerns about the Yukon Housing Corporation's decision to enforce an asset cap of \$100,000 for the eligibility of seniors to stay in Yukon Housing units. At least one of my constituents has received a letter from Yukon Housing saying that they would be kicked out of their unit if they didn't comply with this new policy.

Since then, the minister has told the Legislature that the letter was sent in error and that no one would be kicked out of their units based on this policy; however, it is clear that there have been significant communication issues. Will the minister agree to pause the implementation of this policy and go out and consult with Yukoners about whether or not the \$100,000 asset cap is appropriate for seniors to live in Yukon Housing units?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: So, in 2022, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada's report to the Yukon Legislative Assembly on Yukon Housing identified concerns that the Yukon Housing Corporation has applied different asset cap criteria for seniors and non-seniors in community housing.

Our government recognizes the importance — and I think that members from the opposition have referred to this report on a number of occasions. We are trying to ensure that we are following through and are accountable to the direction of the report. One of the things, again, was around assets caps. Our government recognizes the importance of ensuring that program eligibility is transparent and equitable for all tenants.

Concerning this — we're talking about this one letter in communication. To be very open with the Assembly, that's the only instance that this has been brought to my attention. I will go back to see if there have been any other occasions where there has been a letter that has caused any concern around this issue. I will say to the House that we are in a position to have to make tough decisions. We are trying to look after our most vulnerable citizens and our most vulnerable seniors. Those are the goals of our policy, and I look forward to question 2.

Ms. McLeod: Last week, a local economist pointed out a significant flaw in the Yukon Housing Corporation's new policy that has been posing a \$100,000 asset cap for seniors to be eligible for housing. He noted that if a senior had retirement savings in the form of property, RSPs, or other tangible assets that are common for people retiring from the private sector, those would all count against the asset cap; however, if a senior had a defined benefit government pension of the same or greater value, that would not be counted against the asset cap.

This means that the Yukon Housing Corporation's policy was clearly discriminatory against seniors who had worked their lives in the private sector rather than with government.

So, what steps has the minister taken to correct this flaw in Yukon Housing Corporation's new policy?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, first, I want to just go back to that first question. It's important to note — I'm not going to get into personal details other than that the reason that the letter was sent was because — my understanding is that the individual had an application open in Whitehorse and we were dealing with that client in Watson Lake. We have found this on a number of occasions. There are a number of people who have applications open in multiple communities and so we are working with them to ensure — that has been the only cause of communication. I'm not aware of anything else.

I did read the article. I thought there were some good points. I sat with the president of Yukon Housing Corporation today, and we discussed this. We talked about how to make sure that we have fair practices. What is the difference between somebody having a defined benefit? Is it a RIF where it is locked in? Is it an RSP where there is flexibility and they move for liquidity, of course, but still with some tax implications?

So, I want to make sure that our practices are fair. We are talking about what people, again, have access to this at this time and how we account for this. The reality is that we are going to build out housing and we want our most vulnerable folks to be able to get access to that housing. We don't want to be turning away any folks.

But at the end of the day, these are tough decisions that Yukoners are asking us to make and we want to be fair. I appreciate the question and I have had dialogue and will look at our policy.

Ms. McLeod: Now, whether it is a mistaken communication sent to seniors currently living in Yukon Housing, like the constituent I mentioned earlier, or communication to seniors who are currently on the wait-list for housing and who have been told to start getting rid of their assets or this recent revelation that the system for calculating the asset cap is flawed, it is clear that this policy has some real challenges.

We think that the best thing to do is for the government to pause the implementation of this flawed policy to reconsider the limit of \$100,000 and to go out and consult with Yukoners. Will the minister agree to this?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I get the preamble — the feisty preamble. The first piece of the preamble is that there has been a lack of communication. No, it is a lack of understanding by the member opposite concerning the situation and now facilitating a lack of communication. Second, we are trying to ensure that folks, again, are treated fairly across the board. We have talked about these discussions and policies. The third point was around how we account for — whether it is a private sector person who has gone out and — or anybody, really — has an RSP or, if it is a defined benefit, a pension. So, my response to that was that, yes, we would look at that.

The reality right now is that the folks who are on our wait-lists are folks who are in a vulnerable position and they are way

under these numbers, in many cases, and they need support and help. Would we love to have an opportunity for every senior? Absolutely. But, again, these are tough decisions that have to be made. We know in the House that people want us to look after our most vulnerable citizens. Will we always look to adapt and improve on our programs? Absolutely. Did the member opposite make some good, valid points today on our process and identification of assets? Absolutely. And I will be looking at it.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 712

Clerk: Motion No. 712, standing in the name of the Minister of Justice.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does reappoint Victoria Chan and Carol Geddes to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective immediately; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(3) of the *Human Rights Act*, does revoke the appointment of Leah Robinson to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators, effective immediately.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators currently has seven members, as the terms of two additional members expired on March 17, 2023. These positions were advertised and all applicants were reviewed by the all-party Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees. Two members whose appointments recently expired did reapply and were also considered by the standing committee. The committee recommended that Victoria Chan and Carol Geddes be reappointed as members. Victoria Chan and Carol Geddes have both served one term each on the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators. Both have gained valuable experience over their past term on this panel and will continue to contribute in a positive way.

With respect to the second part of the motion, Leah Robinson, who was appointed to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators back in December 2020, has recently tendered her resignation, and this motion seeks to revoke that appointment in this Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(3) of the *Human Rights Act*.

Should this motion be passed, the Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators membership would be returned to nine active members, each bringing a variety of skills and experience and is an asset to the panel.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of this panel for their dedication and their hard work in serving Yukoners in this way. Thank you also to the Standing

Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees for their deliberations and their recommendations. I look forward to support for this motion to reappoint these two members and to remove one member who has resigned.

MLA Tredger: I will just briefly add our thanks to Victoria Chan and Carol Geddes for their work so far. We look forward, we hope, to having them on this panel again. Thanks to Leah Robinson for her work.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the question.

Motion No. 712 agreed to

Speaker: Motions respecting committee reports.

MOTIONS RESPECTING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 5

Clerk: Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 5, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Mostyn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges:

THAT the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges' seventh report, presented to the House on April 18, 2023, be concurred in; and

THAT the amendments to Standing Order 25 and Standing Order 76 of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly recommended by the committee regarding the ringing of division bells and procedures for concluding debate on Government Bills, be adopted.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will be very brief this afternoon. The Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges has met 11 times since we gathered in the 35th Legislature. This is the fruits of the seventh report. When you come into this House and you work among all of these talented individuals, you realize that the division bell is more than a Pink Floyd album; it is actually a means of gathering ourselves in between votes. So, in order to make the House a little more efficient, we are working to, after many, many years, make this a little bit more abbreviated.

We are also going to make regular Standing Order 76, which governs how we conclude debate on government bills, specifically the money bills. I look forward to the debate.

That's all I have to say this afternoon. I look forward to hearing from the members opposite.

Mr. Cathers: We will, of course, be supporting this motion to concur with the latest SCREP report. I would just note that, as the minister will be aware, there is another matter that has been agreed to by the Committee, and I would seek a commitment from him regarding when that report will be brought forward and tabled, as well as a commitment that

government intends to bring that forward for concurrence as quickly as possible rather than delaying that matter.

MLA Tredger: We will, of course, be supporting this motion and look forward to more efficient workings of the House.

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

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am not going to take debate this afternoon. Let's get on with the vote.

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

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.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 5 agreed to

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 22: Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023) — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 22, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McLean.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I move that Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate that Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am pleased to stand today on behalf of this government to bring forward legislation that will amend the *Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*.

For more than three decades, the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues has played an important role in our territory. The council was first formed in 1987, championed by Margaret Joe, then Yukon's Minister of Justice and the first Indigenous woman Minister of Justice in Canada.

Since then, the council has informed many government policies, programs, and legislation through the lens of women's issues and provided critical advice on how to support women's equity. It has also raised public awareness on issues related to the status of women and advocated on specific initiatives to address them — the creation of the women's legal advocate position at Skookum Jim Friendship Centre being just one example.

The council has clearly demonstrated its value over the years. I am truly thankful for the many knowledgeable and determined women who have served on this council over this time. However, much has changed since the council first started in 1987 and since the last legislation was last updated in 2009. In fact, the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues and the work of the council no longer align with the updated name and formal mandate of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, which was changed in September 2021. It is clear that to optimize the functions and effectiveness of the council going forward, the legislation governing the council must change with it.

I am proud to bring this legislation forward today, which will make key amendments to the existing legislation, restructuring the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues to include issues related to two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual plus. 2SLGBTQIA+ communities were identified as an initiative in our government's 2021 LGBTQ2S+ action plan. I should mention now that the plan uses the LGBTQ2S+ acronym, but we are now using 2SLGBTQIA+. So, throughout my remarks, I will use this acronym unless referring to our action plan.

