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HANSARD

Thursday, October 5, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Jeremy Harper, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Annie Blake, MLA, Vuntut Gwitchin
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, October 5, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of a change made to the Order Paper. The following motion has been removed from the Order Paper, as the actions requested in the motion have been taken in whole or in part: Motion No. 640, standing in the name of the Hon. Premier.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would ask my colleagues to please help me in welcoming some guests here today for the tribute on World Teachers' Day. First, from the Department of Education, I have our Deputy Minister of Education, Mary Cameron. We have: Superintendent Trevor Ratcliff; First Nations educational consultant, Tammy Stoneman; director of Curriculum and Assessment, Tanya Lewis; Assistant Deputy Minister of Schools and Student Services Cassandra Kelly; and senior advisor, Alexis Miller. From our Yukon University, we have Dr. Shelagh Rowles, provost and vice-president, and Trika MacDonald, executive advisor to the president for Yukon University. Thank you all for being here.

I also want to welcome Amy Ryder, former Cabinet colleague. Thank you for being here today as well.

Applause

TRIBUTES

In recognition of World Teachers' Day

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Yukon educators in recognition of World Teachers' Day. On October 5, 1966, UNESCO adopted the recommendation concerning the status of teachers recognizing both the essential role of teachers in advancing education and the importance of their contributions toward the development of society and humankind. The vital role of educators is no less valuable today. In fact, considering that there is now a teacher shortage worldwide, the role of educators in our schools is even more important. UNESCO's 2023 theme for World Teachers' Day is: "The teachers we need for the education we want: The global imperative to reverse the teacher shortage". The Canadian Teachers' Federation has also selected the theme for 2023: "The Empty Classroom: Challenges and Solutions to the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Crisis".

We are taking these calls to action seriously here in Yukon and have made significant commitments to improve recruitment and retention of our territory's education professionals. Educators are essential for the growth and development and, truly, the survival of our society. This is why we have committed to adding 81 new full-time student support positions over the next three years.

This World Teachers' Day, we thank our educators for the incredibly important work that you do each and every day. We are thankful for our educators. Today, we stand up to recognize that teachers need the support of our government and our community now more than ever. It is our responsibility as the students, families, and in fact our entire society that benefit from their services as teachers to stand with our educators to applaud, uplift, and support them.

With patience, kindness, and mutual support, Yukon educators continue to set positive examples, innovate, and demonstrate deep care and compassion for the well-being of learners of all ages, including the leaders who will be standing in our shoes in the not-too-distant future.

I thank all of our teachers, specialized support staff, administrators, and all other school staff for their conscious efforts, their compassion and commitment to students and their school communities across the Yukon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize educators throughout the Yukon on World Teachers' Day. Since 1994, UNESCO declared World Teachers' Day to be October 5 and, as this is that date, we rise to say thank you to teachers.

It takes a certain kind of person to be a teacher. An effective educator must possess a set of skills and qualities to allow them to conduct an ordered class day, to command the attention of a roomful of students, to provide a safe place to allow creativity to flow, and to find effective ways to teach. The learning landscape has changed dramatically throughout the years. Teachers have shown that adaptability has proven to be one of those strengths that educators possess. Everyone has stories about teachers — good and bad. Some of them make a huge difference in your learning path and others not so much, but I do know that I remember every one of my teachers, and they all had some impact on me.

All groups of students quickly share notes: Which teachers are the soft touches? Who are the tough disciplinarians and how best to manoeuvre the world of getting by in the daily life of hard-done-by students?

As each year passed and teachers moved in and out of our small community of Dawson City, it was always with excitement and curiosity that we welcomed these strangers into our lives and our extracurricular activities.

A personal thanks to all the long-suffering teachers who helped me through my struggles and successes. To this day, teachers help harness the talents of our young Yukoners and help them find their potential.

Let's also encourage our students toward a career in education. Pass the torch to another generation who will continue to support Yukon students in a familiar setting. Today, we recognize teachers, administrators, executive assistants, educational assistants, and all other educators whose careers are dedicated to supporting Yukon students in their education journey.

Every day should be a reminder that teachers are there providing a wonderful service, shaping the minds and character of our children.

Thank you.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to pay tribute to all teachers, past and present, who have graced the Yukon with their dedication, passion, and commitment to learning.

Teachers are remarkable individuals. The work they do has an impact on the health, strength and sustainability of our collective well-being. Teachers are tasked with not only educating their charges with the curriculum of the day, but they help the child they see into the adult they will become. Early childhood educators teach their small charges everything from A to Z — not just the skills needed in kindergarten, like learning the alphabet and numbers, but things like covering their faces when they sneeze. They set the stage for what comes next.

Elementary school teachers are an even mix of educator, mind-reader, problem-solver, and negotiator. They defuse meltdowns, offer high fives and hugs as required, and they set the stage of lifelong learning. It takes a special sort of person to teach high school because — let's be honest — teenagers are equal parts charming, thought-provoking, and frustrating. In this day and age, high school teachers are competing with the Internet and electronic devices to make learning relevant, and they do, which is a testament to their skill.

Language teachers share not only words but culture, and they deepen our understanding of place and self. To those educators working in adult or advanced education, you will see students making decisions about the future that they want and you support them to reach those goals.

Yukon teachers have always been here for students but, more than ever, they are turning up for students by supporting things like GSAs and making sure there is space for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, I, like many, can still name every teacher I ever had, and as I get older, I make sure to tell them of the impact that they had on my life because I want them to know that what they do is important and it does have lasting impact. I look at my friends who themselves are now teachers and realize that this next generation of learners are pretty lucky. I can't wait to see which of them follow the path to be teachers themselves.

To all of you who answered the call to be educators, we know that your job isn't always easy but we know that what you do makes lasting impacts on the lives of those around you, and those people are lucky enough that you crossed their paths. So, to the teachers I was lucky enough to know as a student, thanks for helping to shape me into the adult that I have

become, and to all teachers, both past and present, thank you so much for what you do each and every day.

Applause

In recognition of Mental Illness Awareness Week

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise on behalf of our Liberal government to pay tribute to Mental Illness Awareness Week. October 1 to 7 marks Mental Illness Awareness Week this year. This important week, first established by the Canadian Psychiatric Association and now steered by the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health, reminds Yukoners of the need to address mental illness with empathy, understanding, and proactive support.

Reflecting upon our shared history, we must confront and acknowledge the legacy of colonialism and intergenerational trauma here in the Yukon. With a thorough understanding of these long-standing issues, our government is steadfast in its pledge to offer appropriate support and take corrective actions ensuring that mental health services are available. Our goal is to foster an environment in which misconceptions about mental illness are replaced with knowledge and compassion.

I would like to commend the dedicated professionals within our Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services branch. Their commitment to providing essential mental health services to those in need throughout the Yukon is nothing short of exceptional. I would also like to acknowledge the Canadian Mental Health Association, Yukon division for their ongoing efforts in mental health advocacy, support, and education within our territory. Their work plays a pivotal role in enriching the mental wellness landscape of our territory. I also recognize the absolutely invaluable contributions of community members, local organizations, and other stakeholders in this shared mission. Their involvement on the ground, whether through support, education, or community building, fortifies our collective aim to tackle mental health challenges.

As we commemorate this year's Mental Illness Awareness Week, I invite all Yukoners to engage in this week's initiatives, deepening their understanding of mental health and continuing to foster a nurturing and informed community for everyone.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Mental Illness Awareness Week. This campaign takes place annually in October — this year from October 1 to 7 — to help raise awareness and increase advocacy efforts for Canadians who live with some form of mental illness. Some powerful statistics from Mental Health Research Canada are worth noting: 56 percent of struggling Canadians are not getting the mental health help they need. That is over half of all people who need it who are not getting help. There are a number of factors in the north that can potentially increase those already high statistics. We have seen the effects of this in our communities: higher levels of substance use, depression, and anxiety occur across the north, and especially in rural Yukon.

Unfortunately, this also means longer wait-lists and bigger service gaps. We have seen mental illness across our

communities: family, friends, co-workers, peers. Unfortunately, it is often substance use that triggers symptoms of mental illness. Those symptoms create further dependence on substances. By recognizing that there is a cycle of dependence and illness, we can identify the gaps and services and see what can be done better to help those who need it most.

Don't judge; listen; discuss treatment options; explore solutions. Be there for the people you love. Most importantly, say something when you feel that the services they need are not readily available.

Salamat po.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Mental Illness Awareness Week and to the many individuals who work in NGOs, schools, counselling services, and government agencies throughout the Yukon.

I want to talk about children and youth across our territory. We are well aware of how COVID impacted the mental wellness of children and youth, and we are becoming much more aware of the need to provide students, teachers, and administrators the support and tools they require to help their students.

Families, too, need to be able to access services for their child or children when dealing with a mental illness, whether that be anxiety, depression, or any number of conditions.

Teachers and education professionals need tools and adequate resources when trying to support students.

We also need to be listening to children and youth and ensure that their voices are heard when talking about services and supports that they need in their communities — no decision about them without them.

Mental Illness Awareness Week is for everyone. Services and supports provided to all youth and children mean better health outcomes and futures for them and also for us. They are, after all, our future.

Mahsi'.

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 31: *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 31, entitled *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 31, entitled *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion agreed to

Bill No. 32: *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 32, entitled *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 32, entitled *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction? Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House recognizes the Government of Yukon's commitment to supporting the design and delivery of the understanding the early years course as part of the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate's early years program.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports the Government of Yukon's universal childcare program, which has seen childcare fees fall to less than \$10 a day, on average.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to increase resources and funding to the RCMP to support the hiring of additional front-line police officers in the Whitehorse area and in rural Yukon communities.

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

THAT this House supports the request of the Association of Yukon Communities to have the Canada Community-Building fund allocation tripled for the Yukon in order to address the infrastructure deficit in communities that has grown under the Liberal government.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to amend the 2023-24 policing priorities provided by the Minister of Justice to the RCMP M Division by adding a priority related to property crime, vandalism, and theft.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Justice to consult with the business community prior to issuing the annual policing priorities to the RCMP M Division.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion: THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce a bill that would:

- (1) allow municipalities to ban mineral staking and exploration within their boundaries; and
- (2) require consultation with residents living within three kilometres prior to issuing any class of exploration permit.

MLA Tredger: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to allow employers with pre-existing paid sick leave programs to access the Government of Yukon's paid sick leave program without requiring them to use up their own paid sick leave program first.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon residential schools missing children

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to begin by acknowledging the potentially triggering nature of today's statement. I will be discussing residential schools and the trauma that occurred as a result of this genocide against Indigenous people. While difficult to discuss, this is information that we must acknowledge as a territory and as a society. I am grateful to have this opportunity to do so here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

On September 26, 2023, the Yukon Residential Schools Missing Children project working group announced the initial findings of their investigation at the former site of the Chooutla Indian residential school. The findings of 15 potential gravesites and the records of 33 deaths that occurred at the school is a stark reminder of the painful legacy of the residential school system and the enduring trauma experienced by Indigenous communities across the country.

No one in the Yukon is untouched by the recent announcement, but we must recognize the significant and immeasurable impact of these findings on Yukon First Nations. The weight of the legacy of residential schools is one that we must carry together. We do so in solidarity with First Nation communities, united as a territory, and with great compassion. Thank you to the Yukon Residential Schools Missing Children project working group and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation for carrying out this important and challenging work. Their efforts to uncover the truth are vital to support the healing of families and communities.

Our government is committed to working collaboratively with Yukon First Nations and the working group. I will speak more in my response about the actions that our government is taking to support the working group's efforts. I offer my support to the survivors and their families, to the families who lost children to residential schools, and to all Yukon First Nations as we move forward together.

While consistent with elder and survivor accounts, this information remains profoundly challenging. It's heartbreaking to think about the children whose lives were cut short by the cruelty of an unjust society. We think of lives never lived, of siblings who never had the chance to grow old together. We think of the pain of the mothers whose babies were stolen from them and never returned. We think of the brutal severing of the

strong matrilineal lines described yesterday by the members from Vuntut Gwitchin and Mountainview and of their traditional knowledge lost as a result. We think of the fathers who never had the chance to raise their sons and daughters, the hunts that never occurred. We think of the generations who never had the chance to be born, their would-be parents' lives cut short before they had the chance to truly begin.

Yukoners, please check in on each other. Make time for learning and healing. Lean on the strength of our communities. The Yukon government has increased the number of rapid-access counselling appointments for people across the territory. People can call 867-456-3838 to request an appointment within 24 hours. I hope this painful journey will bring us closer to a place of truth, understanding, and reconciliation.

Mr. Dixon: I know that Yukoners observed with keen interest the press conference held last week regarding the update on the Yukon Residential Schools Missing Children project and the results from the ground search conducted this summer at the former Chooutla school in Carcross. I hope that the families of those children who went to the Carcross school and didn't come home will ultimately get the answers that they seek.

Our thoughts are with the working group that is taking on this difficult process. I would like to offer my thanks to Chair Judy Gingell and Vice-Chair Doris Bill for leading this important project alongside First Nation governments and families.

As we know, the history of residential schools continues to be a national tragedy and the impacts are still felt today. That legacy has left permanent scars on residential school survivors and their descendants across the country and here in the Yukon.

For many Canadians, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission brought this historic shame into the light and opened the eyes of many more Canadians to the reality that so many victims have lived for generations.

For our part, the Yukon Party certainly supports the 94 calls to action outlined in the TRC report, and we wholeheartedly support the important work of the Yukon Residential Schools Missing Children project.

I hope that the work conducted this summer and future work reveals answers that will help in the process of reconciliation and healing for the families, for Yukoners, and for all Canadians.

Ms. Blake: I thank my colleagues for their words today. September 30 saw Canadians from all parts of Canada pause to remember, reflect, and mourn the legacy of residential schools and the many children who didn't come home.

Last week's truth and reconciliation ceremony in Whitehorse was significant and emotional due to the recent news out of Carcross where 15 potential gravesites were found on the lands of the former Chooutla residential school. Over a span of six decades, more than 1,300 children were taken from across the Yukon, Alaska, and British Columbia to the former Chooutla residential school.

As these events unfold, we are reminded in the Yukon and across Canada how recent residential schools are within Canada's history. Yukon First Nation people have always known that many children didn't return home.

Not only were there children who did not return home, but their whereabouts or burial was unknown. To this day, there are families in Vuntut Gwitchin, across the Yukon, and across Canada who still don't know where their family members are buried. We also acknowledge that there are ongoing impacts that are experienced across our territory and within our families. This also highlights the need for the Government of Yukon to really invest in mental health supports and counselling supports to be available in communities, including youth and children counsellors and addiction and trauma counsellors.

Many survivors live in our territory and communities. They have been deeply impacted by the recent news. Many survivors are reliving the trauma that they experienced during their time in residential school. It is critical for this government to implement direct supports for survivors that are accessible across the territory.

We must continue to work together to do the important work that needs to be done so that we can create safer spaces, programs, and supports for all people across the territory, no matter their place of residence.

Our heartfelt gratitude goes to all members of the Yukon Residential Schools Missing Children project working group, who are doing the emotionally hard work to answer the many questions that families continue to have about their lost children. Our hearts and prayers go out to all those affected.

Mahsi'.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you to the members opposite for sharing their stories and perspectives. I am grateful that we can all rise above that which divides us politically and legitimize the experiences of survivors. Only with truth can there be reconciliation and healing. We pledge to listen, learn, and respect the experiences of survivors with empathy and understanding. We extend our gratitude to the Yukon Residential Schools Missing Children project working group for their tireless efforts.

Our government remains readily available to support their crucial work, fostering healing and reconciliation in every possible way. We will continue to work in collaboration with Canada and the Council of Yukon First Nations to support the working group.

Within the Government of Yukon, we have established an interdepartmental table to support the working group. This table will help remove any barriers to the work as they arise. The table is led by Aboriginal Relations and includes representatives from the Yukon coroner's office, Yukon Archives, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, heritage, and the Aboriginal Law Group, the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, and others. Yukon government will take its lead from the working group and Yukon First Nations and follow as their leaders in communities identify how they would like our assistance moving forward.

We will also continue to work collaboratively with Yukon First Nations on initiatives that address the brutal legacy of colonization. We commit to following the guidance of the working group and impacted First Nations, underscoring the importance of truth telling and reconciliation in every action that we take. To facilitate healing, we are allocating resources for culturally sensitive counselling, mental health services, and community-led healing programs. These initiatives will be tailored to meet the unique needs of survivors and their families. Our dedication extends to long-term, respectful and inclusive reconciliation efforts and engaging with Indigenous knowledge-keepers to observe cultural practices impacted by the residential school system.

In our commitment to educating future generations, we are implementing accurate residential school history programs in schools. We are promoting culturally sensitive sensitivity, tolerance, and respect through public awareness campaigns and events, and we encourage open dialogue to acknowledge and respect the truth. Transparency in communication is our promise. We commit to open discussions about programs and challenges faced in this journey. We recognize the need for community-led health and wellness initiatives and express our heartfelt appreciation for the strength of survivors. Together we are steadfast in our commitment to a future of mutual understanding and shared healing.

Funding for this work is provided by the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada and is administered by the Council of Yukon First Nations.

Thank you for your attention and let us move forward together on this important path toward healing and reconciliation.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Whitehorse Emergency Shelter

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier made it very clear to the Legislature that he thought the current programming available at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter was fine and good and the only problems were outside the building, but that is not what we have been hearing from Yukoners or what they have been telling this government.

Following the lived experience forum on homelessness held in March, a report summarized the views of people with lived experience of homelessness in Whitehorse. It outlined concerning stories of how they are experiencing violence, drug overdoses, discrimination, and feeling unsafe at the shelter and said that the lack of — and I quote: "... supports or sober spaces available, making it difficult for them to get the help they need."

Will the Premier acknowledge that the changes needed at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter are not just cosmetic changes on the street but changes to the operational model of the shelter itself?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would say to the member opposite that I think that all elements of the shelter are on the table at this point. What I referred to yesterday — and hopefully I did not misspeak, but I did touch on the fact that there's really good

work that also was happening inside the shelter. There was an analysis done by a third party under the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Vink report, which talked about some really strong programming that was in place.

I also spoke with the executive director from the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Grand Chief and talked a bit about some of the success that they feel is happening within the programming.

But I think we have been very open — the Minister of Health and Social Services and I, in my role as Minister of Economic Development, working with other levels of government, reaching out to the Minister of Community Services, taking a look at the TPA and getting support from the Minister of Finance. We're all looking at ways to improve the situation.

I take the comments openly from the member opposite. I have had people reach out to me as well. I try to make sure that I'm meeting with people on the ground who have lived experience; I'm trying to make sure that people who use the shelter, who I know well — I'm also getting feedback from them.

Mr. Cathers: One of the things the Premier said yesterday was — and I quote: “What we are saying is: The clients inside right now are getting good programming.” It's not just us expressing concern. Last summer, the *Yukon News* ran an investigative article that outlined problems with the shelter's model, entitled “‘We can't get sober here:’ Whitehorse shelter unlikely place to find sobriety, advocates say”.

Here is what one former guest was quoted as saying in the article: “We can't get sober here. There's no point in even trying.” It has become clear to everyone but the Liberal government that what's happening now is really not working, and deeper change to how the shelter is run is needed. Despite this, yesterday the Premier repeatedly tried to claim that the programming is fine and that what's needed is for the street and issues outside to be cleaned up.

Will the Premier now agree to look deeper and actually make real, substantive changes to the way the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter is run?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It's unfortunate that the member opposite is painting a picture that is not entirely accurate for Yukoners. The truth of the matter is that the Yukon government is committed to working with Connective, the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nations, and all of our community partners to take action and improve health and safety, and enhance supports for Yukoners that are provided at 405 Alexander and across our services provided by government.

We are committed to helping people who are experiencing homelessness to access the services that they need as easily as possible.

405 Alexander Street offers low-barrier, 24-hour, seven-days-a-week shelter and supportive living programs and a range of drop-in services for unhoused and street-involved adults. Our government provides emergency medical services there, homecare and mental wellness and substance use services, outreach services at 405 Alexander. We also provide other

services in partnership with non-governmental organizations that include on-site provision of services, including Blood Ties Four Directions.

So, we are committed, Mr. Speaker, to working in partnership with Connective, with all of the partners, with the community of the Yukon and Whitehorse to provide services needed by 405 Alexander clients.

Mr. Cathers: We do have to remind the minister that I actually quoted the Premier's own words from yesterday.

Yesterday, the Premier tried to assure this House that everything that was going on inside the shelter was fine and good, and the problem is on the street out front in the area around the shelter. That assertion is out of touch with local residents, businesses, and clients of the shelter. Even government's own reports make it clear that deeper changes are needed.

In an evaluation of the shelter from earlier this year, a consultant found that 38 percent of shelter guests interviewed reported that their substance use actually increased as a result of accessing the shelter.

Does the Premier actually consider this a success?

I will ask again: Will the Premier commit to making major changes to the way the shelter is run, or will he stick with his assertions from yesterday that the program that is currently being offered is just fine?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Look, yesterday the commitment I made was that we would work with all the partners that are part of this conversation. Some are specifically delivering programming. We have a contractor in place that provides services across Canada to a number of different entities — that being Connective — working with the RCMP, looking at all available tools to make the experience there as valuable as possible.

It's a weird wedge that the member opposite is trying to take today. I think that there is some good programming. I have been told that there is some good programming happening inside. Are there improvements that can be done inside the building or outside the building? Likely so, but I will say this: When we had this legacy handed to us, there were definitely things happening inside that building that were not appropriate and they were definitely harming people. At that time, no changes were being made, so, yes, we have made changes before and we will always seek to make sure that the best possible experience is in place with the individuals who are there. Again, we will continue to work with our partners on this work. I think it is going to take a number of different entities, not just the Government of Yukon, to ensure that the best possible results can be seen in that shelter.

Question re: Whitehorse Emergency Shelter

Mr. Dixon: It has not been lost on Yukoners that it wasn't until last week when Alpine Bakery announced that they were closing due to what they call ruinous conditions of the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter that the Premier has paid any attention to this issue. The Liberal government has received letter after letter, e-mail after e-mail, and report after report outlining the concerns of residents, neighbours, businesses, and

even shelter clients about the problems of the shelter. Now, after being shamed into action, the Premier has announced that he is taking over this file from the minister and will be leading the government's response. So, why did it take a local business closing its doors for the Premier to acknowledge that the minister's lack of action has been unacceptable and for him to step in and take over this file from the minister?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I was very clear yesterday that I feel that we need all elements of the government responding to this. I think I was very clear that I felt that leaning solely on the Department of Health and Social Services, on the minister, to deal with a number of different elements of this is not fair. I also would challenge the comments because we have sat in meetings and worked through dialog with a number of stakeholders with the City of Whitehorse hosting meetings where this has been a topic of conversation. I have sat with chambers of commerce over the last number of years, and I truly believe that we need to have an all-of-government approach and also need to garner the support of a number of different organizations outside of the Yukon government. So, at this point, that is the commitment that I have made. I think that it is the appropriate thing to do. The feedback that I got yesterday from the business community, from business people who were here who reached out to me right after — words to say that they were here to help. So, I think we are doing the right thing and, again, we're focused on making sure that the experience for the clients is more appropriate and is as successful as possible and is respecting those who are in the neighbourhood, who are residents, and who are business owners.

Mr. Dixon: To the Yukon businesses, to the media, and to the Legislature yesterday, the Premier has made it clear that he is taking this file over. In fact, he had said yesterday that he had tasked officials from the minister's department who "come back over a period of two weeks to give me a set of options that we can look at." So, what everyone involved in this issue is wondering is: Where was this urgency from the minister? It was back in the spring that the mayor spoke out publicly about this and pleaded for leadership from the minister. The mayor said: "We're behind them, but they need to take the lead on this."

She went on to say that she hasn't seen any short-term solutions come from the Yukon government and that they — and I quote: "... continue to hear from residents and nearby businesses that they're getting tired of having to continually raise these issues and plead their case... This is something that needs some immediate attention as well as some long-term solutions." That's a letter from back in the summer, Mr. Speaker.

My question is simple: Why did it take the Premier intervening to give officials a deadline of two weeks to come up with options? Why did the minister fail to take action on this for so long?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First, I want to correct the record and the Leader of the Official Opposition. What I said is that I asked officials across government, from multiple departments, not just Health and Social Services. It's Economic Development, Executive Council Office, and a number of different

departments that I've asked. So, I think, in the role of Premier, you have that ability to do it, and I don't think the Minister of Health and Social Services would have been asking multiple departments that they're not responsible for, for that sort of response, but I do believe that it is my responsibility.

Should I have done that six months ago? You know what? I guess I should have. Again, this is on me. I will take on the role with full integrity and say that, four months ago, I should have done this, but at this particular time, it has to be an all-government response, and it has to be our community. Look, we are talking about some significant challenges in the community. These are not new — many of them are not new challenges. Like I said to the media yesterday, it wasn't like 10 years ago there weren't challenges within Whitehorse from folks, and especially the challenges that we have seen from some of our vulnerable population. But right now, the difference is that we have a structure that was built. Coming into government, we had the responsibility to take that on. The spot was chosen by the opposition and, right now, it's front and centre that we have a challenge and we have to make sure that it's better.

Mr. Dixon: I'm pleased to hear the Premier admit that he should have stepped in earlier, and that the minister hasn't acted on this and he should have stepped in four or six months ago. I'm glad to hear that he has finally admitted that because that's what everybody in this territory has known for months and years now.

Here's what the Mayor of Whitehorse wrote in a letter to the minister just this summer: "Rarely a week goes by without nearby residents or business owners expressing concern about the adverse impacts of the activities taking place on the sidewalks, roads, alleys and adjacent private property around 405 Alexander." She went on to say: "... this situation has been going on for years now, with little apparent improvement." The mayor concluded her letter with this plea to the minister — this was early this summer: "... I am also imploring you as Minister responsible, to give serious consideration to every and all options available to you to fully address the situation outside 405 Alexander Street."

Despite this, it was not until months later and local businesses closing that the Premier stepped in, and he admits that he should have done it sooner.

My question is simple: Are these the actions of a Premier who has confidence in his minister?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, I have full confidence in my minister and I seek the guidance of my minister each and every day, whether it is on the Health and Social Services file or on the Justice files. I have a colleague, the former president of the Canadian Bar Association, who has led multiple NGOs, has done leadership work across this government previously. I seek that guidance all the time, as I do from the rest of my colleagues. I feel very lucky to have a group of people who have experience, who actually have worked in the private sector, who actually have worked outside of government, who actually have led NGOs, who actually have a diverse set of experience. So, yes, I do seek their guidance.

On this particular case, I am not shirking any responsibility. I walked in here yesterday — and I will say it again. The Leader of the Official Opposition can amplify it. But, yes, as a politician and as a leader, I should have been on this file with other members of our community — sitting with them, not just going to meetings, which I did. Over the last number of years, I was wearing the Economic Development portfolio hat, and coming into the role as Premier, I feel like I should have supported my minister better and I should have done a better job, and so the commitment I made yesterday was to do a better job.

So, we can get up all day long; we can cheer against Yukoners, which I am hearing from the member opposite, but what we are going to do is try to make things better, Mr. Speaker, and that is what I am focused on doing.

Question re: Rural communities funding and support

Ms. White: Our caucus spent a lot of time this summer connecting with Yukoners in the communities. We heard over and over that rural Yukon is being let down by this Liberal government. Sadly, the state of rural health care is a perfect example. Mayo, Pelly Crossing, Teslin, Beaver Creek, and Ross River have all experienced weeks- or even months-long closures of their community health centres. The Yukoners we talked to have said that it is unacceptable, and we hear the same things, and more, from rural nurses. They don't feel listened to, they don't feel respected, and they definitely do not feel valued by this government. They end up leaving and community health centres shut their doors due to staffing shortages.

Will the minister tell us why rural nurses are so unsupported by this government that they are leaving their positions in droves?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Once again, unfortunately, politics — and not great politics — are colouring the comments being made by the members opposite.

Absolutely, there is no one on this side of the House who is supportive of us having to have some health centres with reduced services, which is what the case was on a number of occasions over the summer of 2023, but let's be clear and let's make sure that Yukoners know that the provisions of services to support nurses across this territory put in place by this government have, in the last year, reduced the vacancy rate of primary health care nurses in the territory from over 35 percent to below 25 percent.

While this vacancy rate has improved, we recognize that there is more work to be done, of course, to recruit new nurses and to support the existing staff to take the time off that they need for their health and well-being, which is the result of some of the community slowdowns or reduced services that have occurred. I am happy to talk more about this important aspect.

Ms. White: The state of our education system is another example of the Liberals' disregard for rural communities. Many Yukon students started off the school year without teachers in their classrooms or even access to a substitute teacher. From what we have heard, schools in Watson Lake, Teslin, Ross

River, Faro, Old Crow, Haines Junction, Destruction Bay, and Beaver Creek — all of those schools were understaffed.

There are those who like to blame the Yukon Party for making a mess of education and they are not entirely wrong, but the Liberals also want Yukoners to forget that they have had six years to fix it, and they have little to show for it. Educators keep suggesting simple solutions that could make a real difference, like opening positions and securing housing in communities earlier or not requiring teachers on call to reapply for their jobs yearly.

So, when will the minister start listening to educators and take action to keep our schools fully staffed?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to rise today and talk about our incredible educators that we have throughout the territory. We just did a tribute today, and I spoke a little bit about what some of the challenges are in terms of ongoing national labour shortages that really became evident, of course, during the pandemic and have continued to have impacts on overall recruitment efforts.

For the 2023-24 school year, we were able to make many strategic recruitment actions. We have posted positions earlier to be more competitive with other jurisdictions. We have participated in online career fairs and the Yukon University fair, placed advertising in many social media platforms to date. Teacher recruitment has added seven online job fairs and 13 in-person education career fairs in the Yukon, Ontario, Alberta, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick. These steps have supported the recruitment efforts. We continue to work to find staff with the best combination of qualifications, experience, and suitability, and we are definitely holding up the incredible work that educators do in our territory everyday.

Speaker: Order.

Ms. White: The Liberals are wanting to withdraw even basic services, like household waste disposal, in unincorporated communities. Instead, this government is asking rural Yukoners to drive several hours just to take out their trash. To add to that disrespect, the Liberals didn't even reach out to affected residents before they announced that they were closing four rural transfer stations.

They were forced to go back to communities after the signing of the second CASA, but the minister's so-called "consultation meetings" didn't fool anyone. This government still isn't ready to listen. There are better solutions than just closing down transfer stations, but this government is plowing ahead with a bad decision without regard for affected residents. This will kill small Yukon communities and endanger wildlife and people alike.

When will this government stop looking for shortcuts that work for no one and start listening to communities about the solutions that work for them?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to talk this afternoon about the incredible improvements that this government is making to our solid-waste management in the territory, which is critical to our municipalities across the territory. It is critical to our climate change initiatives. It's an initiative that was brought to the former government in 2016 by the Association of Yukon Communities. It was again brought to my colleague

by the Association of Yukon Communities in 2017, and we have taken action based on the advice of the Association of Yukon Communities.

Our government has held consultations and public meetings in each of the communities that may be impacted by the waste transfer station closures. Communities like Keno have partnerships with local communities to haul waste to nearby facilities, and our actions support the request of Yukon municipalities far and wide to have sustainable rural infrastructure and services.

All communities matter, Mr. Speaker. We are here working on behalf of all Yukoners to improve and modernize the way we handle the massive amounts of garbage that we are creating as a society. It's important that we wrangle this. Our communities said it wasn't sustainable. We are taking action to improve things.