These amendments also stem from a revision process that the then-Women's Directorate undertook in 2020 where both council members and the women's and two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual plus groups identified ways to improve the council's function. This process confirmed that there is a continued need for a citizen-based council to inform and support government on women's issues, but there is also a need to update the council's mandate and membership requirements.

As a result of this revisioning process, which included substantial policy work, the legislation that we are bringing forward today will do the following: reflect the updated mandate of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate in the work of the council through amendments made to the name and membership criteria and gendered language used throughout the *Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*; ensure that initiatives across the Government of Yukon will be informed by gender equity and sexual orientation expertise from

community representatives; modify financial and accountability reporting to reflect current practices; and add a regulation-making power to the act that the government can make any future changes needed to membership requirements through regulations.

It is my honour to now provide you with more background on the legislation and details on how key amendments will support both the continued effectiveness of the council as a valued advisory body on women's issues as well as establish a more inclusive council that reflects the diversity of Yukoners.

One of the key drivers for these changes is our government's commitment to ensure that our territory's two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer or questioning, asexual, intersex, asexual plus communities are properly considered and included in our government's programs, services, policies, and legislation. For far too long, the gender diverse, as well as those who are experiencing discrimination based on their sexual orientation, have experienced inequality both here in the Yukon and, of course, across Canada. Our government has committed to change this, recognizing that equality for both women and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities will bring enormous benefit for all Yukoners.

We know that true equality can do so much in reducing violence, increasing economic prosperity, reaping the benefits of diverse perspectives in government decision-making, and even promoting peace in societies, and fundamentally, gender equity is a human right as is not experiencing discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

For all these reasons, our government is committed to achieving equity for all Yukoners, both within the Government of Yukon's programs and services and for the territory as a whole.

The legislation that we are bringing forward today is another significant step toward true inclusion, but it is not the first that we have made and it can't be the last. In 2017, I was first given the mandate to work with the Minister of Justice and other colleagues, such as the Minister of Health and Social Services, to review the Government of Yukon's legislation, policies, and practices to ensure that government was meeting the rules of social standards for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. That same year, our government amended the *Human Rights Act* and the *Vital Statistics Act* to protect Yukon trans and gender-nonconforming individuals from discrimination.

A year later, we passed the *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*, which replaced potentially discriminatory and gendered language from nomination and membership requirements of four Yukon boards and committees with language that supported gender diversity.

Then, in 2019, my mandate to improve inclusion was furthered when we began work on a government action plan. Two years later, in 2021, we released the LGBTQ2S+ *Inclusion Action Plan*. This plan identifies more than 100 initiatives to make government programs and services more inclusive and accessible to two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning, intersex, and asexual communities. The action plan was developed after an extensive engagement on

inclusion, which engaged the public and the Yukon 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations.

A priority action item of this plan was to change the name of the Women's Directorate to "Women and Gender Equity Directorate" and expand the directorate's mandate to reflect its work to further equity for all genders and sexual orientations. Our government completed this action item in 2021. Tied to this action item was another that I mentioned at the onset of my remarks today — restructuring the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues to include issues related to 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

The intention of tying these two action items together was to ensure that the council's work mirrored the changes to the Women and Gender Equity Directorate.

The legislation that we are bringing forward will achieve this commitment through amending the act's title and gendered language and the mandate for the council and introducing regulation-making power to the act.

These regulation-making powers are significant because they will ensure that government can respond to the council's needs and larger circumstances as they evolve. Our intention is to use the regulation to outline criteria for the council's membership. This will give government more flexibility to adjust the regulation as needed so that more Yukoners with experience related to gender diversity and sexual orientation can join this important advisory body.

We will also use the regulation to strive to have members reflect the diversity of our territory. We hope to have members with expertise and experience with issues and with organizations related to gender equity for women and gender-diverse and sexual orientation. We also hope to have members with expertise or experience working with diverse equity-seeking groups on boards and/or providing advice to government.

In bringing forward the legislation today, we are both following through on a commitment made in the action plan as well as supporting our government's larger commitment to improving inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ Yukoners.

Another key reason for bringing forward these amendments is to ensure that the council continues to work in a way that optimizes its potential advisory role for Government of Yukon while reducing potential duplication with the work of other organizations.

As I mentioned in my introduction, the council was established in the late 1980s at a time when there were few gender equity-seeking organizations in the Yukon. Today, the Yukon not only has 13 individual agencies or stakeholders, we also work to increase women's equality in the territory.

There is also an umbrella group that these organizations are a part of — the Yukon Women's Coalition. The number of organizations that work and advocate on issues related to the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities has also tripled since the 1980s; however, sometimes the council's and coalition's work, as well as the work of individual gender equity-seeking organizations, can overlap. This is particularly true when it comes to raising public awareness of gender equity issues.

For this reason, as well as the desire to ensure that the council better represents Yukon's diversity, the legislation we are bringing forward will amend the function of the council. In future, the council will have the mandate to review both gender equity issues for women and the gender diverse, as well as issues related to equity for individuals who may face discrimination because of their sexual orientation.

The legislation will also expand the council advisory function for government by allowing the council to not only advise on issues directed or referred by the minister responsible, but also on issues brought forward by other ministers. This approach recognizes that the determinants of gender and sexual orientation equity are complex and span fields of health, justice, education, and more. We anticipate that these two changes to the scope of the council's work will ensure that the council, going forward, can advise on women's issues, gender diverse, and sexual orientation more broadly. It will also expand the council's advisory role to other government departments, which will support our government's holistic approach to ensuring that our services, programs, policies, and legislation are inclusive.

Our government remains committed to furthering women's equity. We are also firmly committed to ensuring that our territory's two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual plus communities are properly reflected and included in our government's programs, services, policies, and legislation. This legislation is about realizing the full potential of the council as a key citizen-based advisory body to the Government of Yukon. It's also supporting the council's ongoing work as a valued advisory body on women's issues as well as establishing a more inclusive council that reflects the diversity of Yukoners.

Truly, the legislation that we are bringing today is a significant step to making the Yukon more inclusive of all genders and sexual orientations while ensuring that the council can still advocate and advise on women's issues.

It is another milestone in our work to create a truly inclusive Yukon, and a truly inclusive Yukon will benefit all Yukoners.

Ms. Clarke: The Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues, or YACWI, provides a valuable resource for advancing women's equality in the Yukon. Of course, with the expanded mandate of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, it makes sense to have some expanded board resources for the LGBTQ2S+ community. However, I do have some concerns around merging these issues into one board, as is proposed by this legislation.

The Yukon Party felt that it would be more appropriate to have two committees. The legislation should maintain YACWI and the important role that they have in advancing women's issues in the territory and it should establish a new committee focused on priorities of the LGBTQ2S+ community. The issues and priorities for both groups deserve attention. However, it has been indicated that there is an amendment being proposed to accomplish this. With that expectation, the Yukon Party will be voting for the bill at second reading.

We look forward to seeing the proposed amendment and understanding how it will address those concerns.

MLA Tredger: I remember first hearing about this — I was actually the president of Queer Yukon at the time and the consultations were happening about this project. That was probably, I think, about three years ago now. We sent a couple of people on a day when consultation was going on. Both were masculine folks, and they came back and I said: “Well, how was it?” They said: “It was good, but it was weird to be men in a room of women talking about a bill about women’s issues.”

That, I think, in some ways sums up my concerns about this bill. I do appreciate the need for the ministers to be advised by a council that can speak to LGBTQ2S+ issues, but I am not convinced that one council can do both of those things — both women’s issues and queer and trans issues — because they are not the same group of people. Of course, there are people who fall into both of those communities, but everyone does not. They have overlapping issues that connect both communities, such as gender-based violence. They also have issues that are really unique to each of those communities.

I was trying to imagine what this council would look like. So, imagine, for example, that the council was made up of entirely of just straight women and then it was giving ministers advice on 2SLGBTQ+ issues. I think it is pretty obvious to all of us that this shouldn’t work.

Similarly, imagine a council that was entirely gay men. It should probably not be giving advice to the ministers on women’s issues. I know that it would not be the goal to have a council that’s all one or the other, so a more likely example might be half and half. Imagine a council made up of half just cis straight women and half gay men. How is that council going to function together to provide that advice? Why are both those parties having equal weight when it comes to issues that only concern half of them? I just don’t see how that’s going to work.

I also worry a lot about eroding the mandate of the council to specifically address women’s issues. It’s not a new fight, but feminism — I don’t know if it’s getting more popular. There is still a lot of our society that doesn’t want to engage with women’s issues and that doesn’t want to hear about them. So, I really worry about taking away part of the mandate of this committee that is supposed to be expressly addressing those issues.

Similarly, when you think about queer and trans rights, I hate to say it, but not all women are allies to those communities. I really worry about a committee that is half or more people who are not guaranteed to be allies to that community.

I also wonder about what issues that committee can address and who will decide. What if the ministers decide that they only want to bring LGBTQ2S+ issues to that committee and deprive the women on that committee of the chance to speak to issues that are important to them or vice versa?

So, I do really appreciate the goal of this legislation. I think it is important to have a way for the minister to be advised by people on LGBTQ2S+ issues, and I think it’s incredibly important that we retain the capacity of the act to advise

specifically on women’s issues, but I don’t think this piece of legislation is achieving those goals right now.

Just going back to the consultation from several years ago, at the time, there was a lot of concern as we were discussing what this should look like in the queer community and queer and trans communities — about what kind of capacity there was to participate in a council like that. A lot has changed in even three years in the queer and trans communities in the Yukon. Capacity has increased really exponentially. It has been very, very exciting to watch and to be part of.

I think it might have felt really overwhelming and impossible three years ago in terms of finding people to be part of a committee like this. I don’t know if that is still the case. I think there is lot more capacity out there.

We will support this at second reading, but I have a number of questions for the minister in Committee of the Whole, and I look forward to that discussion.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like to thank my colleagues in the House for their consideration of the bill and the valuable questions they have posed, which I look forward to addressing during Committee of the Whole as we get into some more back-and-forth debate.

Citizens-based advisory councils play an integral role in shaping government services, programs, policies, and legislation. They bring issues to us that require government attention or action. They provide careful analysis and advocacy through the lens of the people they represent. Since its inception in 1987, the Yukon Advisory Council on Women’s Issues has certainly shown this.

I would like to again thank all of the council members, past and present, for their dedication and advice over the past three decades. However, again, much has changed in the Yukon since Margaret Joe brought forward and championed the creation of this council. The legislation that we are bringing forward honours the vision that led to the creation of the council while responding to the changes and aligning with our government’s commitment to ensure that 2SLGBTQIA+ communities are properly considered and included in our government programs, services, policies, and legislation.

Simply put, this legislation will expand and modernize the council to better reflect the pursuit of equity for all genders and sexual orientations in the Yukon. Our government identified this need to restructure and rename the council in our LGBTQ2S+ *Inclusion Action Plan*, which came out of significant public stakeholder engagement.

This need was supported through the revisioning process for the council which was carried out in 2020. We also recognize the need to amend the legislation so that it mirrors recent changes to the name and structure of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. Going forward, the Minister’s Advisory Council on Women and Gender Equity will continue to have the mandate to advise and advocate government on

issues related to women's equity. This crucial function of the council will go unchanged. What will change though is that the council can also provide advice and advocacy to government on issues related to 2SLGBTQIA+ communities' equity as well.

The legislation we are bringing forward will allow this through key amendments to the current act, updating the council's mandate and the act's title to include gender equity and sexual orientation, removing gendered language, and introducing a regulatory function in the act that will be used to update the council's membership criteria. These changes are about increasing representation and inclusion. They are about considering the diverse needs of Yukoners from a variety of backgrounds and life experiences. Importantly, the legislation and the amendment we are bringing forward will also support the council by streamlining its functions in a way that expands its advisory role for government.

Going forward, the council's mandate will be clearer, more focused, and less likely to duplicate the work of other gender-equity seeking organizations in the territory. The council will have the mandate to advise the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate on issues related to equity related to women and the gender diverse as well as equity for individuals who may face discrimination because of their sexual orientation. The legislation will also expand the council's advisory function for government by allowing the council to not only advise on issues directed or referred by the minister responsible, but to advise other ministers across the Government of Yukon on issues relevant to gender and sexual orientation equity. This approach recognizes that determinants of gender and sexual orientation equity are complex and span fields of health, justice, education, and more.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all members for their thoughts and contributions on how to make our laws more inclusive and equitable for all Yukoners, and I look forward to further debate in Committee of the Whole —

Interruption

Speaker: Order, please.

Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

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.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 22 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 22: Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Deputy Chair, I am very pleased to speak in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 22. The *Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Gender Equity Act* is the new title that the legislation we're bringing forward gives to replace the current *Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*. I have with me today Clare Daitch from the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, who is acting director, and Bhreagh Dabbs, the legislative drafter for the bill. Welcome and thank you for being here with us today.

As I mentioned during second reading, our government identified updating the *Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act* title and mandate in the LGBTQ2S+ action plan. This plan, which came out of significant engagement with the

public and stakeholders, identifies more than 100 initiatives for the government to take so that its programs and services are more inclusive and accessible to two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual plus communities, or 2SLGBTQIA+.

The action plan ties the initiative to tie the YACWI act and mandate to another significant initiative, changing the name of the Women's Directorate and updating its mandate to better reflect the work the directorate was doing that touched on inclusivity for all genders and 2SLGBTQIA+ Yukoners. I am proud to say that we accomplished this initiative in September of 2021 when the Women's Directorate became the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. Now we are here today to move forward on the action plan's directive to restructure the council so that its mandate includes issues related to 2SLGBTQIA+ Yukoners. This legislation also moves forward on the revising process for the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues that was carried out in 2020.

I will just take note now of some of the comments that were made in second reading. I intend today to introduce key amendments to the act in order to establish two subcommittees within the council. Each subcommittee will have a mandate to provide the government with advice on gender equity, but one will focus on equity for women and one will focus on equity for gender diversity, as well as equity for people who may face discrimination because of their sexual orientation.

These amendments will ensure that a full range of perspectives related to gender equity, diversity, and sexual orientation are considered when considering government policies and programs and provide advice to ministers.

The legislation I am speaking to today will do the following: reflect the updated mandate of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate through amendments made to the act and the council's name and gendered language used throughout the *Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*; ensure that initiatives across the Government of Yukon will be informed by gender equity and sexual orientation expertise from community representatives; establish two subcommittees, each with a mandate to provide the government with advice on gender equity, but one with a focus on equity for women and one with a focus on gender diversity, as well as equity for people who may face discrimination because of their sexual orientation; modify financial and accountability reporting that reflect current practices; remove the council's membership requirements from the act while adding a regulation-making power to the act so that any future changes to membership requirements can be handled through regulations.

But why is there a need? The legislation has two primary goals, as well as minor updates. The first overarching goal is to respond to Yukon's changing context for equity-seeking organizations. Since the council was first established in 1987, this landscape has changed substantially. In our territory, there are now three times as many women's equity-seeking organizations, as well as three times as many 2SLGBTQIA+ not-for-profit organizations, as there were in the late 1980s.

There is also the Yukon Women's Coalition, made up of 13 women's organizations, which has provided advocacy and

advice on justice-related programs, services, policies, and legislation since 2010. Currently, there are now 100 Government of Yukon boards and committees with 1,000 members. Many of these boards and committees struggle to find and retain membership, and the current legislation governing the council's membership and composition requirements does not help mitigate this reality.

The current legislated requirements for the council's makeup are set out directly in the existing act, and any change needed requires a change to the act itself. The result is an inflexible act that cannot easily adapt to the territory's ever-changing context. In addition, the current membership requirements stipulated in the act restrict members to women only and stipulate further membership requirements. Unfortunately, in our current Yukon context, these requirements can make it difficult to meet the challenge of finding members who meet the act's requirements; these requirements can prevent the council from working effectively.

The legislation we are bringing forward aims to change the council's current context and mitigate the challenge of meeting the existing act's membership requirements. It will do this by updating the language in the act that pertains to membership requirements and by introducing regulation-making power in the act itself. This regulation-making power will create greater flexibility in the act by allowing government to make any future changes to the council membership requirements without having to open up the entire act.

In addition, the legislation we are bringing forward will address the potential mandate overlap between the council and other equity-seeking organizations in the Yukon by streamlining and revising the council's functions.

Effectively, this legislation removes the functions of the council that duplicate those of gender equity-seeking organizations. In particular, it removes the council's current function to raise public awareness on women's issues while strengthening its advisory role across government. This streamlining of the council's mandate will ultimately support the council in being more effective in its work as a valued advisory body to government.

The second broad goal is directly tied to the LGBTQ2S+ *Inclusion Action Plan* and our government's larger vision of healthy, vibrant communities where all Yukoners feel safe, included, and able to live their best lives.

As I have mentioned in Committee of the Whole before, when bringing forward the *Gender Diversity and Related Amendments Act*, supporting greater inclusion and equality of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners in our communities is an important step toward realizing this vision, and one of the strongest tools that we have for supporting such change is legislation. This legislation will support the change that we need to make happen. It will do this by updating the existing legislation title and the council's mandate and function — again, introducing two subcommittees through the council with one focused on equity for people who identify as gender diverse and for people who face discrimination because of their sexual orientation and the other focused on equity for women and establishing a

regulation-making power in the act that will identify the council's membership and composition requirements.

These updates also include removing gendered language in the current act that stipulates that women must make up the council membership. Going forward, it is our intention to use a regulation to allow the council to include members of different genders and sexual orientations.

It also updates and streamlines the council's mandate. The focus of the council has been changed from the status of women alone to equity for all genders and sexual orientations. The legislation will also expand the council's advisory function for government by allowing the council to not only advise on issues directed or referred by the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, but also to advise other ministers across Government of Yukon on issues relevant to gender and sexual orientation equity.