Question re: RCMP funding and staffing

Ms. McLeod: Yesterday, I asked the Liberal government to commit to providing additional resources to the RCMP specifically for addressing crime in rural Yukon communities. In response, the Premier said, "We did, we have, and we likely will again."

So, I would like to ask for some clarity: Can the Minister of Justice tell us how many new RCMP positions were added to rural Yukon in the Liberals' budget?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Department of Justice, of course, works to ensure the provision of professional, accountable, and appropriately funded territorial policing service, which I said yesterday, in response to a question about RCMP resources. I am proud that we have increased our RCMP resources since forming government. Our government funds significant and ongoing investments in the Yukon police resources through the *Territorial Police Service Agreement* with the RCMP as well as through investments with the First Nations and Inuit Policing program.

This year, the Government of Yukon approved a policing budget increase of over 20 percent compared to the previous year. This increase will allow staffing increases that have been identified by the Whitehorse and Yukon RCMP to the Historical Case Unit, adding two officers to the crime reduction unit, which serves the entire territory. Two additional resources have been added to bring the First Nations and Inuit Policing program to a complement of 19 resources. They are spread across the territory, and individuals will be added to a number of communities as a result of the decisions made by the RCMP with respect to how they deliver that programming.

Ms. McLeod: Earlier this year, the First Nation and the municipality and the community of Mayo jointly called for an increase to RCMP positions in Mayo.

Can the Minister of Justice tell us how many new positions have been added to Mayo in response to this request?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I can note a result of the interactions and the letters that have been brought forward and the conversations with Mayo as a community. Both the Premier and I and other members of Cabinet have been to Mayo and have been meeting with the chief and council there and the

community with respect to their response and their request for additional resources. No additional RCMP positions have been dedicated to Mayo as a result of those conversations, and, as I said yesterday, the federal policing service, the RCMP here in the territory, have the responsibility of responding to those requests.

I can also indicate that we have had significant conversations with respect to how we can support Mayo. We will continue to do so through the work of the RCMP, through the work of their community safety concerns and their council's wishes as we go forward to work together with that community to provide safety, as we focus to do in all communities in the territory.

Ms. McLeod: Following a community meeting about rising crime in Watson Lake, the municipality released a statement calling for an action plan. There are many folks in my community who think that more RCMP resources are needed to address criminal activity in Watson Lake. The Premier has said that they did in fact provide increased resources for Yukon communities.

Can the government please tell us what additional resources have been provided specifically for Watson Lake?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think it's important to note that we were certainly interested in participating in any community meetings with respect to community issues, including those involving, of course, the police services across the territory. I can recall being invited to attend the meeting that is being referred to in Watson Lake with I think less than 24 hours' notice, and that wasn't a possibility for me to personally attend at the time. Certainly, we have supported it through other officials in the community being available.

I can indicate that currently there is a total number of RCMP regular members, considered officers, who are assigned to the territory and funded throughout the territory. There are 139 sort of regular members in the RCMP here in the territory, which is a significant amount of individuals. We have the third-highest police-per-capita ratio in Canada, with police strength of 320 officers per 100,000 people; ours, as I said, is 139. I am aware that the full complement of officers in Watson Lake are nine members.

Question re: Cyber security and foreign interference

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, on September 14, the Government of Yukon was hit with what was described as an unprecedented cyber attack which shut down government websites and internal Internet-based systems. This attack was one of several that struck Canadian provincial governments that week. Québec's cyber security minister told me that the attack was carried out by a pro-Russian hacker group called NoName.

Can the Government of Yukon provide an update on the investigation into the cyber attack in Yukon and can he confirm whether or not it was executed by the same pro-Russian hacker group that attacked Québec the day before?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Recently, on September 14, 2023, the Yukon government experienced distributed denial-of-service attack. The attack resulted in the inability to access Yukon.ca

websites and disrupted access to cloud services by internal government employees. Members of this House will know that occurred. This type of attack seeks to disrupt access to service by overwhelming the online systems with a massive load of requests. The attacks are not designed to gain access to internal information. We were able to introduce some measures and minimize the impacts of the attacks and make services available again within the same day. The attack was halted a couple of days later. The measures that were put in place to mitigate the impacts of the distributed denial-of-service attacks will help any future attacks. There is no evidence, Mr. Speaker, that any unauthorized access to private citizen data, government systems, or government files took place. Highways and Public Works continues to monitor this security measures that we have put in place.

I had the opportunity to meet with the team that worked on this tirelessly over the course of those number of days and I certainly thank the IT team downstairs in the Jim Smith Building for their amazing efforts in this regard.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, the question I asked the minister was whether or not it was the same pro-Russian hacker group that had attacked Québec the day earlier.

Earlier this year, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador released a report that confirmed that a cyber attack that had hit their health care system in 2021 was also done by a Russian ransomware group. During that attack, there was a ransom demand from the attacking group, and while the provincial government would not confirm nor deny the payment of a ransom, it was widely understood that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador paid a ransom of approximately \$16 million.

Mr. Speaker, did the Government of Yukon receive a ransom demand during the cyber attack last month, and if so, did they pay it?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, what I can advise is that the Yukon government is an active member of the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security. We attend weekly briefings with the centre about emerging threats and receive all security alerts and recommendations for actions to be taken.

For example, on September 5, 2023, Google issued a security advisory to address vulnerabilities in Chrome for desktop. The Yukon government reviews these alerts and applies updates to its systems. We are also active members of the federal, provincial, and territorial committee on cyber security where governments share information about threats, advice, and best practices. The Yukon government also provides input into cyber security position papers that are produced by this committee.

Mr. Speaker, I can advise as well that there has been legislative authority that has been provided by this House over the course of the last year or year and a half for the improvement of all cyber security enhancement measures so that the Yukon is at the same standard or better than our provincial and territorial counterparts.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the update on what has been done since then, the questions were about whether or not the attack was done by this same pro-

Russian hacker group that attacked Québec. The second question was about whether or not there was a ransom demand and whether or not the government paid any ransom.

Could the minister please answer the questions that were asked?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, keeping our information systems and government-held information secure is a key objective of our government. Over the last decade, the number of cyber attacks around the world affecting both governments and private companies have increased. This trend is consistent for the Yukon in recent years. The Yukon government, like other governments across Canada, has experienced an increase in cyber attacks and risks. We take cyber security seriously, and in an effort to counter cyber security threats, Highways and Public Works is continually evolving our security-threat monitoring and detection solutions to repel attacks. We are improving the government's resiliency by taking new approaches to the ways in which we protect information, conducting security-threat risk assessments on systems and regularly mitigating vulnerabilities and working with a security operation centre service contractor to monitor our IT infrastructure 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

All I would say is that, as I said at the very beginning, this type of attack that occurred in September of this year seeks to disrupt access to services by overwhelming the online systems with a massive load of requests. The attacks are not designed to gain access to general information. That is what occurred.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 210: *Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 210, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 210, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 210, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to begin debate on the *Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23*. Bill No. 210 is the third supplementary estimate for the 2022-23 fiscal year.

I have said several times over the years that supplementary estimates are an opportunity to reflect on noteworthy changes of events. The changes included in this supplementary estimate reflect that very nature.

As members will recall, the Yukon government recently completed negotiations and ratified a new collective bargaining agreement with the Yukon Employees' Union. The Government of Yukon values the work of the public servants

and, as both the Minister of Finance and the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, I was pleased to see an agreement reached on the new collective bargaining agreement.

Some of the noteworthy provisions of the three-year agreement include wage increases of 10.5 percent over three years for members, in line with recent negotiated agreements for federal public servants, an increase in acting pay from five percent to 10 percent, an increase in auxiliary benefit allowances from \$2 to \$4 per hour, increases in shift premiums from \$2.25 to \$3 per hour, an increase in retention allowances for social workers, new retention allowances for correctional officers I and II at \$3,000, new retention allowances for student service supports at \$1,000, new nurse pay grids and new midwife pay grids, new retention allowances for primary care paramedics at \$3,000, and critical care paramedics at \$6,000, new retention allowances for a primary health care nurse at \$8,000 and primary health care nurse in charge at \$18,000, and cultural leave for Indigenous employees to observe or participate in traditional activities as well.

Needless to say, the sheer number of provisions included in this agreement, which covers more than 3,500 employees, resulted in a lengthier negotiation time. This was also made challenging by a higher-than-normal inflation rate for the territory, across the country, and around the world.

While I don't want to dive too far into the negotiation process, I would like to thank the negotiating teams who worked long hours to help reach an agreement. With such a large percentage of the workforce covered by this agreement, it is not a surprise that the financial implications are also noteworthy, and that is why we are here today.

Following the ratification of the agreement, the Yukon government was provided 120 days to implement the agreement. This time limit also includes a timeline to complete retroactive pay to employees for the portion of the agreement falling within the 2022-23 fiscal year.

Under the Public Sector Accounting Board standards, any retroactive payment occurring in a fiscal year that remains open must be reflected and booked in the same fiscal year. As we have not yet tabled the Public Accounts for the 2022-23 fiscal year, this means that the retroactive payment for that year must be included as part of the supplementary estimates for that year.

I'll come back to that point in a second. First, I would like to go over the financial implications reflected in the third supplementary estimates for 2022-23.

As part of these supplementary estimates, we will see an increase of \$15.3 million in O&M expenditures. The entirety of this amount is included to cover the retroactive payments for six government departments. Those departments are the Executive Council Office, the Department of Justice, the Public Service Commission, the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Environment, and the Department of Highways and Public Works.

The remaining departments are all able to manage the retroactive payments from their existing department votes and therefore do not require additional appropriations as part of this bill.

Overall, this change in spending would result in a revised annual surplus of \$28.6 million, or a change of \$15.3 million from the second supplementary estimates, as well as a revised net debt of \$313.8 million.

Keep in mind, Mr. Speaker, that these variances reflect forecast end-of-year figures. The final figures, which will be published in the Public Accounts in a few short weeks, will still vary as they will reflect end-of-the-year accounting standards, such as the reflection of environmental liabilities and other treatments.

This brings me back to the point that I wanted to talk about earlier. As members know, the Government of Yukon is currently working hard to wrap up the 2022-23 fiscal year in order to table its Public Accounts by October 31 of this year — a couple of weeks.

I encourage and welcome any and all debate on this bill so we have time that we need to prepare for our final year-end documents by the required date.

At this point, I will wrap up my remarks; however, I do encourage members to seek any clarification on this vote bill in a timely fashion, as time is of the essence. Once again, I would also like to thank everyone for their work on negotiating this agreement, and I look forward to continue to work with the Yukon Employees' Union and its members.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to rise to speak to this as the Official Opposition Finance critic. Our understanding from the briefing with officials is that all of the spending contained in the supplementary estimate for the last fiscal year is due to retroactive increases as the result of the collective bargaining agreement being settled. If there are any amounts that are due to other costs or changes, I would ask the Minister of Finance or one of his colleagues to identify them.

I would note as well that government practice is to include in the fiscal framework funding to cover the estimated costs of ratifying a new collective agreement after that occurs. It is typical government practice not to publicly announce those exact amounts beforehand, but the fact that we are seeing this retroactive spending of so many millions of dollars is clearly an indication that the government settled the contract at a far higher amount than they had planned to do and, as a result, they underestimated previously what those costs would be.

I would also ask, Mr. Speaker, if the minister could indicate — in this area, because these amounts are retroactive, it results in departments going over vote for the fiscal year. In the normal course of business, a department going over vote is not in compliance with the *Financial Administration Act* and is considered a breach. I would just ask the minister to explain his understanding, from a legal perspective, of whether this retroactive settlement results in any lack of compliance with the *Financial Administration Act* by departments — and, if not, if he could just explain why they believe that this is in fact compliant with the *Financial Administration Act*.

Ms. White: Today, in speaking to the *Supplementary Estimates No. 3*, my only point would be that if negotiation for a new collective agreement takes 18 months and we see this

happening again in the future, I think we will have to re-evaluate how that process goes.

In recent memory, this has not been the common practice. Typically, agreements are able to be negotiated within the time frame so it doesn't cover multiple budget years, but, as per the briefing, my understanding is that this is to meet the new requirements of the collective agreement and so we will have no questions.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I thank my colleagues across the way for their comments today.

One of the comments from the other side was about compliance. That is exactly why we have a special warrant here today. It is for that compliance issue. Being able to book in the fiscal time, the fiscal year, is a requirement from the Office of the Auditor General. That's the necessity to get this done.

I believe the retroactive pay will be this week. I will double check that with my officials — that money now being spent compared to it being spent in every single cheque during that time is the difference, I guess. Really, this is why we have a special warrant today, compared to booking the money in the regular course of events in the supplementary that we would be discussing after we pass this special warrant.

I will say for the record — again, I won't necessarily comment on the time frames. I hope that this is not the new normal. I suspect it wouldn't be — this would be an anomaly. A lot of different things were happening at that time. Again, I'm not going to talk about the negotiating process. We never walked away from the table. I stated that earlier. We definitely worked with the board chair.

With that being said, there is an issue about legislative grants that I would like to address in second reading. There is no other extra financial, necessarily, but because we have the special warrant open and we want to book inside of the right fiscal time frame, there is an opportunity to provide an additional vote authority for two legislative grants under Health and Social Services. The grants were for the Yukon seniors income supplement, and it is basically a regional subclassification.

So, the required budget for these two grants will be offset because it's just basically expected lapses from a Whitehorse subclassification of the social assistance program and other regional subclassifications. That reclassification resulted in a net zero when it comes to any budgeting considerations — more clerical than anything else.

Because we had the special warrant open, we might as well book it in there as opposed to later on and the Office of the Auditor General saying that subclassification should have been done during the time frame. So, it would have either come up in the Public Accounts in their comments or we have an opportunity right now to just deal with it, and the subclassification is here so that would be the only thing else.

But again, to reiterate, this results in a net zero increase to the budgetary items.

With that, I will sit and look forward to Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are nine yeas, seven nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 210 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

Chair (Ms. Blake): The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 210, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 210: Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 210, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to begin Committee of the Whole debate for the *Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23*. Before I begin, I would like to introduce and welcome my Deputy Minister of Finance, Jessica Schultz, into the Assembly, and I want to thank her for her tireless work, and the whole team in Finance as well.

I'm going to keep my remarks very brief; however, I would like to cover two items before turning to the floor. First, I would like to provide some further details on the breakdowns included in this appropriation act, and secondly, I would like to reiterate the piece about timing that I spoke about earlier. So, I will begin with some details.

So, I will begin with some details. As part of the supplementary estimates, we will see an increase of \$15.3 million in O&M expenditures. The entirety of this amount, as I mentioned previously, is included to cover those retroactive payments to six Yukon government departments for 2022-23 fiscal year. For clarity, this funding does not cover the complete retroactive payment totals under the new collective agreement. Retroactive payments for 2023-24 fiscal year will be included in the supplementary estimates for that year.

At this point, I would like to just break down the funding per department as part of the bill: \$8.7 million is included in the Department of Health and Social Services to meet its retroactive payment commitments; \$2.8 million is needed in the Department of Highways and Public Works; \$1.6 million will be allocated toward the Department of Justice; \$1 million toward the Department of Environment; \$970,000 is needed for the Public Service Commission; and \$318,000 will be directed toward the Executive Council Office.

Madam Chair, I mentioned previously that all other departments are able to manage their retroactive payments for 2022-23 within their existing vote authority. Therefore, they are not included as part of this appropriation bill.

These changes in annual spending result in a revised surplus of \$28.6 million for the 2022-23 fiscal year and a revised net debt of \$313.8 million. These conclude the changes proposed in part of the bill, but I would like to now remind members of the timing considerations surrounding this appropriation. As the members know, the Yukon government is working, as we speak, to wrap up the 2022-23 fiscal year in order to table its Public Accounts by October 31. While I am very pleased to answer as many questions as are needed on this bill, I will remind members that the work on the 2022-23 fiscal year does not end with the passing of this bill.