This shift in approach recognizes that the determinants of gender and sexual orientation equity are complex and span fields of health, justice, education, and more. Ultimately, this change will optimize the effectiveness of the council as an advisory body. All of this work is about recognizing the equity of both women and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and will bring enormous benefit for all Yukoners. It is also about recognizing that gender equity and protection from discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation are foundational human rights.

This legislation shows that our government is committed to revisioning the council in a way that maximizes its effectiveness, going forward. It continues to support the council's focus on women's issues while expanding its role to also advise on issues related to equity for the gender diverse, as well as those who may face discrimination for their sexual orientation.

I have heard my colleagues raise concerns about the legislation. I would like to take some time to address the key concerns I've heard. One of the issues brought forward has been a concern that we are the first jurisdiction in Canada to give such an advisory council a mandate that includes both women's issues and issues facing the gender diverse and those who may face discrimination because of their sexual orientation. This is true. The model we are presenting will be unique; however, many similar bodies across Canada have made changes to be more inclusive of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in recent years. Significantly, in 2018, the Status of Women Canada transitioned from an agency to a federal department with a new name: Women and Gender Equality Canada. In 2021, the mandate for the department was expanded to include sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. Women's advisory bodies in other Canadian jurisdictions have also become more inclusive of gender identity in their work. For example, two of three bursaries provided by the Advisory Council on the Status of Women in Prince Edward Island include those who identify as women. This council also includes a section on diversity and inclusion that highlights advancements in the integration of 2SLGBTQIA+ issues into services in the Equality Report Card.

Another concern brought forward has been whether the council will continue to focus on women's issues given its new broader mandate. Let me assure you that these changes are about recognizing that our understanding of women and gender issues has shifted. They are also about recognizing the breadth and depth of issues that impact women, the gender diverse, and those who face discrimination because of their sexual orientation.

In our targeted engagement in 2020 with the YACWI members past and present, the Yukon Women's Coalition and 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations all demonstrated ongoing alignment with advancing gender equity.

Expanding the mandate of the council to be inclusive of a broader understanding of gender, as well as discrimination based on sexual orientation, will not prevent the council from advising government on programs, policies, or legislation concerning women's equity. The council will continue to focus on women's issues and strive to be representative of diverse perspectives and identities.

Finally, I have heard some questions regarding the council's potential composition. Will the cisgender men or 2SLGBTQIA+ men be able to join the council? How will we ensure the council's makeup is truly diverse? As I have mentioned before, we will use the act's new regulation-making power to outline criteria for membership. These regulations will allow for flexibility and will enable more Yukoners with experience related to gender diversity and sexual orientation to join the council. We will strive to have members reflect the diversity of our territory. We hope to have members with expertise and experience on issues. As I have mentioned today, we all hope to have members with expertise or experience working with diverse groups on boards and/or providing advice to government.

I would like to thank my colleagues again for the opportunity to speak to Bill No. 22 and the *Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Gender Equity Act*. I thank, of course, Clare and Bhreagh for being here today. Citizen-based advisory councils truly play an integral part in shaping government services, programs, and policies. The Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues has clearly shown its value over the past 30 years in advising and advocating on women's issues, though it has faced its share of challenges.

Again, I do not take any of these amendments lightly. Margaret Joe was very much one of my role models in life, and I really respect the time and era when she brought this council forward. I hold my hands up to her, and I think she would be proud that another Indigenous woman is bringing forward amendments to align with the current reality of our territory.

This legislation is a positive step for the council with the real potential to revitalize its role as a key advisory body to government. The council's updated mandate will give it an ability to not only advise the minister responsible for women and gender equity but any minister.

This is a significant shift in approach that recognizes that determinants of gender and sexual orientation equity are complex and span the fields of many other departments within our government. The mandates will also continue to allow the

council to advise on women's issues and equity, while also allowing to provide expert advice on issues affecting two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual plus Yukoners. This marks another step forward in our territory toward true inclusion of all Yukoners.

Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

Deputy Chair: At this time, I will ask if any private member wishes to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole, as I would like to take part in debate.

Member for Takhini-Kopper King rises

Acting Chair (Ms. White): Order, please.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you to those joining us in the House today.

I only have a few questions for the minister. How many members are there currently in YACWI? How many times did they meet? How much are they funded?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. Currently, the YACWI board has four members. They can have up to eight members and a minimum of two; that is the way the act is structured right now.

They have had five meetings in 2023, one of them being a special meeting on March 30.

The YACWI budget for 2023-24 consists of two allocations: One is for meetings and administration, and it is a total of \$18,500, and an annual forum allocation of \$28,000.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the minister for that answer. Likewise, does the government anticipate that the newly created committee on gender equity will have the same structure and funding? Also, when does the government plan to have it operating? Will the funding appear in the fall supplementary?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Based on recent expenditures, YACWI could hold more than double the number of meetings and remain within its current budget allocation. As I have stated — and this is one of the issues that we are bringing forward — we have really struggled to have a full membership with this council and we are striving to have a full council. This would allow the additional subcommittee members to, as deemed necessary by the council — we will, if we are in need of further funding within the 2023-24 allocation, strive to find from within and revisit in a future budgeting cycle for the next fiscal year.

MLA Tredger: I will start today by thanking the officials for being with us today. I appreciate their time very much. I want to also thank Margaret Commodore for getting this started. It has been a real honour to represent the riding that she represented, and I just think she is an incredible woman with such vision for the future. I think that has really been borne out by the fact that we are still discussing this act today and it is still relevant today.

So, the minister mentioned that there was an amendment coming about subcommittees. I am wondering if she could talk more about those subcommittees and the intention for them.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, I will be proposing three amendments today when we get to line-by-line debate that will

essentially create two subcommittees on the council. One will focus on gender equity for women and one will focus on gender equity for the gender diverse, as well as equity for individuals who may face discrimination because of their sexual orientation. The council will work together to determine when the entire council will advise on particular issues and when a subcommittee will advise.

On why the amendments are being made to the act after it was introduced in the House — amendments were going to be made to the structure of the council to create two subcommittees with that focus that I have already spoken about a number of times. We are proposing these changes to acknowledge that cisgender women, transgendered people, and people with diverse sexual orientation may all have differing perspectives and priorities. These amendments will be introduced to address concerns raised regarding the full inclusion of these groups. Dividing the issues of women, transgendered people, and people with diverse sexual orientation into two separate councils could be problematic, as they often intersect. The subcommittee structure allows the council to use its discretion on when to work separately and when to come together on issues.

I think it's an eloquent solution to continue to have the focus on women-specific issues and those that are around gender diversity and sexual orientation and also have the ability to bring the two committees together on areas where they may wish to advise together.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. I really appreciate this response to some of the concerns that we raised. I had mentioned in my response to second reading that I was very concerned about trying to take two groups of people whose interests sometimes overlap but not always and kind of mash them into one group. So, I think this is a really good way of making sure that it's understood that they are two different groups of people.

I have a couple of follow-up questions. The first is: How will it be decided who sits on which subcommittee? Will that be an appointment or will that be done by the board itself? I will start with that question.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Currently, we put a call out for where we have vacancies to this council and folks will then apply to be considered for the council. It then goes by recommendation of the Minister of the Executive Council and then an appointment is made. The intent is to have folks come forward for membership to this newly amended council and be appointed as a member, and then the council will make determinations about the subcommittees that folks will sit on.

So, the other part of your question is that the council may establish its own procedures for determining which issues are to be considered by the council as a whole and which issues are to be referred to a subcommittee.

MLA Tredger: So, just to make sure I understand, people are appointed to the board as a whole and then it is up to the board to select who sits on which subcommittees; is that correct?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have to make a correction in terms of that last answer. Each subcommittee established under

section 4.0 is to consist of not less than two and not more than six members appointed by the Commissioner in Executive Council from among the members of the council.

MLA Tredger: So, the minister appoints members to the board and to the subcommittees, if I understand correctly. Would there be any members at large who wouldn't sit on either subcommittee or would all members sit on a subcommittee? Is it possible for a member to sit on both subcommittees?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I think we are getting into some of the proposed amendments that haven't been brought to the floor of the Legislature yet. When we get into line-by-line debate, we will be making a proposal around the composition, which is similar in some ways, but there is a distinct change in the overall composition of the council, the minimum and maximum, and how folks will come to either respective subcommittee.

MLA Tredger: Okay, I will hold my questions about the subcommittees until later, but I would note that they are a really important change to this piece of legislation. I will have more questions about those later.

So, with the change in the mandate of the board from doing a number of activities such as sharing public information to being focused solely on delivering advice to the minister, can the board make their advice public if the minister doesn't follow it or disagrees with it?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The council writes a report yearly — an annual report — that is tabled in the Legislative Assembly. This is part of the act and will remain. So, there will be opportunity for folks to talk about all of the work that they have done over the year, including areas that they want the public to be aware of.

MLA Tredger: That's really great to hear, because I think that is a really important role of the board.

I am wondering about the procedures now that multiple ministers might be seeking advice from this council. How does that work logistically? Would they send all their questions to the Women and Gender Equity Directorate that would compile them and send them to the board, or would they meet individually with the board? I am wondering what that's going to look like in practice.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, this is an expanded role. The council will advise on emerging issues related to gender equity and sexual orientation across Government of Yukon through these two subcommittees and to the council as a whole. The council will work together to determine when the entire council will advise on a particular issue and when a subcommittee will advise.

The Women and Gender Equity Directorate will continue to liaise and coordinate with other departments when the council brings forward issues related to work of other departments and vice versa. It will be done through the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. This is found in section 3, clause 5 in the amended act.

Further, the council will continue to meet quarterly. That will still be part of the way in which the council meets, unless

there is a need to meet more frequently, which can also be arranged.

MLA Tredger: I only have one more question for this part, although most of my questions did focus on this issue of what the council's mandate is and whether it is about women's issues or LGBTQ2S+ or both. Most of my questions will come up in line-by-line debate, but I did want to ask: Are the leaders of women's organizations or LGBTQ2S+ organizations eligible to sit on the council? So, for example, if — I don't know — the executive director of one of the organizations that is part of the women's coalition wanted to sit on the council, would that be allowed?

Ms. McLeod: Yes, absolutely. I think that is one of the goals of the amended legislation — to have some cross-population from the equality-seeking organizations, whether they are women or 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations, to be part of this newly amended council.

Acting Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause-by-clause.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Clause 3 agreed to

On Clause 4

Clause 4 agreed to

On Clause 5

MLA Tredger: So, under clause 5, I am looking at section 2(c)(i)(d). It says that one of the functions of the council is: "to advise the responsible Minister, or any other minister, on any issues related to gender equity or equity for individuals who may face discrimination because of their sexual orientation that the council considers advisable."

I understood this to mean that the council could bring things forward to the minister that the minister had not initiated. Is that the correct interpretation of this clause?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, that is the intent of this clause.

Acting Chair: Is there any further debate on clause 5?

Clause 5 agreed to

On Clause 6

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I had mentioned previously in debate today — earlier in this part of our debate — as a result of feedback that we received since tabling the bill, I felt it was important to expand the bill in key areas — proposing the introduction of two subcommittees on the council that gives the council greater clarity on how it will provide advice to government. Established would be two subcommittees, each with a mandate to provide government advice on gender equity, one with a focus on equity for women and one with a focus on gender diversity as well as equity for people who may face discrimination because of their sexual orientation. The council will work together to determine when the entire council will advise on particular issues or when a subcommittee will advise. These proposed changes are to acknowledge that cisgender

women, transgender people, and people with diverse sexual orientation may all have differing perspectives and priorities.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ms. McLean: Acting Chair, I move:

THAT Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*, be amended at page 3 by adding the following clause after clause 6:

"6.1 Section 4.01 added

"The following section is added after section 4:

"4.01 Sub-committees

"(1) The following sub-committees of the council are established:

"(a) the sub-committee on gender equity with a focus on equity for women;

"(b) the subcommittee on

"(i) gender equity with a focus on gender diversity, and

"(ii) equity for individuals who may face discrimination because of their sexual orientation.

"(2) The council may establish its own procedures for determining which issues are to be considered by the council as a whole and which issues are to be referred to a sub-committee.

"(3) Each sub-committee may make rules governing its own proceedings."

Acting Chair, I have the amendments prepared and an appropriate number of copies for distribution to members.

Acting Chair: The amendment to add clause 6.01 to Bill No. 22 is in order.

It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate:

THAT Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*, be amended at page 3 by adding the following clause after clause 6:

"6.1 Section 4.01 added

"The following section is added after section 4:

"4.01 Sub-committees

"(1) The following sub-committees of the council are established:

"(a) the sub-committee on gender equity with a focus on equity for women;

"(b) the subcommittee on

"(i) gender equity with a focus on gender diversity, and

"(ii) equity for individuals who may face discrimination because of their sexual orientation.

"(2) The council may establish its own procedures for determining which issues are to be considered by the council as a whole and which issues are to be referred to a sub-committee.

"(3) Each sub-committee may make rules governing its own proceedings."

Is there any debate on the amendment?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As members can see in the amendments I proposed — in line with what I have said so far — the two subcommittees would be formed within the advisory council, each with a mandate to provide the government with advice on gender equity. One subcommittee would focus on equity for women, and the other subcommittee would focus on

gender diversity, as well as equity for people who may face discrimination because of their sexual orientation.

Again, the council will work together to determine when the entire council will advise on a particular issue and when a subcommittee will advise. I am proposing these changes to acknowledge that cisgender women, transgender people, and people with diverse sexual orientation may all have differing perspectives and priorities. This amendment is being brought forward to address concerns raised regarding the full inclusion of these groups.

Acting Chair: Is there any further debate on the amendment?

MLA Tredger: I will take this opportunity to ask a couple of questions about the subcommittees. So, what would happen if the subcommittees disagreed on an issue? How would that be resolved?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, as proposed in the amendment, the council may establish its own procedures for determining how issues are considered by the council. This would be done through terms of reference. There would also be an ability to bring forward independent recommendations or advice to any minister who is bringing forward a matter. If there is a dispute, that would be part of the terms of reference that would be established.

MLA Tredger: Just so that I understand, in the terms of reference that the council will establish or, I guess, that each subcommittee will establish, because they get to make their own proceedings — they could bring forward dissenting opinions. So, if there was an issue that went to both the women's committee and the LGBTQS subcommittee and they had different opinions on what should happen, there would be a mechanism, I guess, for the minister hearing both of those opinions?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, absolutely. I think that's the idea and the beauty of having the two subcommittees so that we can bring forward diverse perspectives and ensure that voices of Yukoners are heard within this important council. I think that is a really important mechanism, that the minister needs to hear the diverse range of perspectives and be able to hear, as well, when there maybe isn't agreement around what the recommendation should be so that it can be considered as a whole.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. I think this is a good solution to the problem of: How do you take these two diverse groups and have them considered through a single council? I was thinking a little bit about the analogy of the department which deals with both women's issues and LGBTQ2S+ issues, but we have lots of departments that deal with multiple things. Highways and Public Works deals with digital security and it deals with building highways, and you would never expect the same group of people to be able to advise on both those issues. I think the same thing holds here, and I think this is a good way of being able to capture two different communities that may or may not agree on issues and be able to hear advice from both of them.

Acting Chair: Is there any further debate on the amendment?

*Amendment to Clause 6 agreed to
Clause 6, as amended, agreed to
On Clause 7*

Hon. Ms. McLean: This section outlines the minimum and maximum number of council members. Given the two-subcommittee structure, we are proposing to amend the minimum and maximum number of members to four and 12 respectively. This is in order to ensure each subcommittee has two members and a maximum of six.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ms. McLean: I move:

THAT Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*, be amended at pages 3 and 4 by replacing clause 7 with the following:

“7 Section 5 replaced

“Section 5 is replaced with the following:

“5 Composition of council and sub-committees

“(1) The council is to consist of not less than four and not more than 12 members appointed by the Commissioner in Executive Council.

“(2) In appointing members of the council, the Commissioner in Executive Council is to make a reasonable effort to ensure that the membership of the council meets any prescribed criteria.

“(3) Each sub-committee established under section 4.01 is to consist of not less than two and not more than six members appointed by the Commissioner in Executive Council from among the members of the council.”

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have the amendment prepared and an appropriate number of copies to distribute.

Acting Chair: The amendment to clause 7 is in order.

It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate:

THAT Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*, be amended at pages 3 and 4 by replacing clause 7 with the following:

“7 Section 5 replaced

“Section 5 is replaced with the following:

“5 Composition of council and sub-committees

“(1) The council is to consist of not less than four and not more than 12 members appointed by the Commissioner in Executive Council.

“(2) In appointing members of the council, the Commissioner in Executive Council is to make a reasonable effort to ensure that the membership of the council meets any prescribed criteria.

“(3) Each sub-committee established under section 4.01 is to consist of not less than two and not more than six members appointed by the Commissioner in Executive Council from among the members of the council.”

Hon. Ms. McLean: This amendment is quite straightforward in that, with the two-subcommittee structure, it's important to ensure that there is a proper and equal representation on each subcommittee. As the amendment

speaks to the council, it would be made up of a minimum of four members to a maximum of 12. This will ensure that each subcommittee has a minimum of two members and a maximum of six. This will provide an equitable lens on both gender equity issues for women and the gender diverse, as well as issues related to equity for individuals who may face discrimination because of sexual orientation.

Acting Chair: Is there any further debate on the amendment?

MLA Tredger: I will re-ask my question from earlier. Are members able to sit on both committees? Would there be any members who don't sit on either committee?

I guess I am wondering a little bit about the application process. Would members, when they apply, indicate which committee they would like to sit on — either or both?