For now, Madam Chair, I will turn things over to the members opposite to begin the debate on the supplementary estimates.

Mr. Cathers: Just as noted earlier, our understanding is that this spending is related to retroactive increases as a result of a collective bargaining agreement. I asked the question that I had earlier — the two questions — regarding this in second

reading. The minister did answer the one regarding the *Financial Administration Act*. The other question was related to whether there was anything outside of those amounts that were provided, and he did make mention of one adjustment internally. Again, unless there is anything else that the minister would identify as “other matters” contained in this spending, we really don't have any questions. Since it is related to retroactive funding, we would focus our attention on the government's supplementary estimates related to the current fiscal year.

I will hand it back to the Minister of Finance. I don't know if the Third Party has questions, but unless there are other questions from others, we are also prepared to request unanimous consent to clear this budget and move on to other matters.

Again, I will pass the floor back to others before actually making a motion.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I have nothing else to add.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, we will proceed to departmental debate.

Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all Votes in Bill No. 210, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23*, carried.

Unanimous consent re deeming all Votes in Bill No. 210, Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23, carried

Chair: The Member for Lake Laberge has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all Votes in Bill No. 210, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23*, carried.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$15,348,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$15,348,000 agreed to

Mr. Cathers: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses, schedules, the preamble, and title of Bill No. 210, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses, schedules, the preamble and title of Bill No. 210, Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23, read and agreed to

Chair: The Member for Lake Laberge has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses, schedules, the preamble, and title of Bill No. 210, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clause 1 and Schedules A, B and C deemed read and agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Preamble

Preamble agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 210, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that the Chair report Bill No. 210, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

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

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 Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 210, entitled *Fourth Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 211: *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — Second Reading — adjourned debate

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 211, standing in the name of the Hon. Sandy Silver; adjourned debate, Mr. Cathers.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased today to rise, as the Yukon Party Official Opposition Finance critic, to speak to this supplementary budget for the current fiscal year that the government has tabled. I would note that, while my colleagues and I will be saving many of our questions and comments for department debate, I will begin with a few remarks.

We continue to be concerned with the government's financial management, including increased spending that we

see encompassed within this budget as well as continuing to take the territory further into the red with net debt, but I do want to begin my remarks by talking about some of the things that we do agree with in the budget.

I am pleased to see the government increasing funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. We were pleased to see that in the handout provided by officials. I would also note, as members will recall, that this is an area where I have raised concerns on many occasions with the Liberal government for their chronic underfunding of our hospitals. The Minister of Health and Social Services and I had a fair bit of discussion on that topic in the spring of this year as well as last fall, and in some previous sessions as well.

According to the information provided to us by Finance officials at the briefing, this budget contains \$14.9 million for the Yukon Hospital Corporation that is described as — and I quote: “core funding increase”, as well as \$2.3 million for what they describe as pension solvency.

I would note that, in the spring when I expressed concerns about the ongoing chronic underfunding of the Hospital Corporation, I cited what the chair and chief executive officer of the Hospital Corporation told this Legislative Assembly about their needs when they appeared in the House last fall, in November 2022. At that time, we heard from them that the hospital's core O&M needs for that fiscal year was \$103.5 million. Quoting from what they told us that day: “... annual O&M budget for the fiscal 2022-23 is \$103.5 million. It is expected that is a core increase of approximately 3.3 percent...”

As I noted in the spring, unfortunately the numbers we saw reflected in the supplementary estimates for last year, as well as the budget for this fiscal year, fell short of what the hospital witnesses told us that they needed.

Again, just going back for the reference of members to the comments as recorded in Hansard from earlier this year, I made mention of the quote from the hospital CEO, which is found on page 2846 of Hansard from November 22, 2022 — and again, I would urge people to refer to what the CEO said at that time. We heard from the hospital witnesses that what they needed in O&M core funding from government for that fiscal year was \$103.5 million. In fact, however, what we saw in this current fiscal year — and the number tabled in the spring as shown on page 13-4 of the main estimates for this current fiscal year — was that Yukon Hospital Services had \$93.6 million in O&M identified for it. That number, of course, is \$10 million lower than the number that the hospital CEO told us was the hospital's O&M need for the previous fiscal year. Of course, at a time of rising inflation — when the Yukon has been leading the country in inflation, in fact — while growth in costs in the health field tend to be higher than the rate of inflation, it is simply not plausible that the hospital would need \$10 million less in O&M core funding than they did in the previous fiscal year.

In the spring, I asked the minister several times what the hospital's budget request for O&M funding had been for the current fiscal year — that being 2023-24 — and after the minister repeatedly sidestepped the question, she indicated on April 6 during debate — this is found in Hansard, page 3493 —

the minister said — and I quote: “I believe the other question was how much the Hospital Corporation asked for, for the 2023-24 budget. I can indicate that some of what was included in their initial request were things that had not yet been approved by Management Board.”

The minister, in her response, further went on to say — and I quote: “We have provided core funding from Yukon government to the Yukon Hospital Corporation for the beginning of the process in 2023-24 of \$93.6 million.”

Again, not only in reference to the quote from the hospital CEO indicating that the amount for the previous fiscal year was \$103.5 million in core funding needs, but, by the minister’s own acknowledgement, some of what was included in their initial request was not actually approved by Management Board at the time this budget was tabled in the spring.

As a result, I am pleased that they have finally provided this amount in core funding to meet the hospital’s needs. It is unfortunate, however, that it has taken so long since, based on normal budgetary timelines, unless the government has changed them significantly without our knowledge, the request from the Hospital Corporation, as with any department, would have been made over a year ago in anticipation of the budget since the budgetary call letters would typically be out in late summer or early fall. So, it is unfortunate that it took so long for them to make it right to provide the hospital with their needs.

I do hope that we will have the opportunity to ask the Hospital Corporation witnesses this Sitting whether the government has actually provided all of the amount they need for core funding for this year or if there is still a shortfall.

We also learned from Finance officials at the briefing — and just for the record, I would note that we have not yet had an opportunity for the individual department briefing with Health and Social Services, so we are told by the Finance officials that they were not in a position to provide some of the detail that we had asked for, which I understand, at that time, but until we have that detail, we will not be able to fully understand what the changes in this budget are, absent that information.

Finance officials indicated in the handout that they provided to us regarding the Department of Health and Social Services that there was a \$10-million increase in insured health. I am just curious about what that is related to. We in the Yukon Party, of course, support funding our health care system and meeting the needs of Yukoners as well as reducing wait times, but an increase in insured health of that amount of money, based on the variance report four months into the fiscal year, is a significant variance, and we are looking for an explanation of what that is due to.

As noted in the information provided to us by government, this *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for the current fiscal year forecasts an increase of \$132.7 million in operation and maintenance spending and no increases in gross capital spending. We are also concerned that the annual surplus that they had projected in the spring of \$48.2 million has now dropped to \$3.6 million.

Even more concerning, that net debt forecast has grown significantly from \$378 million, as referenced in the main estimates, to \$423.8 million in projected net debt. We would also appreciate information on the current debt that the government has classified as long-term debt as well as short-term borrowings. I did ask for that information from officials, but it was clear that they were not at liberty to share that. I would appreciate the government updating Yukoners because the further this government goes into long-term borrowings and short-term borrowings, especially at the rising rates of interest, that increasingly becomes very relevant public information and it does not serve this territory or this Assembly well if the government refuses to share that information until the Public Accounts for the current fiscal year are tabled and audited by the Auditor General because that information is, Mr. Speaker, then over a year out of date.

Mr. Speaker, we were also pleased in the spring of this year that the government did finally commit to developing a health human resources strategy. This is following our efforts of championing the need for such a new strategy for years, and we were pleased that the government has finally recognized the need for it and that some work on it has begun. I would ask for an update on the work that is proceeding as well as what results may be happening, Mr. Speaker, because this is a matter of some urgency. There are many Yukoners across this territory who do not have access to the health care they need when they need it. This includes growing wait times for important procedures as well as specialist appointments. The fact that thousands of Yukoners do not have access to a family doctor — and this year we have seen the ongoing series of rural health centres closing as a result of staff shortages, including carrying forward into the fall in a number of communities, and it is really disappointing that it wasn’t until the rural nursing vacancies reached almost 50 percent by the government’s own admission that they finally acted in this area, which we have been calling on them to take action in for years and which health professionals have been calling on them to take action on for years. This Liberal government has been shockingly slow to respond — until the situation was very much a crisis that is preventing Yukoners across this territory from accessing health care that they needed, in many cases.

I was also concerned to see, in terms of the growth of spending, that spending increase, compared to the previous fiscal year, based on the information that the government has provided us, now stands at an increase of over nine percent in spending over the previous year. This Liberal government is continuing to grow government more than necessary or appropriate, and what is worse is that they are neglecting important areas that matter to Yukoners, such as health care and others that I’ve mentioned, while continuing to spend money in areas that do not reflect the priorities of Yukoners but may reflect the priorities of this Liberal government.

I won’t get into an exhaustive list now. We’ll have more time in the session to get into examples, but every time I look at the parking lot outside this building, which the government spent \$2.7 million on ripping up and repaving, it is an example in the minds of many Yukoners of how this government

unnecessarily spends significant amounts of money on doing something that really was not a priority when many Yukoners would rather have seen those investments in improving our roadways, improving road safety, hiring more nurses, increasing funding to the hospital, repairing our highways, to name just a few of the many areas that are being neglected.

There are many of my constituents who continue to complain about the money that the government spent on the digital signage over highways that are widely disliked by many people but they spent millions of dollars on.

This government also is spending in areas such as spending millions of dollars on installing electric vehicle chargers while literally neglecting highway repairs and maintenance and closing down outhouses beside our main highways. This morning, I note that Yukoners in Whitehorse and the surrounding area dealt with the snowfall that we had. I personally witnessed a situation where school buses and many of my constituents were driving on highways that would have benefited from some plowing this morning, while unfortunately that had not occurred, at the busy time of the morning. Again, the list of areas where government has wasted money or spent on low priority items — we have listed some of that in the past and will in the future, in addition to the examples that I gave here today. We will continue to press, on behalf of our constituents and other Yukoners who contact us, for the government to focus its resources on addressing their needs and their priorities.

Mr. Speaker, I will not spend much longer in my remarks here at this stage, but I will just note that, according to the information provided to us both in the government's budget as well as the interim fiscal and economic update, we see that the government's expenditures have increased significantly, even over what their own typical spending increases are. Ultimately, while we do agree that some of that spending may have been necessary, such as spending on fires and floods, there are other areas where we believe that government has been wasteful with taxpayers' money and has demonstrated, from the Cabinet level, a very casual attitude toward spending the public resources on matters that are not a high priority for Yukon citizens while neglecting other areas that are.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would just wrap up my remarks here at second reading. I look forward to hearing comments from others during debate on this budget. As I mentioned, my colleagues and I will largely focus most of our questions and comments during debate on individual departments, just in the interest of expediting that, as well as due to the fact that, in most cases, we have had a high-level explanation of the expenses and programming changes within individual departments but have yet to have a briefing on those individual departments to fully understand what those changes entail. Once we do have those briefings, we will be in a better position to ask questions related to those matters.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks and would note that, as is our practice as the Official Opposition, we will continue to vote against the government on each and every confidence vote, including on budgetary matters. That is, of course, quite common across the country for Official

Oppositions to do that. Despite the Premier and other ministers attempting to point to specific items and trying to confuse those who may not have been paying close attention to debate into thinking that we have specifically voted against those items, the ministers know that such conclusions and attempts at spin are not well-based in fact and that we will continue to support the individual initiatives that we believe are worth supporting, we will reflect that in our comments here in this Legislative Assembly in many cases, but overall, we will continue to vote against this Liberal government on all confidence matters because Yukoners are asking for an election and are seeing a situation where the territory is currently being governed by a Premier who no one actually voted for in that role. It is a convention across this country that a new leader, a new premier, seeks a mandate from the public to govern.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I think that it is important that we ground this in context, because I was elected in 2011, actually almost 12 years ago. Next week is my 12th anniversary. The Member for Klondike, as well a couple of folks in the Yukon Party as well — 12 years — 12 years ago, just about. The reason why I bring this up is that one of the frustrations that I have had since the Liberals have changed the budgeting process is that a lot of the questions that you want to ask in budget debate are actually around departments and you want to ask about programs and you want to ask about direction. It is challenging to do, because since the budgeting process changed and it has been improved so much, the supplementary budget is far smaller and it doesn't include every department across the entire government spectrum, which is actually an improvement.

So, the difference with the one we see today is that it does cover every department, which is a real pleasure for me, because it means that I can ask questions all across the spectrum, but the reason it includes it is because, as we know, it has to do with the new collective agreement.

I find it incredibly, incredibly just a little bit amusing that my colleague from Lake Laberge is talking about the spending, because in the first supplementary budget in the year 2013-14 — the supplementary at same time this time in 2013 was actually \$71 million, and it was \$71 million without even a collective agreement. I have to tell you that, for the first five years that I was in this House, supplementary budgets just meant that I got to debate every department again and ask questions across the full spectrum because the accounting process was so poor that there was always money being revoted on in the fall — always. That's how come I find it so frustrating when the process changed, and I'm sure that the Member for Klondike also felt that because we would ask questions and he would say that he was unable to answer them because it wasn't part of the supplementary budget.

It's important to note that things have change drastically. So, to have my colleague suggest in the way that he has — it's just that revisionist history. It's the ability to talk about maybe our different remembering, but it is important to note that you can find the supplementary estimates from 2013-14 online, and it will remind you that it was \$71 million this time, you know, that many years ago. It's wild — sometimes it's wild to listen

to. So, I just wanted to bring us back and remind us of the changes.

Interestingly enough, I don't actually have a lot to comment on the budget overall because, really, I'm more interested in asking those questions about departments that I would typically be asking. We haven't been briefed yet, but I know that we will have that opportunity as we go forward.

As for comments today about the supplementary estimates as a whole, there are a lot of things that have been explained. We already understand that a good portion of it has to do with the collective agreement, but there are other things that have come through in programs and, you know, I think there are some priorities that I would have liked to have seen funded in this supplementary budget that we have. I look forward to asking those questions of the ministers when they are on their feet.

As far as comparing the two, I would say that things have changed, and even though I find it frustrating, it's changed for the better. When we talk about the new budgeting — well, it's not even new anymore — but we talk about how budgeting happens now, which is departments doing their best to figure out the money they need for the entire calendar year and not coming back with a substantial ask in the fall. So, this is a bit of an anomaly — and again, an anomaly I'm grateful for because I have lots of questions across the spectrum. But this is unusual, and it's important to give credit where credit is due.

There have been great efforts made by the Department of Finance, by our current deputy minister who has been involved in numerous processes in different roles and now he has taken that lead, but it's important to note that what was done in the past was different, but it was also worse. So, if we're just talking about a budgeting process, let's acknowledge that there is a better job being done across the spectrum of government to make sure that the budget that is required for departments — they are doing the best that they can to estimate, the best they can to ask for it in the spring, and it's far better than it used to be.

We just have to go back to budgets in the 33rd Legislative Assembly to see those changes. I just wanted to note that today because I think it's important. Today, we are talking about an \$84-million budget request with an entirely new collective agreement, but in 2013-14, they were asking for \$71 million and it wasn't with that collective agreement negotiation, so there is a difference.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time and I do look forward to getting into those department debates.

Hon. Ms. McLean: It is my pleasure to rise today to speak in the second reading for Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*. I want to start, of course, by saying that it continues to be an honour to serve the constituents of Mountainview as their MLA and to serve all Yukoners in my capacity as Minister of Education, Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, and, most recently, Deputy Premier. These past five months have been busy between the Spring Sitting and Fall Sitting with a lot of great opportunities for me to connect with constituents and Yukoners

throughout the territory and, of course, I have also had some really great opportunities to meet with my provincial and federal counterparts to advance important files. It's really great to get back to having those opportunities to meet in person and we have certainly taken great advantage of that.

I am going to speak a little bit about education and women and gender equity today. Both are part of the supplementary budget. The member opposite, the Leader of the New Democratic Party, is very correct in that all of our departments are part of the supplementary budget. The majority of our requests are in line with the collective agreement. There is also a request for resources to go toward enhanced French language education, moving resources in different ways within the department.

Some of that has to do with the new First Nation School Board and the work that they are doing. Through Education, we're really working to transform our education system to better serve all Yukoners, working in collaboration with First Nations and our education partners. Our primary goal really is to make our schools more inclusive, safe, and attuned to our diverse communities while improving outcomes for all learners.

This school year, our focus is on our ongoing commitment to safer schools and our broadened vision for inclusive and special education. For us, safety and inclusion aren't just words; they are foundational elements to the work we are doing every single day. We're working to ensure that every student feels a sense of belonging and connection. Our efforts to evolve Yukon's education landscape are very much collective. Every school community shares a mutual aspiration to make schools welcoming, safe, and supportive spaces. Teachers, students, families, and other stakeholders play crucial roles in ensuring that our schools are nurturing environments where students can realize their potential.

A lot of our work has been around reimagining inclusive and special education. Learning thrives in an inclusive setting where every child feels valued and empowered. This is the foundation of reimagining inclusive and special education — or what folks may hear, the term "RISE". That's what that is referring to. RISE is a collaboration with the First Nations Education Commission and the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education. A key component of RISE is the Ready-to-Learn Schools initiative, which was formally introduced in 2022. Ready-to-Learn aims to foster an environment of safety and calm so students can learn more effectively. We are training educators to recognize how trauma and stress can affect a student's learning so we can meet all students where they are at.

This is very key, and a lot of time and effort has been spent on this. This school year, there are 14 schools that have adopted this approach, enabling teachers to better address individual student needs. We are making tangible strides. Over the next three years, 81 new full-time roles — including school wellness specialists, educational assistants, and learning assistants — will be introduced.

In addition to school wellness specialists — this is a key change — these staff will offer tailored supports to meet the

distinct needs of our school communities. This will support comprehensive mental health and wellness for students.

On August 4, we announced the dedication of \$1 million annually, subject to legislative approval, to holistic student support. A large part of this funding will be used to work with Yukon First Nations, bringing in elders and community leaders to provide culturally appropriate supports that meet the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and academic needs of students. By working collaboratively, we are not just reimagining education but really shaping it, Mr. Speaker, ensuring that every student in Yukon thrives. That is truly the goal.

Making schools safer and school safety planning is also a substantial part of our work. We believe that student and staff safety within schools is crucial and that everyone should experience an environment free from fear or abuse. We recently implemented all 23 actions from the safer schools action plan. Focusing on safe environments, transparency, and collaboration, the plan emphasizes victim-centred approaches and promotes reconciliation in schools. Though safety is an ongoing mission, the plan marks significant progress, reinforcing trust and partnership.

Over the past two years, our government has been working to bring about meaningful, systemic change at the Department of Education, improving accountability and oversight in Yukon schools with the goal of making schools safer for students. We continue this work. The importance of fostering a safe and inclusive learning environment that nurtures the academic and personal growth of students has been communicated to all department staff. The education leadership team is working to support staff in providing this environment.

Since 2021, we have enhanced training for staff in crisis intervention, behavioural management, and fostering a healthy work environment. We have also launched new preventive procedures and increased support for school leaders. Another important part of our work is, of course, early learning and childcare, which is something I'm so excited about because the investments that we're making — and we're making historic investments into early learning and childcare and really investing in our youngest Yukoners in a substantial way. Quality early learning education is the foundation for every child's success. Our focus is on supporting high-quality, accessible, culturally relevant early learning. Together with Yukon First Nations and key partners, we're enhancing early learning and childcare in Yukon. Our goal is to ensure that quality, affordable early learning is accessible to all families in the Yukon.

Recent highlights of our progress include: raising educator wages to among Canada's highest, reflecting our respect and commitment; offering a comprehensive benefits package for operators; and boosting funding for continuous education of educators and ensuring programs are culturally relevant.

Investing in early learning educators is an investment in the future of our childcare system. We have made a number of key investments. This was a major topic in our provincial-territorial-federal ministers meeting in Iqaluit this summer where we talked. This is a new ministers' table that has been

established. It includes ministers most responsible for early learning and childcare throughout Canada. I can say that Yukon is definitely performing well in terms of our implementation of our early learning and childcare agreement with Canada — and had opportunity to present on some of the work that we've done.

This is an exciting area. I know that it's not frequently spoken of in this Legislative Assembly. I've managed to bring it forward through ministerial statements and in other ways because we generally do not get a lot of questions about it. It's something that is going very well — and again, huge investment in a range of \$43 million this year in early learning childcare. That is historic and very important to the better outcomes for our children long term. This is such a critical area that we continue to improve and invest in.

We've enhanced early kindergarten program supports for students with the transition to regular kindergarten. So, early kindergarten is a literacy-focused, play-based learning that fosters academic readiness and a love for learning. Nearly all rural Yukon schools offer early kindergarten. We are discussing the program with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government and the Robert Service School. We are considering bringing early kindergarten to Whitehorse schools, extending the early academic foundation to even more young learners. This is exciting work that's ongoing.

Effective teachers are one of the most important factors in student success in our schools, and we are working to attract and retain the best educators that we can. The Yukon government has allocated an additional \$1 million in each of the next three budgets to enhance recruitment and retention of new rural education professionals across the Yukon. This ties into our goal of finding staff with the best combination of qualifications, experience, and suitability for our communities.

A major part of our work, of course, is transforming Indigenous education. Starting in the 2023-24 academic year, the First Nation School Board has assumed governance of an additional three Yukon schools, bringing the total to 11. This is not just an administrative change but a profound shift toward an education system where Yukon First Nations regain enhanced ownership of the education of their children.

We believe in the promise and potential of the First Nation School Board. The trust is demonstrated in our 15-month funding agreement, where we have committed over \$35 million. This investment ensures that the school board has the resources needed to realize their vision. Our collective path forward aims for a more inclusive educational experience for all Yukon students. Three additional schools have joined the board this year, as I have said. As a result of this, approximately \$2.8 million is earmarked for operations for these three schools, which will be moved to the school board from the department's existing budget.

Some other exciting work around literacy and numeracy: Developing and improving literacy and numeracy skills throughout life is essential to an individual's right to an education and is a top priority for our Department of Education. We provide individual adult learners with flexible supports that best meet their needs. We recognize that every individual's

journey and needs are different and encourage interested Yukoners to come and talk to the training programs team to discuss the support available to them. This summer, we launched a new online student financial assistance platform, streamlining applications and tracking for post-secondary students. This modernized system enhances the application experience, reflecting our dedication to making education and support more accessible for Yukoners.

There has been much discussion around the SOGI policy. Every Yukon student deserves a learning environment where they feel respected, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. To reinforce this, we have updated the sexual orientation and gender identity policy, also known as “SOGI”, in line with Yukon’s LGBTQ2S+ *Inclusion Action Plan*. This fall, we will be speaking again with stakeholders to provide further feedback, as we continue to refine this policy. In partnership with the BC-based ARC Foundation, we are introducing SOGI 1 2 3. This initiative provides educators with specialized resources to promote inclusion for all students, highlighting its importance. Our educators started the year with a dedicated SOGI training session, which I understand went very well.

Another huge area, of course, that we are working on — we are investing in school capital. We continue to work with our school communities on planning for their short-, medium-, and long-term facility needs. The Government of Yukon’s five-year capital plan includes school replacements and renovation projects to ensure that all buildings are safe and suitable for many years to come. We are pleased that work is underway on the new schools in Whistle Bend and Burwash Landing. Planning has started for the replacement of École Whitehorse Elementary School. Engagement with the broader Whitehorse community and partners on school capital planning took place this spring.

The public had access to an online survey between March 14 and May 15. This included public open houses that were held throughout April. The result of this public engagement will be available this fall in the form of a “what we heard” report on yukon.ca/engagements. This feedback will inform future planning in Whitehorse schools, renovations, and replacements. I will note, as well, that I have certainly had some targeted discussions with the Chiefs Committee on Education and will continue the discussions with the First Nation School Board, as many of our rural schools are now under the operation of the First Nation School Board.

In terms of women and gender equity, through the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, we continue to make trailblazing progress on several major initiatives where we see the Yukon being a leader among the rest of the country. We continue to support our Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit People in developing and releasing the strategy and the implementation plan, which was released this summer. We certainly stand firm in our commitment to our government’s *Inclusion Action Plan* on 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. We collaborate with Justice in the engagement and planning for the expansion of the sexualized assault response unit services

beyond Whitehorse to Yukon communities. There are many other — we will obviously have an opportunity in general debate and Committee of the Whole to talk further about the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* and more detail around the implementation plan.

Thank you for allowing me a bit of time to speak today. Again, I had a great opportunity this summer to connect with my constituents and certainly look forward to more discussions with a focus on community safety in the Mountainview area. I am looking forward to the general debate in Committee of the Whole.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am truly honoured to speak to Yukoners as the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Highways and Public Works. I will expand on the work that this Liberal government is doing for the benefit of all Yukoners.

Over the summer, I had the pleasure of travelling across the Yukon to witness the hard work occurring and meet with the staff who make the work of this government possible. I would like to start by praising the work being done on converting our remote northern grader stations from noisy and ineffective diesel generators to — for a large portion of the year — silent and top-of-the-line bifacials, which are double-sided solar panel farms, which I had the pleasure of attending and seeing both of those on a trip in September. By this fall, we expect to have substantially completed the construction of the two solar array systems at the Klondike and Ogilvie grader stations. These projects will offset more than 100,000 litres of diesel fuel each year and reduce emissions by approximately 280 tonnes.

The solar farms in these remote locations — particularly the Ogilvie grader station, which is located near Engineer Creek — are truly a sight to behold, and if anyone does — to all Yukoners, if you do have a chance to travel the Dempster Highway, either this year or next year, I would certainly encourage you to do so. They are big — they are large solar arrays. I was surprised how large they are.

We are also moving forward with solar energy projects at the Tuchtua and Blanchard grader stations, which will be tendered in the coming months. Once all of these solar array systems are installed, the four systems will offset a total of approximately 200,000 litres of diesel fuel each year, which is a reduction of over 500 tonnes of greenhouse gases, and, of course, the completely intended consequence is that you will have far fewer B-trains of fuel having to travel on the Dempster Highway to supply both the Klondike and Ogilvie grader stations.

On this recent trip, I also witnessed the ongoing work on the Dempster fibre line. The Dempster fibre line project, which commenced in July 2021, is progressing steadily to extend 800 kilometres of high-speed fibre line along the Dempster Highway from Dawson City, Yukon, to Inuvik, Northwest Territories, thereby creating a redundant fibre loop for all of northern Canada, as there is already a fibre line between Inuvik and Yellowknife.

This year, installation work resumed in May with the aim of installing conduit between Eagle Plains and Inuvik before

the end of summer. As of September 2023, 780 kilometres of cable conduit have been installed, and 405 kilometres of cable have been installed inside the conduit. This includes the installation under three major rivers: the Mackenzie River, the Peel River, and the Arctic Red River.

Work on the Dempster fibre line is seasonal, with crews usually demobilizing from the work site in November. For those of you who are familiar with the Dempster Highway, you will know that the construction takes place in sometimes formidably challenging terrain. This includes the use of specialized equipment and construction methods to minimize the impacts to the environment.

Of course, not all the work on the Dempster is seasonal, and I would like to take this opportunity to praise our hard-working grader station workers and grader operators working throughout the winter to keep our roads, or the Dempster Highway, open and safe. I had the opportunity to meet with grader staff in various places in the Yukon — but at the Klondike grader station and the Ogilvie grader station — and also spoke to some grader operators who were grading the Dempster in September.

As most of you know, our highways and roads see considerable weather challenges that can pose safety risks to drivers. This is, of course, most acute for the Dempster Highway where frequent snow, rain, freezing rain, and, as we hear often, full-on hurricane force winds and major temperature fluctuations can make the highway conditions extremely challenging. Throughout the year, our crews are out there maintaining the highway daily, plowing, grading, and fixing issues as they arise.

Once again, I take the opportunity to thank all grader operator staff across the Yukon.

As we head into winter, I urge all drivers to use caution when travelling along our network of highways, and particularly the Dempster Highway. Please drive to the current road conditions and do not forget to check 511 Yukon for the latest updates.

Over the summer on a number of trips, I had the opportunity to meet with many of the employees of Highways and Public Works and Environment working in the Klondike area. I also met with Klondike park staff and was shown — and assessed — the damage caused by violent winds in the Klondike River campground. I was impressed with how quickly the staff had fixed up and removed significant hazards, such as fallen debris — and, might I say, not insubstantial trees — to keep the campground operational.

As well, in the spring of 2023, there were some significant washouts along the Klondike Highway that caused traffic disruptions, some highway closures, and understandable concern for Klondike residents.

Washouts occurred near the Dawson airport, Henderson Corner, and Clear Creek bridge. As well, a culvert washout occurred near the Dempster cut-off at kilometre 670. Highways and Public Works crews effectively and quickly repaired the washouts and opened the roads to traffic in a mere few days.

We also had flooding within the Dawson airport perimeter, and our crews worked industriously to keep rising waters from

reaching the runway and from spreading into the nearby Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in farm. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard in those situations.

I was given a tour of the airport perimeter recently and could visualize the lowland areas there. I was advised that pumps had to run essentially continuously for the better part of 30 days in order to ensure that the airport was operational. Once again, many thanks to the hard-working crew at the Dawson airport, Highways and Public Works, and all Dawson residents for your industry and support of each other.

While in the Klondike as well, I also met with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government — once with chief and council and once in the presence of the northern chiefs. It included Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Vuntut Gwitchin, and the Gwich'in Tribal Council, and we had fruitful discussions.

I would also like to mention the ongoing work to complete the Dawson regional land use plan. Our government and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in are making progress on consensus discussions regarding the decision on the Dawson land use recommended plan. We continue to work together and we continue those discussions.

As well in the Klondike, I also took the time to visit the Dawson humane society. Our government provided the Humane Society Dawson with an additional \$25,000 in funding in fiscal year 2022-23 and we were pleased to do so. Our government provides annual funding to the territory's two registered humane societies supporting their mandate to rehome unwanted animals and to promote responsible pet ownership. The Department of Environment also supports both humane societies through a contract to offset the cost of rehoming companion animals that become the property of the local or territorial government when they are not reclaimed by their owners. Last year, we provided an additional one-time emergency support payment of \$135,000 to the Humane Society Yukon due to the increased funding pressures that they were facing. This was in addition to the \$110,000 in base funding that had been provided. In the coming months, we will contact municipal and First Nation governments and humane societies in order to better understand their needs for animal care and to identify additional partnership opportunities.

Moving along to another part of the Yukon, I had the opportunity to visit Teslin several times in the past months to meet with the Teslin Tlingit Council and the Village of Teslin. In Teslin, our government is supporting the construction of the Nisutlin Bay bridge. The \$159.96-million contract was awarded on May 3, 2022 to Graham Infrastructure LP. Infrastructure Canada's Building Canada fund committed \$41.25 million to the project. Transport Canada will also contribute \$52.5 million through the national trade corridors fund to the project.

The capital plan indicates that the approximate spending in 2023 is \$40 million to \$45 million, for fiscal year 2024-25, it is between \$45 million and \$50 million, and in fiscal year 2025-26, it is \$25 million to \$30 million. These numbers are subject to change as the work progresses.