Hon. Ms. McLean: In appointing members to the council, the Commissioner in Executive Council is to make a reasonable effort to ensure that the membership of the council is to be representative of diverse identity factors and lived experience. Members can sit on both subcommittees if the minimum required number of members is met.

Actually, they can also be members at large. So, there isn't a requirement to have everyone sit on a subcommittee, and some folks may not be interested in that; they may be willing and wanting to just be part of the overall council. So, there is some flexibility there, but we want to have that, as we've said, equal representation. As long as that minimum requirement and number of members is met, then there's flexibility with the overall council.

Amendment to clause 7 agreed to

Clause 7, as amended, agreed to

On Clause 8

Clause 8 agreed to

On Clause 9

Clause 9 agreed to

On Clause 10

Clause 10 agreed to

On Clause 11

Clause 11 agreed to

On Clause 12

Clause 12 agreed to

On Clause 13

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am proposing a final amendment to the bill to allow the necessary time to appoint the new members to the advisory council. An additional section would be added outlining that the act will come into force on a day determined by the Commissioner in Executive Council.

Acting Chair, I move:

THAT Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*, be amended at page 5 by adding the following clause after clause 13:

“14 Coming into Force

“This Act, or any provision of it, comes into force on a day or days to be fixed by the Commissioner in Executive Council.”

I have the amendment prepared and an appropriate number of copies to be distributed, Acting Chair.

Acting Chair: The amendment to add clause 14 to Bill No. 22 is in order.

It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate:

THAT Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*, be amended at page 5 by adding the following clause after clause 13:

“14 Coming into Force

“This Act, or any provision of it, comes into force on a day or days to be fixed by the Commissioner in Executive Council.”

Is there any debate on the amendment?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I mentioned, this amendment will allow time for the recruitment and appointment of additional members to this important advisory council. This will also provide time to ensure proper representation on both subcommittees.

Amendment to add Clause 14 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McLean: Acting Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*, with amendment.

Acting Chair: It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate that the Chair report Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*, with amendment.

Motion agreed to

Acting Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 208, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Acting Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote No. 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 208, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Environment — *continued*

Acting Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would just like to welcome back to the House, to my left, Deputy Minister Manon Moreau and, to my right, Assistant Deputy Minister Shehnaz Ali assisting me today.

I believe I have something like just over two minutes remaining in opening comments.

The Department of Environment is not a department with a large capital budget, as our biggest cost and most valuable expense is our public servants doing the critical work needed across our territory every day. Every initiative or project that I highlighted in my speech a few days ago is backed up by a team of dedicated and talented staff.

Personnel costs make up nearly half of the department's overall budget, or \$29.8 million. This ensures that our territory has some of the best professionals in their field, including world-leading scientists and researchers, dedicated conservation officers, planners, veterinarians, financial officers, biologists, and more.

The wide breadth of experience, talent, and expertise within the Department of Environment is astonishing and frankly humbling. At the end of the day, the Yukon's environment is managed and protected due to their efforts and the partnerships that they create in our communities every single day.

Acting Chair, thank you for the opportunity to highlight some of the aspects of the Department of Environment's budget. This budget supports the important work that so many Yukoners rely upon. Sometimes that work is apparent and tangible, and sometimes it is done in the background and without recognition. I know that when Yukoners are outside in our territory, we reflect on how much we value these natural spaces. I hope today that I have provided some insight on how our government does this too.

Thank you to all of the hard-working Environment staff who are committed to ensuring that our land, air, wildlife, habitats, water, and climate continue to thrive and support our way of life. Your efforts are noticed and appreciated.

I want to end this speech by thanking all Yukoners who are taking steps every day to reduce their impact on our environment and strengthening their connection to nature. We truly only have one world and it is home for not only us, but for future generations of Yukoners to come.

Mr. Istchenko: I want to welcome the staff here again today — thank you for coming to support the minister — and also those who are on the phone and the interweb and everywhere else looking for the information that I might be asking for. So, thanks a lot.

My first question is in reference to the Yukon Fish and Game Association. I understand that the minister met with them last week, so I have a couple of questions. The minister committed to new hunting opportunities at the Yukon Fish and Game Association annual banquet. Can the minister elaborate on what these new hunting opportunities are this season? I know that it has been a long-lasting request from the Yukon Fish and Game Association to have their contribution topped up to what it was before the previous Liberal minister

downsized it, so are they getting a complete top-up? I look forward to answers to those.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the Member for Kluane. Yes, I had the privilege of meeting with the executive of the Fish and Game Association last week. I met with President Bekar, executive director Schroff, and their secretary, Bohnet. It was a very positive meeting. I certainly look forward to continuing to have those meetings and to identify opportunities where at all possible.

We recognize and appreciate the desire that Yukon hunters have for more hunting opportunities in the Yukon. Managing wildlife harvests, including creating new hunting opportunities, is a collaborative process that is informed by wildlife surveys and scientific, traditional, and local knowledge sources. The Yukon government works with First Nation governments, the Inuvialuit boards and councils, Yukon public, and stakeholder groups when making harvest decisions.

In recent years, the Department of Environment has increased the pace of wildlife surveys in order to ensure that decision-making related to harvest opportunities are grounded in high-quality, up-to-date information.

Using this approach, the Yukon government will consider potential new hunting opportunities where it can be done sustainably. The Yukon government has provided a number of new hunting opportunities over the past several years where wildlife populations allowed. Often these new hunting opportunities are made possible as a result of recovery efforts.

In 2020 as a result of 25 years of collaborative recovery efforts and the signing of the Fortymile caribou harvest management plan, we were able to offer a winter threshold hunt of 140 caribou and a summer registration hunt. In 2022, working with the Kluane First Nation and the White River First Nation, we opened a new threshold hunt of 25 caribou for the Nelchina herd. Last year, we also introduced a new adaptive hunting permit process and made eight initial permits available for hunting elk in the Takhini Valley, increasing the total to 12 permits. Recent survey results in the Sifton-Miners Range moose management unit indicated a higher than expected moose population. As a result, we are increasing the number of permits available this season from 12 to 24, and that was communicated in person to the Yukon Fish and Game Association last week.

The Yukon Fish and Game Association plays an important role in the Yukon's fish and wildlife management, conservation, habitat protection, and hunter education. We recognize the concerns that were raised by the Yukon Fish and Game Association when their core funding had been reduced. In response to these concerns, we provided an additional \$10,000 of funding in 2022 based on a work plan to bring the overall funding level back to \$70,000. In the meeting that we had with the Fish and Game Association last week, they indicated that they could usefully deploy more assets — and perhaps collaboratively between the Department of Environment and the Fish and Game Association.

I certainly heard their request and took it favourably for fiscal 2023-24 that, on a project-by-project basis, it could very well be that the Fish and Game Association would be delivering

more programs and that potentially there would be additional funding being provided to the Fish and Game Association in collaboration with Conservation Officer Services and Fish and Wildlife at the Department of Environment. So, we started those conversations, and our Department of Environment committed to continue those conversations. I said that I would meet with the Yukon Fish and Game Association as required, but certainly no less than twice a year, and that my deputy minister and the management at Environment will meet with the Fish and Game Association at least quarterly.

What else happened at that meeting? We also communicated the Kluane sheep hunt restriction, and Fish and Game was receptive to the conservation concerns that were expressed by the Kluane First Nation. I also advised that Environment is looking at providing a possibly one additional opportunity of a sheep hunt somewhere else in the hunting season, recognizing that may represent a logistical and planning issue.

The Fish and Game Association also asked about perhaps having some hunts that would involve bow hunting. I heard them on that as well, and I've asked the working group to explore that.

So, certainly a very positive meeting with the Fish and Game Association. I heard their request for possible new funding based on discrete project delivery. I certainly heard them also with respect to, wherever possible and where supported by science, providing for additional hunting opportunities.

I think that fairly encapsulates the meeting. I said I looked forward to future meetings, and I would characterize the meeting we had last week with the Fish and Game Association as positive. The door is open to listening to their concerns and proposals. What I would say is thank you very much for the work that they do and their membership of both individual Yukoners and Yukon families pursuing both hunting and fishing in this beautiful territory.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that. He did speak about the hunting allocation framework. So, can he give me an update on what has been done so far and what work is planned for the coming year and the launching of this while it is developed?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We are committed to ensuring that licensed harvest is done sustainably while respecting the primary importance of wildlife conservation and Indigenous subsistence harvest rights. Managing human activity, particularly hunting, is our primary tool to conserve big game and to support continued availability of licensed hunting opportunities into the future.

The Department of Environment has indicated to stakeholders that we are considering development of a harvest allocation framework to support increased transparency, fairness, and public understanding of harvest allocation decisions. During these conversations, we have identified the need for further engagement with our partners, and we are committed to doing this. We support the goals of a harvest allocation framework and see this as an important step to clarify and improve how hunting is managed in the Yukon.

Understanding the unique context for each stakeholder group requires time and consideration of the issues at hand and to process this in a fair and balanced way.