I continued to be very impressed by the close engagement occurring on this project. The Department of Highways and

Public Works continues to work collaboratively with the Teslin Tlingit Council and to engage with the Village of Teslin, the public, and specific stakeholders on this project as it moves forward. One of my trips to Teslin was specifically to meet on this and a few other topics.

The Yukon government project team meets with the Teslin Tlingit Council on a biweekly basis in order to discuss the project and to troubleshoot and identify any challenges together. This is a megaproject for the Yukon and it is critical to have close engagement with the community. This is without a doubt one of the measures determining whether this project is a success.

For Yukoners who have had an opportunity to travel to Teslin and beyond, the physical work occurring in Teslin is impressive. The contractor is constructing a temporary trestle bridge, which will serve as a working platform for the construction of the new bridge. As of now, 21 of the total 30 spans have been completed and are facilitating the construction of the new bridge, starting with the piling. As well, the following work has been completed to date by the contractor: site mobilization and permanent pilings of the north and south abutments; installation of permanent pile casings for two of the piers — P2 and P3 — out of the total of six piers; and the concrete pouring for four of the eight piles of pier 2. The remaining four piles of pier 2 are scheduled to be poured in October of this year. The concrete pour for the south abutment, including abutment C, back walls and wing walls of the south approach embankment, is approximately 75 percent complete, and clearing and grubbing for the new road on the south side and also the installation of two of six cofferdams required for the construction of the new bridge, granular pit development, and rock production at kilometre 1238 near Teslin and environmental measures — such as hydro-acoustic monitoring, fish salvage, and water sampling — are ongoing.

As well, I was also in Teslin over the summer to celebrate the partnering with the Teslin Tlingit Council on a heat purchase agreement for the Khâtinâs.âxh Community School which will reduce emissions by approximately 106 tonnes each year.

I had the opportunity to celebrate this agreement with Deputy Chief Alex Oakley, and instead of cutting a ribbon, Deputy Chief Oakley and I sawed a log. That was a fitting ceremony for confirming the heat purchase agreement. We toured the impressive biomass facilities in Teslin and were certainly impressed by the level of sophistication and efficiency of these modern biomass systems.

I would like to take this opportunity to praise the Teslin Tlingit Council for being a trailblazer in the Yukon in developing the various biomass district heating systems that they have in their community. I would also note that I had the opportunity to tour their supply yard for incidental biomass which is very close to the Village of Teslin. That provides an economic opportunity for various Teslin Tlingit Council and Village of Teslin citizens.

Speaking of biomass, investing in renewable energy projects is part of many initiatives that the Yukon government is taking to meet the goals of *Our Clean Future*. Biomass

systems are renewable fuels to displace the use of fossil fuels and to reduce our overall emissions. Our government has made significant investments in biomass heating systems this past year. A new biomass heating system was recently installed at Elijah Smith Elementary School in Whitehorse, which will reduce the school's emissions by approximately 180 tonnes annually. I had the honour of attending the opening and launch of that system this summer.

The Yukon government is also expanding the biomass heating system at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre in order to reduce emissions by approximately 271 tonnes annually. Construction is expected to be completed this winter. These three biomass systems combined will reduce emissions by approximately 550 tonnes each year.

Touching on another significant project in the Yukon, I would be remiss to not mention the work that we are doing at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. A \$160.7-million contract to reconstruct the main runway was awarded to Flatiron Constructors Canada Limited on May 19, 2023. The proposed work is scheduled for the 2023, 2024, and 2025 construction years, with anticipated substantial completion by 2026. While this is a large project, we expect there to be minimal disruptions overall for the travelling public. We will be working closely with aviation stakeholders to minimize impacts on their operations during the construction period. This year's work involved preparation for the main runway reconstruction, including airfield drainage improvements, water and sanitary line extensions, fencing to secure the work site, and construction of two access roads to the parallel runway in preparation for next year's construction season.

These, Mr. Speaker, of course, are only snippets of the work that the Department of Highways and Public Works and the Department of Environment are carrying out this year. I would certainly, at this point, close by thanking all of the public service for the work that they do year-round with the Department of Highways and Public Works and the Department of Environment in sometimes very challenging conditions, keeping Yukoners safe, and providing a lot of incredibly valuable service to Yukoners, both in creating resilient infrastructure and lots of outdoor significant and world-class opportunities for both Yukoners and for the rest of the world.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I would just like to acknowledge that it continues to be an honour and a privilege to serve here in this Assembly and to serve the residents of beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes.

A couple of nights ago, I was at a meeting in Mount Lorne; last night, I was at a community meeting at Marsh Lake; and tonight, there is a community meeting in Tagish, but I think I am going to end up going to the Golden Horn Elementary School annual general meeting tonight. It is really wonderful to get to represent folks from Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. I was just reminded of it yesterday, when a young person came into the Assembly. I didn't know what their career had turned out to be, but it turns out that they are an energy advisor. I knew this young person when the Marsh Lake Community Centre first

opened, and they used to come and put on an annual dog show when they were not even yet a teenager. I have been reflecting on how we have grown and changed as a territory.

Last night, at the meeting in Marsh Lake, there was this group of people from a couple of the neighbourhoods who are working hard to provide advice to government around how to best invest to make our communities more resilient in the face of climate change — in this case, in particular, about flooding. We had quite a few residents there who had invested quite a bit of time to provide that advice to us. We had members of our local advisory council there. We had lots of government folks there. The Emergency Measures Organization had a couple of folks there. There was Community Affairs; Highways and Public Works had staff there. The Water Resources branch from Environment had someone there. We had members of the private sector; we had Yukon Energy there. The Minister of Community Services attended; the deputy minister and me, as MLA — all dealing with these tough issues, but it really impressed me how far we have come as a territory.

I remember the flood that happened in 2007. I remember, both as a resident of Marsh Lake and as a climate scientist, arguing with the government of the time that climate change was real, that this was change that we could anticipate. Now, we understand that it is not the status quo; things have changed, and there is a lot of challenge that we have to face.

I just want to begin by giving a shout-out to those members of the government and of the community who spend a lot of their time to help improve the lives Yukoners. It's quite something.

Just before that, I stopped by a neighbour's place. We carpooled out for the meeting. I had loaned a button press to a young student from Golden Horn school, who had done some entrepreneurial artwork with some friends using my button press at our fall fair. I think that the Leader of the Official Opposition was at the fall fair. It was just heartwarming to me to see all of this investment in our communities to make them vibrant, healthy, and inclusive.

The one community that I haven't mentioned from my riding — I just want to give a little bit of a comment about Carcross. Just recently, I was talking with Haa Shaa du Hen Benoit about the work that's happening with the missing schools project, especially around the Chooutla school. These are very tough subjects for our communities, and because Chooutla is located in Carcross, I think that there are some challenges for the community.

There are some very difficult emotions to navigate — grief, loss, also possibly moving closer toward some sort of type of closure. I just want to reflect on a sacred fire that was lit at the Chooutla site. I was in conversation with Mr. Harold Gatensby, who had lit the fire for the community to give folks a chance to share some of their stories around the fire.

As Harold was lighting the fire — he and I were there a little earlier — he shared this wonderful story about his daughter Violet and how she had painted a piece of art, which is now hanging in the courthouse and depicts the Chooutla site but also depicts all these forget-me-not flowers that are around

the site as a reminder of the children whom we are looking to find. Again, it was a hard story but a heartwarming story.

This summer — summers in the Yukon are always great, and as a minister, you often travel to many communities — I went to Old Crow, to Haines Junction, Carmacks, Mayo, Keno, Dawson — I was in Dawson a few times. One of them, I was asked to sit for a dunk tank to raise money for the Klondike Placer Miners' Association. Apparently, I raised the most money, which I think is both good and humorous for me. I wanted to share a couple of stories about travel this summer.

In particular, I want to mention going to Atlin for Haa Kusteeyí, for the Tlingit festival. There was a moment this summer when there was a 200-year-old Chilkat blanket that was being repatriated into the community of Atlin. I tell you, as I sat there to witness that event — my wife and I talked about it afterward — you could feel the hair on your arms stand up as it was happening. It was such a privilege to get to witness that and an extremely powerful moment.

I had another amazing moment. I had never been so far down the Porcupine River, but there was a wonderful opportunity where many members of Vuntut Gwitchin, the community of Old Crow, travelled downriver to Rampart House. We were marking Rampart House being designated as one of Yukon's historic sites. It was a great community event. We travelled back, and I was shown afterward some great footage of folks jigging as they were waiting for their boats to leave. They had a little community jig; it was great.

Another highlight for me was travelling to Dawson recently to acknowledge and witness the inscription of the Yukon's second UNESCO world heritage site and the first UNESCO world heritage site in the territories that is focusing on a cultural site — and this is, of course, the Tr'ondëk Klondike inscription. I felt so incredibly proud to be there to cheer on Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in on behalf of Yukoners. I think that it is going to make such a huge difference when we have visitors now come to Dawson. I think that they are going to — it is a completely different story. It is not just the gold rush story; it is also the story of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, how they have lived in the Klondike region for millennia and their story of how the gold rush impacted them and their resiliency through that story. I am so happy that it will be a much richer story for visitors to the Yukon to learn about and to appreciate.

One last lucky trip for me — I got to go to Herschel Island this year. I think that, for me, I will count that as kind of a trip of a lifetime. The heritage branch was there doing work to try to lift up the whaling station because, as sea ice is melting and as the sea level is rising, the whaling station was getting wet from underneath and we needed to get it up. So, just a couple of big shout-outs to our heritage restoration team. They did great work and I got to see them just as they were completing their work.

Also, a shout-out to both Tourism and Parks interpreters who were setting up to receive cruise ships now coming to Herschel Island to see the historic site — in particular, I want to give a bit of a shout-out to Ranger Richard Gordon, who was such a great guide and so informative. I really felt I got a lot of inside scoop about the place. It was very, very lucky for me.

I want to talk about how we are investing in the Yukon a little bit and how we are trying to make life affordable and sustainable. Just a couple of days ago, I had the privilege of being invited to witness a ribbon cutting for the four new turbines up on Haeckel Hill. The project is called Thay T'aw. It's our first 100-percent Indigenous-owned independent power producer wind project north of 60. You have the Chu Níikwán Development Corporation and the Eagle Hill Energy LP. There are a few things that other speakers from the development corporation said that I would just like to acknowledge. First of all, they called our independent power producer policy "historic". They said that when they started planning this wind project, we didn't have such a policy in place, and they needed a policy like the one — well, it would have been the Premier who helped to get that in place — but it was the key to getting to these projects. After that, we talked about the use of the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative fund. Those are dollars that we provide to help groups like Chu Níikwán to do energy planning. After that, there was some serious investment, both through the Investing in Canada infrastructure plan and through CanNor and the federal government, where they invested up front in this energy project as a piece of infrastructure. Then finally there's also the energy purchase agreement that was needed to be put in place so that Yukon Energy can buy the electricity, which then enables the revenue to flow back to pay for the project.

So, my big congratulations on this wind energy project. Of course, wind is an intermittent renewable, so you still need to find ways to fill in the gaps around wind, but in terms of renewables, wind is stronger in the winter, which is so important for us because we have more need for energy in the winter — so a super-impressive project.

One more story that I will share about an initiative led by a First Nation but one where we are working in support to try to assist — and I heard this one on the radio just the other day, but I had been in meetings earlier in the summer. It's a project being led by the Liard First Nation where First Kaska Construction Limited Partnership purchased Heartland Timber Homes, and they are using that business to work to build affordable homes in Watson Lake. We were working with the Yukon Wood Products Association — we being the Forest Management branch — so the two governments were at the table, working with our wood harvesters in the area and the new Heartland Timber Homes business to talk about wood supply and how to support that. These are great examples of how we have been investing in ways to advance reconciliation, to invest in a more sustainable future for the Yukon, and to build — sort of broadly — healthy communities.

I always recognize that the job of the opposition is to criticize government, to look to try to probe to see how we can do better and what we can do, but there are always a few things that strike me that don't completely add up.

For example, today, I heard the Member for Watson Lake saying that there is an infrastructure deficit and that we need to see more investment in our communities, but when I look back over time, capital budgets under the Yukon Party were

\$100 million to \$150 million — sometimes getting up to around \$300 million —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Well, at least in presentation of the budget, maybe not in delivery of it — thank you, Mr. Speaker — yet our capital budget was \$500 million. When I was a city councillor, I understood about that deficit, so I am always trying to square the differences between — that the Yukon Party believes in climate change but also wants to invest in fossil fuels or fossil fuel subsidies. I can't see how that squares — that the Yukon Party believes that we have too much long-term debt, but they also suggest that we should be spending much more money on a whole bunch of fronts. You can't have it both ways.

Anyway, I look forward to having that fuller debate in Committee of the Whole. As always, I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak to Yukoners.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It's great to be on my feet this afternoon talking about the budget here in Whitehorse.

Over the last several months, it has been a really great summer. I have heard from virtually everyone I have spoken with — and I have spoken with a lot of people over the last several months — about how great the weather has been in the territory over the last summer. People are harkening back to the 1970s. I can go back to the 1990s and say that this is probably one of the better summers I have had in the territory since the early 1990s. That, for me, is both a blessing and a curse, because as good as the summer has been, bringing us warm weather, it also brings us threats with wildfires and the flood in Dawson. So, it has been a very busy year but a great summer.

I really enjoyed speaking to my constituents in Whitehorse West this summer. I had an event at Elijah Smith recently with my colleague the MLA for Mountainview. We had a great attendance with many constituents and hearing the insights I get from my constituents — speaking to them — it is always heartening. I mean, they are like a microcosm of the entire territory as a whole. They have the best interest of so many Yukoners at heart and speaking to them and hearing the advice and the context that they provide me — the intelligence, wit, and empathy with which they deliver their messages to me — is always heartening, and I want to thank them for that candour and for their thoughts, opinions, advice, and their praise, frankly, and the incredible support that they have given me over the last several years.

I have also been meeting with municipalities and local advisory committees across the territory over the last several months. Again, I am heartened by the leadership I have seen in municipalities across the territory, and I applaud the selfless service I see in municipality governments that I have visited throughout the territory. I have told them as much, but I think it bears noting this afternoon here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly how important that service is. It is a thankless job, and a lot of these people have been doing it for a long time — helping their communities, taking them through some really challenging times — and they deserve thanks for that work. I think that it is important that we recognize it, because they have

really done a good job, and I will be talking a little bit more about this later on when I talk about some of the events that we have had in the territory and how some of our community leaders have addressed that.

For now, I am going to be talking about floods and fires a little bit, but before I get there, I would really like to start talking about some of the other work that Community Services has been doing since this House sat last spring. These are things that are happening, really, behind the scenes, but they don't get a lot of attention, but I would like to bring a little bit of a spotlight on them right now, talk about them and get them on the record because they deserve to have their place in the sun.

I am going to start with the comprehensive municipal grant. This provides core support to municipalities. It was first reviewed and updated by our government and municipalities in 2018, Mr. Speaker. The grant is built around principles of adequacy, certainty, equity, transparency, and accountability, which is a fancy way of saying we want to make sure our municipalities are whole — that they have the money they need to provide the services — that I was just lauding — to their citizens.

Now, changes were made in 2018. That included the establishment of a funding floor at the 2017 level. From 2018 to present, municipalities have also seen grant payments increase every year, and that trend is expected to continue in 2024 and beyond. However, in 2020, Community Services' Community Affairs branch formed a joint review working group with the Association of Yukon Communities. So, as early as 2020, we decided to take a look at whether or not the grant was meeting the needs of municipalities. That was done by my predecessor, and the work has continued under my oversight.

Between 2020 and 2022, the group met 17 times to discuss the efficacy of the current comprehensive municipal grant formula and its various components, and that work is well underway today. In late 2022, the Association of Yukon Communities board identified the need to hire a consultant to assist in gathering, analyzing, and summarizing information developed by the review committee since 2020 and to develop recommendations for amendments. The Association of Yukon Communities hired that consultant to undertake the work, and Community Services contributed more than \$8,000 to support the association and its work.

I received a copy of the resulting report this summer, and the department is currently reviewing that report to see how it will apply to the review process. The goal of the overall review is to ensure that the core purpose of the formula is still being met. The consultant's work just completed will factor into that assessment.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, that in 2023, the comprehensive municipal grant totalled more than \$22 million for municipal governments and is expected to grow significantly, perhaps surpassing \$27 million in 2024, due to the current escalators built into it around inflation, as well as other matters that the formula takes into account automatically.

Also, on the municipal side, as suggested by the Association of Yukon Communities president and its members, we are looking at the tax rates paid by citizens living outside of

municipal boundaries, which have not been touched since the 1980s. So, we are looking at maybe taking a look at that.

We have now fully transitioned to the new *Societies Act*. We have updated our online resources, hosted monthly workshops, and resourced a societies advisor, who is dedicated to answering questions and providing guidance to NGOs. I hear from my officials that this transition has been smooth for most non-governmental organizations. However, some have found it difficult, there is no doubt. As I have said in the past, I encourage any organization having trouble to reach out to the societies advisor. I really want to thank the team at Corporate Affairs for making this as seamless a transition as possible over the last two years. You're really doing great work.

We have also launched a review of the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* in June of 2023, and that work is now underway. This, of course, has been a topic of much interest in the territory, given the rental crunch across the country and specifically here in the Yukon. I am happy to say that civil servants within the department are diligently collecting the information needed for this review and giving it the upmost attention. To those Yukoners out there waiting for this work to be complete — and I know there are lots of you — some of you are currently facing some difficulties, be they tenants or landlords. I empathize with you and I ask that you give us the time needed to get this new law properly balanced, drafted, and passed. A team at Community Services is working on this as we speak with the goal of tabling the legislation in the spring of 2025.

We are also working to review the health professions regulations and improve how we regulate health care service professions. Modern regulations will make the Yukon an even more attractive place for health professionals to work and allow us to provide Yukoners with access to new and innovative ways of accessing health care. We are developing specific psychology regulations in the Yukon which are expected to be completed in the spring of 2024. I know that this has been something the local psychology community has been advocating for, and we agree on its importance for many reasons. While those are underway, the department has rolled out a public awareness webpage on how to select a psychologist. This site includes a voluntary list of psychologists practising in the Yukon, indicating who holds a valid license in other Canadian jurisdictions. I thank the psychological association for their advocacy and continued work with Community Services to bring the new regulations to fruition next year. I know this has been a long time coming.

As well, this session, we will be discussing the act to amend the *Registered Nurses Profession Act*. Again, I want to thank our very busy Corporate Services team, which has pulled this law together. They have so much on their plate and they're still managing to deliver great and important work with verve. I thank them from the bottom of my heart for all of that work.

The legislation will give Yukon more flexibility to hire nurses, a goal I think we agree unanimously in this House is necessary for the territory.

I'm now going to move on to sports and recreation. I'm happy to reiterate that this government has agreed to support

the City of Whitehorse in its bid to host the 2026 Arctic Winter Games. Our support will include financial and in-kind contributions of up to \$4.35 million. We will work with the City of Whitehorse and territorial support organizations on formalizing the roles and responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, after the heartbreaking but necessary decision to cancel our last games due to the COVID pandemic in 2020, I know that many of these athletes will have moved on, so this latest Games is cold comfort, but I'm pleased that a new and upcoming group of athletes will get the chance to compete in front of their friends, families, and fellow Yukoners here in Whitehorse. This is going to be an important event for all here in the territory.

We have also been making progress on the safe sport file, which largely began in 2019 at a federal-provincial-territorial meeting that I attended. All jurisdictions across Canada worked to have all athletes and participants in Canada protected by an independent third-party mechanism and identified a targeted date to achieve this by the end of the year.

We have also had a maltreatment in sport working group established nationally to identify problems, guiding principles, and/or to develop recommendations to support jurisdictions in the establishment of independent third-party mechanisms. We want to make sure there is a forum for best practices and key learnings from safe sport efforts across the country and we'll be pulling on that in the future.

In July, Team Yukon, consisting of more than 130 athletes, coaches, mission staff, and supporters, travelled to the North American Indigenous Games in Halifax. Team Yukon proudly represented the territory and home communities in 11 sports and brought home an incredible 39 medals: 20 gold, 10 silver, and nine bronze. I congratulate them for doing Yukon proud and bringing home all that hardware from those Games.

I was profoundly disappointed that I was unable to attend those Games because of the wildfire situation here in the territory; however, my good colleague the MLA for Mountainview was in the region at a separate meeting and was able to support our athletes during the opening ceremonies. I thank her for that, along with the staff who accompanied her from Community Services.

I am going to move on to something else that has taken up a lot of public discussion over the last couple of years: solid-waste regionalization. This whole process began after the Association of Yukon Communities presented the Yukon government with a report outlining the need for a plan to deal with community landfills that were becoming huge environmental liabilities for them, difficult to manage. Our government, among other things, moved to provide more funding to municipalities so that they could install electric fences, scales, gates, and the ability to collect tipping fees from users. We have a plan in place to modernize the way that we are dealing with landfills in the territory to make them more efficient and controlled so that we actually have a mechanism to start to reduce the amount of garbage that we're creating in this territory and handle it in a way that's more responsible and easier for municipalities to do so, which reduces not only their

costs to operate them but also reduces the future liabilities that we will see on these sites in terms of insurance and other things.

Municipalities across the territory asked for this to be done and my colleague the MLA for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes took this on and I have now taken on that role from him. We now have agreements in place with many of the communities on this file. I am really heartened to see how many municipalities are coming on board with the plan that we worked on with the Association of Yukon Communities. We now have interim regional agreements with Watson Lake, Teslin, Mayo, and Carmacks. Dawson has operated a regional solid-waste facility for approximately 20 years. These agreements provide financial support to municipalities to modernize their solid-waste facilities and extend their waste management services to unincorporated residents within the regional boundary. The goal is to make sure that nobody has to travel more than 50 kilometres to dispose of their garbage. In doing so, we are going to make sure that we are reducing methane production in the territory, which is a great contributor to greenhouse gases, because we are going to be working to separate organics from the garbage and manage it better so that we actually have a much better run regional landfill system that runs very similar to those we see in jurisdictions across the country.

We haven't got everybody signed on to these interim regional agreements yet — we have Haines Junction and Faro, two communities that haven't signed. In my meeting with Faro in the last couple of weeks, they were very supportive of the regionalization initiative and those talks are still going on but are close to conclusion, and I am going to be talking with Haines Junction soon on the very same topic. The end result, Mr. Speaker, is that all Yukon municipalities will have more modern waste management systems, and that is great news for all Yukoners.

What I am running into is opposition from the benches opposite, and that is kind of unfortunate but that is fine. This is how we refine our arguments and make sure that the system runs well; that is part of our democracy. In closing four transfer stations — these are unsupervised dumps on the side of the road, where people can dump whatever they want into it, into these things. This uncontrolled free dumping is really a dodge around the accountable system that regional landfills are there to create — a place where all tipping fees in the territory are fair and reasonable. As soon as you have a place where you can dump without paying that tipping fee, it is going to collect scofflaws who want to go down and dump in those free sites. We are trying to end that practice, and we are working very, very hard with communities to make sure that this is done in a humane way, to make sure that we cause as little disruption to those folks as we possibly can.

Now, I'm not going to pivot to wildfires, because we have had a lot of that, and flooding. I was just at a meeting last night, as a matter of fact, out at Marsh Lake with residents there, where they were talking about the flood that we had in 2021, the measures there, and how to get ahead of any new events that we might see so that we are not reacting but we are proactively taking steps to prevent an event like we saw in 2021, 2022, and

2023. There is a pattern emerging here, and we all have to do better.

I have been working with municipalities — talking to every one of them over the last several weeks about this. I have also been talking to citizens, both at my constituency events and any public gathering I'm at. I talk about the various pillars of responsibility in this territory, and it begins with every one of us, Mr. Speaker. Every one of us has a responsibility to prepare for an event, be it a wildfire, flood, or other climate change-caused event in the territory. We talk about us having a 72-hour kit for all citizens, making sure that, when you're travelling through the territory, you have food and water and perhaps a sleeping bag and a shovel in your car, even in the summertime — taking precautions we normally take in the wintertime in the summertime now to prepare for unexpected events; making sure you look around your house and identify the things you want to preserve in the event of an evacuation order; keeping your gas —

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Today, it is my privilege to rise as the MLA for Porter Creek South to speak to the 2023-24 supplementary estimates. Again, in the months since we last sat together in the Assembly, we have all been working hard on behalf of Yukoners, speaking with people in Yukon's communities — local leaders, First Nation representatives. I had the chance to listen and advocate on behalf of Yukoners on the federal and international stages. I have met with First Nation leaders on their traditional territories, attended their general assemblies, held two Yukon Forums, and met with mayors in municipalities.

I want to thank those who have given me the opportunity to meet with them in their communities over this last summer. First of all, I would like to thank the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation for having the opportunity to sit down with Chief Frost in Old Crow this summer. They had an opportunity to open up their new seniors centre, an absolutely beautiful building, which I think many Yukoners have heard the nation speak about. It's a critical piece of infrastructure for them to be able to support the individuals in their community.

During Caribou Days they open it up and it was a chance to be in the community and to really take a look at all the work that has been happening there, the investment by the nation, the Yukon government, and the federal government. It was an opportunity to see what the vision of the nation is for their elders and the support systems that are in place, to hear about the good things that are happening there, and also to understand some of the things that the nation feels needs to be prioritized.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, also in Dawson City — it was good to meet with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as well as with mayor and council this summer. I want to thank both levels of government for the opportunity to listen to — of course, there is new leadership with Chief Taylor — Hähkè Taylor — and I think that gave us a good sense of what they're thinking about — their focus on land planning, their focus around mining legislation, and their focus on investment in their communities. Of course, I met with the municipality and heard from mayor

and council, having an opportunity to hear what their priorities are for infrastructure and housing and the things that are going well.

I know there has been a lot of talk about some of the interim measures that have been put in place for housing. We put a fund together in support of those housing initiatives, which were really what they were calling the "old tent city". It's like the old tent city but a brand new set of structures that can help offset some of the pressures for the tourism season.

I also had a chance to meet with the Selkirk First Nation. I have had a chance to work with their chief in the past — Chief Nelson. There is young vibrant group of individuals who have joined the chief on the council now. There is a lot of energy. Of course, we did talk about some of their priorities. We talked about Minto and their concerns but also about some of the thoughts that they had about that project continuing on and what they would be looking for in potential partners and what they want to see from the Yukon government. They commended us and the minister for his quick action in collaboration with them on the Minto site. Also, we talked about infrastructure, the goals and aspirations of the nation. All these conversations are ongoing, but it was a good chance to be in Pelly.

I want to thank the Chief of Little Salmon Carmacks. I had the chance to be in Carmacks on a couple of occasions this summer, meeting with the mayor and having the mayor attend the opening of our new duplex — our investment from Yukon Housing. I think it was appreciated. I had a bit of a chance to talk to Mayor Bodie and also spend some time with Chief Tom.

We were in contact today, and I know that she really wanted to talk about the further development of the roads to resources, some of their thoughts about them, and making sure that we understood some of the concerns they have and areas where they want to see mitigation, but also discussing infrastructure investment, their focus on heritage and resources, and their interest in making sure the right infrastructure is in place to have more citizens come home.

I commend them. They bought a very significant structure — a beautiful house that sits in Carmacks — and they have citizens who have worked in British Columbia in addictions and trauma counselling now moving back to Carmacks, and they're looking to repurpose that home for some of that work. I think that is going to be a significant addition to their community, and it was good to spend time there.

Ross River Dena Council pulled citizens together to meet with me as well as their elected officials in the off-season from the Assembly. We were commended for being able to bring our team out there and had a good discussion with them. We went through short-term goals for the First Nation that were really around, of course — there was a lot of emotion in the community as they were looking for, and continue to look for, Ramona Peter. That was a key focus of the conversation, but we also talked about their interest in making sure they had the right infrastructure in place to do more land-based activities to focus on their culture. They talked to me about their concerns around some illegal activity coming in and out of their community, and we committed to supporting them in the

endeavours to try to ensure that those things come to a halt or slow. We also talked about their bigger aspirations of the nation. They have been very open about their own interest in doing some level of supportive type of land planning, which they have talked about publicly. They are interested in working with the mining sector more closely, and they're interested in making sure that their traditional undertaking of hunting, trapping, and fishing will be there for generations to come.

I had an opportunity — it has been a long time since we have had representation from government at the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council General Assembly. I was happy to be able to attend their general assembly at Helen's Fish Camp. The focus really was a lot of conversation around housing, infrastructure, and some of the interest of collaboration with the First Nation. Our officials have been following up on that conversation which has been great.

I have had a couple of occasions to sit with Chief Smith of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, as well as the development corporation. The new administration is coming in and will be meeting with all elected officials, but it was a good opportunity to be at their new administration building and also to have an understanding of what direction the chief is looking to focus on with his new elected officials. The development corporation is doing significant work. I know that I and maybe members of the Official Opposition have had a chance to see their portfolio work. It's pretty impressive. With their land development, their acquisitions, and their buildings, there has really been a tremendous amount of work that they are focusing on, as well as their collaboration with the Yukon Energy Corporation on land leases and investment in infrastructure.

I had a chance to meet with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations as well in Haines Junction. I appreciate having the opportunity for them to host and really go through some of their key areas of focus with Chief Joe and the new leadership, and also at the same time, having the chance to meet with the mayor in Haines Junction and understand some of the areas of interest there. In some of the things, they are doing a great job with their focus on infrastructure, but also some of the things that they want to work on with our Community Services, of course, those will be ongoing conversations.

In Watson Lake — meeting with the Liard First Nation before. They were getting close to going into their election, but I had the chance to meet with the elected officials at that point in time to get a sense of what they were thinking — and, of course, a commitment now that they have a new group of people elected. They will want to sit down. I know that, this week, we were happy to see the housing company that they had bought was highlighted on national news. I know that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has been able to contribute to that endeavour. We are happy to see just one of the many things that are happening in Watson Lake. I had a chance to jump in the truck with the mayor and go down to look at Frances Lake and some of those lot developments that we have helped to support and undertake. It's something that we haven't seen in the Yukon to that level where you have the municipality on a couple of streets, then you have the First Nation, which is not a self-governing First Nation, as well as

the Yukon government coming in to de-risk and provide some capital toward the horizontal infrastructure, and then putting more lots out — a really significant number of lots — to the community. There were really good ideas from the mayor. I appreciate that conversation and continued conversations with the mayor in Watson Lake.

The CYFN General Assembly, which most political leaders had a chance to attend, was held in Klukshu this year. That was a very good event that had significant attendance from nations right across the Yukon. It was a chance for us to have some discussions, hear the priorities of nations, areas of focus and priority, as well as just continuing to be committed to reconciliation and to the Yukon Forum and the work there. The two Yukon Forums that we attended — one was on June 19 and that took place at Helen's Fish Camp, and then we just finished up on September 26 and 27 in Dawson City. We will be hosting one more Yukon Forum to continue to keep our commitment of our quarterly meetings later this year.

When it comes to the municipality of Mayo, the conversations were really under a bit of pressure because that is when the evacuations were happening. The Mayor of Mayo, Mayor Ellis — what an incredible Yukoner — what grace under pressure, what unbelievable forethought to be able to do pre-planning in that area, which he did, when it came to some planning around evacuations. I know that he and the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun have a great working relationship. It was a chance to see him in action and thank him for his work.

I am just trying to give a quick overview of some of the work this summer that was happening, and just for a sense for Yukoners, it was just important to get out to all of these communities. There are a couple of communities that have changed schedules for events that they were going to have this summer. I have been talking to their leaders and I look forward to being able to, over the fall, have a chance to meet with them and have discussions about their thoughts and priorities.