We are continuing efforts to meet with stakeholders to listen and to consider the needs and interests prior to initiating the harvest allocation framework process. We feel that, by focusing on conversations up front, we will ultimately support a more thoughtful and effective process.

We continue to engage with Yukon First Nation governments, the Inuvialuit, renewable resources councils, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope). Yukon hunters, the Yukon public, the Yukon Outfitters Association, the Yukon Fish and Game Association, Yukon Conservation Society, and other interest groups are also key partners in the conversation. All types of knowledge — including Indigenous, local, and scientific — are part of decision-making. A modern wildlife harvest allocation framework must reflect the evolution of hunting and conservation in the territory.

I can advise that, within the last few months, I attended the renewable resources council working group meeting, which was held at the Sternwheeler, and provided some introductory comments and listened to some of the presentations that took place there.

I have also met with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board in the last two weeks and the Yukon Fish and Game Association, and I know that the Premier has met with the Yukon Outfitters Association quite recently as well. So, we are engaged with the stakeholders, and once the Spring Sitting is completed this Thursday, the ministers — myself included — will be attending various Yukon communities to meet with both municipal governments and self-governing First Nations, as well, to receive their input.

So, that is where it is currently at, Acting Chair.

Mr. Istchenko: As we know, in chapter 16 in the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, the boards and councils that the minister spoke of are — it states in there — the primary instrument in resource management. So, I want to ask the minister if the minister tasked his department to sit down with those boards and councils in the fall and talk about what work they are doing the next year so that they can both plan their budgets at the same time. If they don't do that now — and I am actually meaning like the regional biologists and the communities, and we have lots of communities — get out there and meet with the resource councils and plan budgets together with the basic asks and wants and work that needs to be done in those communities that the councils are hearing from community members — so, will he commit to doing that?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Staffing the Department of Environment front desks across the territory allows clients to readily access local services so that they can get out and explore our vast territory. Whether they are purchasing an angling licence, picking up a map for a hunting trip, or inquiring about ammunition needs for a bison hunt, our regional staff lead the data collection efforts for many of the Yukon's wildlife species.

Regional staff members work with the Inuvialuit, First Nations, renewable resources councils, and communities to

ensure that Indigenous-based knowledge and local perspectives are reflected in our wildlife management programs. For example, we are working as a nine-government steering committee to develop a management plan for the Southern Lakes caribou.

This committee includes the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Kwanlin Dün, Ta'an Kwäch'än' Council, the Taku River Tlingit First Nation, the Teslin Tlingit, British Columbia, and Canada.

We also continue to implement the *Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement* and the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* by contributing to Porcupine caribou herd management activities including population monitoring, harvest management, and habitat management.

The department works with the regional resources councils and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board annually to review and support their funding agreements. They also discuss local priorities and concerns — on average, it is estimated approximately once per month. When we meet with the regional resources councils, we connect on the local concerns in their areas. Our regional biologists meet regularly with outfitters and First Nations as well.

The specific question, I believe, was whether there was a commitment from Environment to specifically address needs and budgeting concerns for regional resources councils. I had some brief conversations with regional resources council members at the Sternwheeler within the last two weeks and heard some concerns about that, but it seems to me that the lines of communication are open. If there are issues with respect to resourcing, budgeting, work plans, or Environment support, it seems to me that those contacts are occurring. We can always do better, so if there are some specific concerns, I am certainly supportive of the Department of Environment working with regional resources councils and providing as much background support as they possibly and reasonably can.

Mr. Istchenko: I want to switch gears a little bit to capture work that the department does. I have, in the past, asked questions about why the Liberal government makes some of their decisions without data and without following the science. This question that I am about to ask plays into why it is important to have data.

All other jurisdictions in Canada use private contractors for wildlife capture. They hire a helicopter company that then has a team and they go and do the job. Yukoners have been telling me that the Yukon government is bringing in people from out of the territory to do this work.

In the Yukon, we have more than qualified, very experienced helicopter companies and people to do this work, so why isn't the government just using the local private sector like all other jurisdictions?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I will certainly endeavour to get the answer about the private out-of-territory versus local helicopter provision of services. I won't say what that breakdown is right now. We're just trying to get that information.

I will just provide some information for the House this afternoon on the wildlife surveys and data use.

In 2022, the Department of Environment allocated approximately \$448,000 for three moose-related projects and \$865,000 for monitoring projects related to caribou herds. As well, the Department of Environment dedicated \$74,000 to conduct a 2022 Aishihik bison population survey. Last year as well, a fisheries group sampled fish in four lakes and stocked another 11 lakes with fish.

The Department of Environment is committed to collecting robust wildlife population data to provide high-quality, up-to-date information that contributes to evaluations of harvest sustainability. In order to evaluate harvest sustainability, we combine information from licensed harvesters, First Nations, Inuvialuit, and community partners with results from our wildlife population research and monitoring to inform management decisions. These data also support decision-making such as establish threshold levels, permit numbers, and non-resident quota allocations.

The Department of Environment cannot survey all wildlife populations, of course, yearly and relies on reports from licensed harvesters, First Nations, Inuvialuit, and community partners in order to guide decision-making in the interim between scheduled surveys.

This process is iterative. In the absence of recent survey results, we use our annual licensed harvest data combined with reliable observations provided by co-management and community partners to fine-tune our evaluations of harvest sustainability on a year-by-year basis until the next population survey is undertaken.

In addition, we work closely with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. The board is a vital co-management partner with which we share survey results and propose actions to ensure harvest sustainability. The Department of Environment dedicates significant resources to collecting and analyzing data to support evidence-based wildlife management decisions and to carry out targeted population inventories, collect harvest data, and perform ecological assessments annually to gather up-to-date information.

I have spoken in a previous answer about Sifton-Miners. That was data. What else can I tell the House this afternoon?

Data from the 2022 moose survey is completed in the Nisutlin River. Quiet Lake, Nordenskiöld River, and the South Canal area are also currently being compiled.

In 2022, we also deployed satellite collars in the Porcupine, Fortymile, Aishihik, Hart River, Coal River, and Wolf Lake caribou herds. We also carried out population composition and/or distribution surveys on the Aishihik, Chisana, Wolf Lake, Finlayson, Little Rancheria, Coal River, Hart River, Ethel Lake, Tatchun, Tay River, Boreal, Fortymile, and Porcupine caribou herds. Many of our surveys or transboundary populations were done in collaboration with other jurisdictions.

In addition, we conducted surveys for wolves, deer, elk, bison, sheep, musk ox, fish, pikas, bats, and ground squirrels.

We plan to carry out approximately 40 wildlife surveys across a diverse range of species this year — roughly equivalent to the number of surveys carried out in 2022.

We prioritized which areas are to be surveyed based on a combination of factors, including harvest levels, access, community concerns, land use planning, data needs, the date of the last survey, and human activity.

The department is very busy, I would say, and continues to be busy. It is consistent with my mandate letter to ensure that we are collecting accurate data and science-based data with respect to animals that are not hunted but obviously animals that are of interest to Yukon hunters as well.

With respect to the question from the member opposite, the information that I have received this afternoon — and that is my recollection from signing a lot of these contracts — is that the aerial surveys are local helicopter companies and that the staff who are not pilots but are in the helicopters are in-house. That is primarily based on long-standing relationships with Yukon First Nations and the specialized expertise of the in-house staff. I can certainly find out whether there are any other significant contract dollars that are not staying within the Yukon. It is likely that it's happening to a certain extent, but the information that I have this afternoon is about helicopters. I am not sure about fixed-wing, but I can find out about those fixed-wing contracts as well. I am just getting some more information here, and 51 out of 55 helicopter contracts were to local helicopter providers for fiscal 2022-23. So, that's a significant economic driver, I would suggest, within the territory.

Mr. Istchenko: Last fall, the minister's new *Animal Protection and Control Act* faced many calls to pause the bill and adequately consult with municipalities and many organizations. The minister promised that he would do these consultations after the bill was passed and before regulations were developed. So, can the minister tell us what consultations were conducted this past winter, who the department met with as part of these consultations, and where we are at with the regulations on development?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The new *Animal Protection and Control Act* provides a comprehensive, modern, and enforceable legal framework for managing all aspects of animal protection and control in the territory. The act enables Yukon communities to take on an enforcement role to increase animal control and reduce public safety risks. The act establishes standards for the care of animals and sets standards for acceptable means of killing animals humanely. The act enables the use of new tools for managing escaped livestock such as Eurasian boars, as well as feral populations such as horses. In addition, it will authorize the regulation of pet stores, boarding kennels, and animal rescues.

We are developing regulations for the new *Animal Protection and Control Act*.

The act sets a broad framework, and the regulations will provide the specific detail required to implement this new law. We will engage with affected stakeholders to clarify the regulations with respect to standards of care for domestic animals, prohibited cosmetic surgeries, exotic animals, control standards for livestock, and tools to control feral animals. It is important that we ensure that our regulations reflect Yukoners' values, our relationships with animals, and our way of life.