The supplementary budget that we are tabling is our ability to use some of the funds that we believe should be put in place in the spring. I think that the budgeting process this spring took into consideration what we believe could have been some unanticipated challenges. What we have seen year over year is more pressure when it comes to flooding and fire. I want to commend my colleagues and the work that they did this summer. There were a lot of extremely long days by public servants, volunteers, leaders, and communities across the Yukon, specifically when you think about Mayo and Old Crow — not to say that we didn't see, when it came to flooding early on this season, the challenges in the Klondike and the community of Dawson City coming together and so many good leaders making sure that the citizens in those communities were well supported.

I do want to commend the ministers and specifically the Minister of Community Services. When it came to the fire season, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Health and Social Services were doing tireless work. I am not saying that my other colleagues — there was work that had to be done through Highways and Public Works and I am aware of that. It was not a one-person approach, but

one person took on a lot of the challenges in Dawson — and that was, of course, the MLA for Klondike — early on just working with the community. Flooding season — I thank him for that — and then going into the fire season, which was a bit more prolonged.

Every time I was on the line or asking for help or checking in with those ministers, whether it was 7:00 a.m. or 12:00 at night, specifically the Minister of Health and Social Services — I think about the time when folks were coming in from Mayo at 11:30 or 12:00 at night, and she was coordinating the appropriate spots for those elders to be at a time when — yes, the City of Whitehorse and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation did incredible jobs to step up, but when you have an elder who is pretty shaken, leaving their home and community to come into Whitehorse, that individual needs a good, comfy place to be — and watching the minister do everything that she possibly could to ensure that those folks had a comfortable place — putting that all together within hours was absolutely incredible and I want to thank the minister for that and for the ongoing work that was done by other colleagues in the House during that time.

I also think that it was extremely prudent fiscal planning that was done when it came to the consideration. We had lots of debate during the mains about how we were going to allocate funds. We said in the House that we had the potential for unanticipated cost pressures. What we have been able to do is put together a very significant program to offset the cost impacts from flooding. In the Klondike, I was just meeting with officials today to discuss the uptake of our programs and money getting out the door to support individuals through that program.

This summer, I had a chance to be in Nova Scotia. For the record, I did take about two weeks with my family. My children had not had a chance to spend time with their grandparents collectively since 2019. During that, I took two days, and one day I drove to Halifax while I was away, and I signed an agreement with Premier Houston. It was really about a sharing of health care information. It was about — Nova Scotia has done a really good job on reducing red tape within the health care field. I made a commitment to ensure that the Yukon Medical Association can garner some information from that, but also, they were going through major floods. Some really devastating things had happened, and it was really incredible for me to be able to sit there and say, you know what? Yukon, a small jurisdiction, already went through flooding; we built a program in just a very short period of time, and I'll call our officials in Intergovernmental Relations and make sure that program gets shipped out to you — which it did right away — so that a bigger jurisdiction, like Nova Scotia, could have a framework of a flood program that was built by Community Services and Finance here in the Yukon. I think our public servants should be extremely proud of their ability to do incredible work. I think that was something that was, again, quite a — I was just proud to be part of Yukon government and see our ability to share that work.

The other things that we took into consideration, if you'll remember — and I mentioned this to the media yesterday when we talk about floods and fire — the Minister of Community

Services and myself went up to the airport early in the spring, and we had Wildfire come out. What we were trying to do is to ensure that we could bring as much emphasis as possible to preparation by individual Yukoners for unanticipated challenges from climate change. That day, you know, we had Wildfire there, and we talked about the 72-hour kit, and one of the things I said was — I pleaded with the media. I said, "Please, try to take this message and amplify it as much as you possibly can."

We know that these risks are always just around the corner for us, and, you know, I will never stop saying that. This summer, we had an extremely professional public service that did an incredible job — and community leaders, and First Nation leaders, and volunteers. Like, it was Yukoners coming together to support Yukoners, but there is always that threat that we could be in a situation like our neighbours in the Northwest Territories or British Columbia. It's always there, so we can't stop these discussions.

I will go back and say I remember some great dialogue with the Leader of the NDP and the MLA for Lake Laberge about firesmaring and fire breaks and that stuff. Now that we have political will and social licence, we need to focus on those items.

Other than that, I just want to say, I thank the Minister of Finance for the ability to build and future-proof our budget. We are going to have an opportunity to get into general debate on this. I think you will see that our spending was solid. We have taken our surplus down because we need to put money out there for individuals to offset the pressures of inflation, so there is just a modest surplus at this point in time. I think Yukoners want us to be putting that money into their pockets to support them, and I appreciate the opportunity to have had the right tools in place this summer to keep Yukoners safe and sound.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am pleased to be able to rise again here today to close debate at second reading of Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, also known as the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for the fiscal year 2023-24. I am trying to rack my brain to think if there was ever a time since I have been in the Legislative Assembly that this second reading debate began and ended on the same day. It is an interesting approach, but maybe we will expedite the whole process.

I was also listening to the Leader of the NDP, the Third Party, talking about the supplementary debates. I agree quite a bit about — I want to thank her for her comments about our deputy minister and the team at Finance. I concur; they work extremely hard, and I am really thankful for those comments.

I am just looking over those years with us in government and the different approaches that we did try in a general-debate avenue — seeing that we were budgeting up front in the spring and not having as much of a budget debate in the fall or not as much of a budget in the fall. We did try a whole bunch of

different approaches. Sometimes we would have all of the ministers available, or if I was not available during the general debate — we tried different things on this side to accommodate, but I do concur with the member opposite, understanding my time in opposition, that you do want to have as many opportunities as possible to talk to the departments at either session, either in the fall or in the spring.

General debate was interesting, as far as the processes of the Legislative Assembly — if there is not a dollar value for the department, they're not going to appear, and then general debate becomes a lot of questions for a lot of departments. I have to say, though, that opportunity to work closely with all those departments, prepping for these conversations — it was a great education. As Premier and as ministers, we do a lot of — you have to spread yourself quite thin sometimes to know all of the issues and all of the departments — let alone your core departments. To be able to have that much more time with deputy ministers, ministers, ADMs, directors, as we prepare for these general debates, it really does wonders for your knowledge of not only the individual line items but the dedication of those individuals — the people, the public servants — who run this place.

It is quite an honour, actually, to be able to engage with them on a regular basis anyway, and we just found that general debate was just another avenue where we would spend a lot of quality time getting to know the people who work so tirelessly for this government, and I tell you, even more so during a pandemic, to see the dedication of the public servants, it really manifests itself in weekends, evenings, without a lot of talk — just a lot of yes, we have to get these things done. I'm thinking about times where we have to make really quick decisions involving a whole bunch of different departments in the best of times; then add to that the COVID-19 pandemic; add to that, as well, a general debate where you're really working with those folks as well — so, it is those moments that you really appreciate where we live and the dedication of those public servants.

Speaking specifically of the second reading, again, supplementary estimates are about responding to those unanticipated areas, needs, pressures, and those supplementary estimates are, like the ones introduced here — they're here to support Yukoners and support services and institutions that Yukoners have grown to depend on and trust, and it is important that any territorial government approaches them with seriousness of the accounting and the budgeting that Yukoners deserve and demand.

These are the first supplementary estimates that I have brought forward since our Yukon Liberal government was elected in 2016 that I have not been the Premier for, so that is an interesting role for me now. The role of Premier in this territory that we all love is an incredible duty, an incredible responsibility, and an incredible honour, and I applaud the current Premier of the Yukon — the Member for Porter Creek South, the Minister of Economic Development, and the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation — for the way that he has approached this role so far.

However, I continue to have the responsibility for, and opportunity of, seeing these supplementary estimates, our entire budgetary process, as well as my other roles as minister and the MLA for Klondike through the eyes of being the Minister of Finance — a role that I feel tremendous honour in filling. It is a very unique role, that is for sure. I continue to be immensely grateful to the people of the Klondike and the people of the territory for allowing me this time to sit with this team in these chairs and pursue good governance and stewardship on their behalf.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke in my opening second reading remarks that supplementary estimates provide an opportunity to test our ability to respond to changes. This is a government and a team that has responded to immense challenges — both unique to the Yukon and also facing issues that have been faced on a wider national and international scale throughout our time. This is a team that has experienced thoughtful ministers who respond to the challenges and difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic and are responding to the unprecedented health and economic consequences borne of the pandemic. This is a team that is responding to the gravity of a substance use health emergency and thoughtfully, maturely and compassionately addressing not only the root causes but also other facets that make recovery and healing extremely difficult for some very good people, but it is always worth it.

This is a team that protected Yukoners and their property when natural disasters struck, whether it be flood or fire, and that is ensuring that we prepare for natural disasters that will come in future years and which have left our northerly neighbours with the most harrowing of circumstances that they could ever envision this year in Yellowknife. Our hearts, prayers, and thoughts go out to all of our fellow northerners in that situation that we all find ourselves in. It was Yellowknife's unfortunate experience that really keeps us all up at night, because these are not once-in-a-century situations anymore; whether they are floods or fires, this seems to be the new normal.

This is a team that is responding to a worldwide climate emergency by looking into our own backyard and addressing our own climate and ecological footprint, ensuring that Yukoners can be proud of the impact of our territory in this important fight, all the while utilizing the opportunities and skillset to grow our economy and financial opportunities by participating in the green economy. This is a team that's approaching the territorial government — a colonial government — the territorial government's relationships with Yukon First Nation peoples and their governments and doing so not in a checking-of-a-box type of situation, but doing so as invaluable partners, friends and neighbours in this land, which is their traditional territories, their lands, who have immense knowledge and insight on the most effective, sustainable, and appropriate ways to move the Yukon forward.

When I talk about partners, friends, and neighbours, nowhere is that more relevant than at the Yukon Forums. Remembering back to the very first Yukon Forum and seeing how it has matured, pivoted, and really blossomed into new and exciting opportunities — that's a really great feeling to see that,

27 forums later, maturing in that way. I have said it in the Legislative Assembly before that it's sometimes hard to get folks to sit, because we get together, and it's all the public servants from all the different governments and all the chiefs and ministers who are now spending much more time in the parking lot talking together or over by the buffet table. It's great to see these relationships form with people who are all trying their best to do common pursuits and goals. We don't all necessarily agree all together all of the time. I mean, the people on this side of the Legislative Assembly don't necessarily always agree all of the time, but it's the effort, it's the respect, it's the relationships that really — it's important, and it is an honour to be at those tables working with such dedicated Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very seasoned, mature, and diverse team that cares deeply about the Yukon. Given my previous position, I had the pleasure of meeting all of these ministers before they got into territorial politics. I grabbed them away from their comfy lives in order to — for a higher purpose, I guess — a higher challenge. Each and every one of them were all really very successful in their own pursuits and all from different walks of life. It's a lot of memories in that time frame. I have learned about their passions. I have learned about their families and the issues that they — well, the issues that drive them — the issues that get them excited and, you know, bring forth their communities' concerns. I have watched ministers from different departments, you know, caring more about the complete Yukon than, you know, politics or specific ridings, and I think that's the important piece — is the honour, and a lot of people on both sides of the House, they know this honour of being representative of people whom you have barely met, whether they are your neighbours and your constituents or leaders in other jurisdictions.

It's a very, very powerful position that we are all in, in this Legislative Assembly to know — some of my favourite moments are when, you know, you look up to somebody who doesn't know you, and then you get into a position as an MLA, and they are demanding your time and demanding your ears to listen to their perspective on the Yukon. As individuals, we just grow — every single one of us in this Legislative Assembly grows through that opportunity. It's powerful; it's daunting sometimes, because it's a huge responsibility, but I know everybody in this Legislative Assembly relishes the opportunity to fight for Yukoners.

With my team here — you know, watching us all kind of come together and, you know, working around the Cabinet table, as I said, 27 forums later, and, you know, we have heard them advocate for Yukoners who live in every corner of this territory. I have been reminded that they really are truly passionate — a tested and seasoned team that this territory has — and I'm just very grateful to be part of it.

Yukon will continue to face some very difficult challenges, as we move forward. There is no downtime, that's for sure. It's in these moments like this that we — that our territory needs, you know, our experience — needs people who are driven and forward-thinking to make decisions at the helm.

I am very proud that we built a team that takes good ideas from all sides — a team that sees that a strong economy is critical to the success of a healthy environment and that a healthy environment is critical to a good economy and the participation of — and respect for — First Nations is the highest responsibility of this Yukon government.

Successful teams don't just happen by chance; they are built, and this team is built and driven and committed to moving Yukon forward to being even better than yesterday and much better tomorrow.

Through the pandemic, as well, it was very interesting to go from — sometimes I get a little cranky when we have to travel. I would much rather be home and hanging out with friends and family and that type of thing, but pre-pandemic, I would get pretty cranky with all the touring and travelling that we had to do. Then the pandemic happened, and no one was moving at all, and you have perspective. When people can move again, you feel, "Okay, stop being so cranky." These are responsibilities, and you should relish the opportunity to go to these other jurisdictions but afterward, as well, being able to come back from those travels and see how other communities in Canada and around the world fared in the pandemic. I have had this conversation with many people at the gas station or wherever in Yukon about that perspective after the pandemic.

If we didn't know already before the pandemic how amazing the place that we call home is, that perspective afterward really did hit home — for me, for a lot of my constituents and a lot of people I talked to in the Yukon — not having to shut down as much as other jurisdictions — schools, businesses, being able to keep our economy going with the good work of the placer miners, the good work of the mining community, the good work of the people who were in those critical frontlines. We really did show our true spirit as Yukoners, taking care of each other in this small neck of the woods that we call home. That perspective was really interesting. It made me very grateful. It made a lot of my constituents very grateful to know that we have something really powerful and unique here in the Yukon. It really is a true honour.

Like many of my colleagues in this House, since we have commenced the Sitting, we have been able to reflect, as well, on the busy summer we have had here in the Yukon.

It was great to be able to connect with people all across the Yukon this summer. Back in the Klondike, as well, people who have been able to graciously spend their time sharing their thoughts, concerns, ideas, hopes, and sometimes some meals and beverages and some music as well, with me — it is always great to reconnect that way. One really amazing thing that we all got to do this summer was being able to be in Dawson with our Special Sitting and all the other Members of the Legislative Assembly. This was big and this was a thing that we all shared together: a Special Sitting of the Legislative Assembly in the original capital of the territory. We are still kind of angling to get that back some day, by the way. The Dawson Museum is such an amazing building — those halls, you know — you can just imagine the history, the conversations back at the burgeoning of the governments and the administration of the

Yukon back in the day — on June 13. I was touched to hear colleagues from all parties in this House recognizing the 125th anniversary of the creation of the Yukon as a Canadian jurisdiction and acknowledge the importance of the Klondike, the history of Tr'ondëk — Klondike — in our territory. That history goes a lot further back than 125 years, of course, as the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in the Klondike and every Yukon First Nation could readily remind us, but a day like that was one when Yukoners could reflect on those 125 years. As our Premier spoke so passionately about, it is important and I once again extend my thanks to you, Mr. Speaker, and your team with the Legislative Assembly and to all colleagues in this Chamber for making that day a success for the Yukon and a success for Dawson. I would also like to express my thanks to other non-MLAs like Mayor Bill Kendrick, Senator Pat Duncan, and everyone else who came out on that warm July day to make it a success.

I do have a lot more comments that I could get into, but I am running out of time, so we can get into some of those conversations during Committee of the Whole. What I will do is sum up now by thanking you for the time today and thanking all of my colleagues who have spoken today for all of their comments on second reading, and I will cede my time now.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are nine yea, seven nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 211 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, 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. Tuesday.

The House adjourned at 5:21 p.m.

Written notice was given of the following motions October 5, 2023:

Motion No. 762

Re: mental wellness supports for children and youth
(Blake)

Motion No. 763

Re: Yukon Energy Corporation funding (Tredger)