With respect to the engagement that has happened since the — actually, at the very end of the Fall 2022 Sitting and then into the winter, I can advise as follows: that the engagement has been with the Tagish Local Advisory Council on November — this would all be 2022 — November 10; Watson Lake Town Council — oh, and I can tell you whether it was in person or virtually. Tagish Local Advisory Council was in person.

Watson Lake Town Council — attended the meeting virtually on November 15, 2022; Yukon Dog Musers Association, by phone, November 21, 2022; Yukon Outfitters Association was in person, December 16, 2022; Faro Town Council, a virtual meeting, January 10, 2023; Haines Junction Town Council and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Council, a virtual meeting, January 18, 2023; the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee, an in-person meeting, January 26, 2023; All Paws Veterinary Clinic, in-person meeting, and that is January 27, 2023; Mayo Town Council, a virtual meeting, February 1, 2023; Alpine Veterinary clinic, in person, February 8, 2023; Marsh Lake Local Advisory Council, in person, February 8, 2023; Selkirk First Nation community safety officer, in-person meeting, February 21, 2023; Humane Society of Dawson, in person, February 22, 2023; Dawson City bylaw officer Jalen Henry, in-person meeting, February 22, 2023; and John Overell, Dawson veterinarian, an in-person meeting, February 22, 2023.

With respect to meetings that are still planned in the relatively near future — in that sort of spring, April/May window — dog mushers, the Agriculture branch, the YAIAC, the YAA, and GOOFY — Growers of Organic Foods Yukon — the Wilderness Tourism Association of Yukon, the Yukon Outfitters Association, the humane societies, Duffy's Pet store, boarding facilities, more municipalities and communities, additional First Nation governments, the Islamic community, and a virtual call-out to the public. The timeframe for this is generally seen as being spring, with some drifting into the summer.

A shout-out to the animal health unit and Dr. Mary Vanderkop and her hardworking team there for significant outreach so far and significant continued consultation and outreach planned for the next few months. Also, I would be remiss if I didn't provide acknowledgement of the hardworking staff at the Energy, Mines and Resources Agriculture branch as well who are also facilitating this consultation.

If the members opposite have additional suggestions as to who either the animal health unit or the Energy, Mines and Resources Agriculture branch ought to be speaking with, certainly, I am prepared to receive those suggestions, but it does appear that the consultation is quite fulsome, and it's planned out by the middle of the summer or so — perhaps there will be some stragglers as you get toward the end of the summer — most of those valuable conversations will have taken place.

Mr. Istchenko: The last question I had on that was: When does he see the regulations actually coming out and coming into force?

On that, I guess I better turn it over to the Third Party; they also have questions. I have many more to go — hopefully, the department comes back up.

Thank you to the staff.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, the plans are — the Department of Environment and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources are hopeful that these regulations will be drafted and have the possibility of coming into force and effect in the fall, yes — in the fall of 2023.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the officials for being here today and also to everyone listening in.

Last time we were discussing this in the supplementary budget, we talked a bit about wetlands, so I don't have too many more questions about wetlands, but I do want to ask one, which is about the wetlands of special importance. I am wondering when the nominations of wetlands of special importance will be opened — so, when organizations, governments, and various parties can start nominating those wetlands.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite.

With respect to the Yukon wetlands policy — this policy provides for the establishment of a framework to be able to nominate and legally designate wetlands of special importance. As described, currently under the policy, wetlands of special importance may be nominated by an Indigenous, federal, territorial, or municipal government or a board or council, such as a renewable resources council, a regional land use planning commission, or a wildlife management advisory board or council. In order to support the nomination process, additional implementation guidance is required to fully describe how wetland benefits and impacts will be measured.

Developing special guidance for evaluating wetland benefits in the Yukon is another important near-term implementation action for this policy. We recognize that we must be responsive to new information as we continue to build our knowledge and improve our understanding of Yukon's wetlands. This includes recognizing and respecting all sources of knowledge, giving equitable consideration to traditional, local, and scientific knowledge. We will continue to engage with other governments, departments, agencies, regulatory bodies, external partners, and land use planning interests in order to discuss aspects related to the policy's implementation. In addition to working through policy implementation tasks, we remain committed to addressing wetlands stewardship and protection within ongoing land use planning discussions to address more regional or local needs.

The specific question from the member opposite is about the timing of when these nominations might occur. I am just waiting to see if there is some more updated information with respect to that.

With respect to special importance, we have a commitment to mapping wetlands in the Yukon within five years. We have already begun work and have completed wetland mapping for the Peel watershed planning region, the Beaver River watershed, and the Mayo and McQuesten watersheds. We are also currently developing our five-year plan for how to accomplish the remaining mapping needs, which will get underway in fiscal 2023-24.

Wetlands of special importance still require, as I think I said at the beginning of my response, internal work to look at a

suite of designation options and tools, and several legislative approaches could be feasible, but I take the member's point that there should be, relatively quickly, a nominating process by Indigenous, federal, territorial, or municipal governments, boards or councils, renewable resources councils, regional land use planning commissions, or wildlife management advisory boards or councils.

To date, broad regional wetland mapping has been completed for approximately 16 percent of the territory, with more detailed local mapping covering approximately an additional five percent. So, in order to move this forward — and it is part of the wetland policy, but setting up a process is part of the implementation committee work.

MLA Tredger: So, is there a timeline on when that work will happen and when governments and various others can start nominating those wetlands of special importance?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: \$455,000 is included in the main estimates this year and next year to implement this policy over the next two years. This includes increasing our — as I said — publicly available wetlands map inventory, developing guidance and a legislative tool for wetlands of special importance, and assisting with developing guidance and standards for proponents where developments may impact wetlands. Yukon's wetlands policy was developed, as I indicated, through engagement with various stakeholders.

Over the coming months, we will continue to work with other departments and agencies, First Nations, regulatory bodies, external partners, and those with land use planning interests to discuss specific aspects related to the policy's implementation.

In addition, our government developed a tool to assess the health of our wetlands, which was recently tested through a wetland pilot study in open-water wetlands across south and central Yukon. The department is now preparing a final report on this study, fulfilling another commitment in *Our Clean Future*.

The answer to the specific question is — the estimate is six to eight months to begin the process of defining the applications for wetlands of special importance.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

When we were debating Highways and Public Works, I had asked about the carbon emissions or the fuel use as a proxy of Government of Yukon buildings currently and how they compared to 2010 levels to help get sense of how this is changing with the actions that the government is taking. At the time, the minister had suggested that I ask that question in Environment, so I am asking the question now in Environment.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. We can play a role in reducing the impact of climate change by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. While the Yukon's emissions are a small percent of Canada's total emissions, our per capita emissions are among the highest in Canada. With transportation and buildings being the highest source of emissions, *Our Clean Future* was designed to reduce emissions in these and other areas. We will continue to build on actions in these areas in order to achieve our ambitious target.

To support us in determining where to focus our efforts, we track and report on Government of Yukon as well as Yukon-wide greenhouse gas emissions annually.

So, the specific answer — I do have that answer — is that for all of YG buildings, in 2010, it was 18.32 kilotonnes, and for 2020, it was 22.18 kilotonnes, so it was more than in 2010.

What I am going to say is that, first of all, the Yukon Territory grew significantly between 2010 and 2020, and the stock of government building infrastructure increased as well. That doesn't mean that we don't have work to do, but even within the last two or three years, what are we doing? We are retrofitting a lot of buildings that were not captured in 2022. We have the Klondike and Ogilvie grader stations, which are going to get \$3 million per grader station, and solar arrays, which are offsetting hundreds of thousands of litres of fuel on the Dempster Highway this year. Next year, for the summer of 2024, there will be two more grader stations. There is a \$7-million or \$8-million project on the Old Territorial Administration Building in Dawson, which is quite a beautiful but leaky old barn and is being retrofitted. It is a government asset. There is a skylight at the law centre which has now been replaced and will offset a lot of fuel use. It might be diesel. We also plan to basically rebuild the Yukon University roof, which will offset a lot of fuel use.

As well, there are biomass projects like the Elijah Smith building, like the Teslin district heating, like Dawson district heating, and other projects that we are identifying.

There is work to be done. There are a lot of projects, even since 2020. In this fiscal year, there is a \$60-million investment in green energy and there are infrastructure funds that are being dedicated for resilient infrastructure and retrofits as well.

We do anticipate that these numbers will start to come down, but there is a pathway to make the building infrastructure of the 500 or 600 buildings that HPW has in its suite of buildings progressively more energy efficient. HPW is prioritizing them on the best target for energy use reduction on down, and that process is occurring as well.

I hope that perhaps Environment will come up again but, Acting Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*, and directed me to report the bill with amendment.

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

The following sessional paper was filed April 24, 2023:

35-1-97

Final Report of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform (April 2023) (White)

Written notice was given of the following motion April 24, 2023:

Motion No. 720

Yukon Housing Corporation seniors asset limit policy (Tredger)