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HANSARD

Wednesday, October 11, 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
Wednesday, October 11, 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. Motion No. 767, notice of which was given by the Minister of Community Services on October 10, 2023, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as the motion was not in order.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Are there any visitors to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to ask the Assembly today to welcome individuals who have come to visit us today with a Ukrainian delegation. I would like welcome Mayor Volodymyr Shmatko, who is with us today, and also Dr. Serhii Budenkyvych as well as Marta Hlubish. I also would like to recognize, from the Ukrainian Canadian Association of Yukon: Jeff Sloychuk, Taras Yurkiv, and Donna Reimchen, who are with us today as well. At the last moment, I saw Grant Zazula, who is probably with the Zazula family — if we could welcome them all here today to the Assembly.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would ask my colleagues to please help me in welcoming some guests here today for International Day of the Girl Child. We have Natalie Taylor from the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle; Julia Ronalds from the mental health outreach for Yukon government; Maya Auguste from les Essentielles; Charlie-Rose Pelletier from les Essentielles; and Marguerite Tolgyesi from les Essentielles.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Chortkiv, Ukraine

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Today I rise to pay tribute to the newest sister city of Whitehorse, the Ukrainian city of Chortkiv.

Last week, the City of Whitehorse approved the honorary sister city relationship. With a population of about 37,000, Chortkiv is slightly larger than Whitehorse and is the capital of its local regional area in western Ukraine.

Despite Chortkiv being approximately 490 kilometres away from Ukraine's capital, Kiev, their community has felt the effects of the continued conflict with Russia. June 2022 saw the city hit with four missiles from the Black Sea injuring

22 people. Chortkiv has been host now to 3,000 refugees seeking shelter and refuge from the war.

The connection between Whitehorse and Chortkiv first took root when Chortkiv Mayor Volodymyr Shmatko initiated contact with the City of Whitehorse in December of 2022 to explore the possibility of establishing a direct partnership. About a month later, Jeff Sloychuk, from the Ukrainian Canadian Association of Yukon, was on a humanitarian mission to Ukraine and realized that his route would take him through Chortkiv. Jeff and Mayor Shmatko established a relationship that helped to ensure safe aid deliveries and transit supplies to the front lines. Mayor Shmatko personally drives and delivers supplies sent over from the association to ensure that everything reaches the intended destination of persons.

The Ukrainian delegation was met at the airport yesterday with a warm welcome from the Ukrainian Canadian Association of Yukon, representatives from Ta'an Kwäch'an Council and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and members of the RCMP and local firefighters.

Mayor Shmatko of Chortkiv, the chair of the western Ukrainian international relations department, Marta Hlubish, who is with us today as well, and Dr. Serhii Budenkyvych with the Ukrainian health service have travelled to the Yukon to visit and develop a closer relationship with our city and the territory. Our government is happy to support the humanitarian work of the Yukon Ukrainian association today and has contributed to their travel costs.

Tomorrow evening, the delegation will join a fundraising gala at Mount McIntyre Recreation Centre to support future aid deliveries to the Ukraine. I'm sure that many of us will be there to welcome our new friends and to celebrate the partnership between our two communities. This may just be the beginning of a wonderful partnership and connection for our cities. I want to commend you on your incredible leadership. I know that we have met with — all of us here today — incredible leadership.

Slava Ukraini; glory to Ukraine.

Applause

Mr. Dixon: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the newly formed sister city relationship between the City of Whitehorse and Chortkiv, Ukraine. As an MLA whose riding is here in the City of Whitehorse, I have always been proud of the relationships developed between our territory's capital city and other communities and cities around the world. We have a long history with sister city agreements — the first being proclaimed in 1977 — and we have ongoing sister city ties with Ushiku, Japan, Lancieux, France, and, of course, Juneau, Alaska.

I had the opportunity earlier today to meet with the delegation that is here with us today from Chortkiv, and I would like to once again extend my very warm welcome to them. I know that the mayor and his delegation have been busy travelling outside of Ukraine, doing important diplomatic work to build international support for Ukraine. We are very pleased that this work has included the Yukon.

I would like to commend both the City of Whitehorse — the mayor and council — as well as the administration that have

done so much work to make this agreement possible, and, of course, I would like to thank the delegation from Chortkiv for this work as well. The Yukon is home to an active and proud Ukrainian-Canadian community, and initiatives like this only serve to strengthen the links between our communities and our countries. The agreement demonstrates the solidarity that our community wishes to proclaim with our friends in the Ukraine.

I would also like to take a moment to commend the great work being done by the Yukon Support Ukraine group — of course, led by Jeff Sloychuk, who is here with us today — with fundraising, supply drives, and relocation assistance. I understand that they have arranged for the Ukrainian delegation to fly home with additional luggage filled with urgently needed supplies.

So, thank you to the mayor and his team for coming this great distance to be with us and for signing this important agreement with our mayor, and thank you to all of those who have worked on this agreement.

Slava Ukraini.

Applause

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the power of peace through people-to-people, city-to-city, and country-to-country relationships, and we are pleased to welcome and pay tribute to Whitehorse's newest sister city, Chortkiv, Ukraine. We want to thank the Ukrainian Canadian Association of Yukon. This group of volunteers has never stopped working to promote peace and to respond to the needs of our friends in Ukraine. This week, we get to see the efforts of this group celebrated with this official delegation visit.

We had the pleasure of meeting Mayor Shmatko and his colleagues who are here to see first-hand where so much support for the Ukrainian people has come. Today, we celebrate the warmth and welcome that they share on behalf of their community and their country. We celebrate the importance of forming bonds across borders and cultures and that centre on our shared humanity. We look forward to the day when peace will allow us to visit Chortkiv and explore your country.

Slava Ukraini.

Applause

In recognition of International Day of the Girl Child

Hon. Ms. McLean: Today, I rise on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to recognize the International Day of the Girl Child. This is a day to recognize that girls around the world do not yet enjoy gender equity and that they continue to face many challenges when it comes to enjoying basic human rights, such as living free from gender-based violence and the opportunity for education and economic advancement, some of which are brought on by political conflict, war, and climate change events.

It is also a day to recognize that, despite this, girls around the world are leading us in creating the world that they want to see and that we must continue to support them in their efforts.

This year's theme is "Invest in Girls' Rights: Our Leadership, Our Well-being". As the United Nations has

shared, governments around the world must continue to invest in girls' leadership programs and programs that support gender equity, because these investments can support girls in creating a better future for themselves and for all of us.

Our government wholeheartedly supports programs and organizations that seek to empower girls so that they can become the leaders they have the full potential to be and, of course, in so many cases, here they already are leaders. Mr. Speaker, as you know, ending the tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people is work that I'm very passionate about. One of the objectives under the whole of the Yukon strategy is to honour missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus people.

When I learned that two young women from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Jamie Thomas and Piper Fordham, helped to organize the Sisters in Spirit walk and vigil in Dawson City, I was inspired. I know that this is only one example of local initiatives that are happening across the territory where girls and young women, including transgender Yukoners, are working to create positive change in our society.

There are also so many other organizations and groups in the Yukon that are working in different areas to empower girls. There are so many examples, Mr. Speaker, from sports to trades and technology, science to arts and culture. So, let us think today about the challenges that exist, but let us also celebrate the potential of girls to change the world and that, through collective efforts both large and small, we can ensure that every girl has the opportunity to soar and contribute their unique talents to our society. Thank you.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize girls and young women and the unique challenges they face around the world. As we observe this day each October 11, it is important to emphasize the importance of investing in girls to help address these challenges and empower girls to be leaders in a healthy and inclusive society.

The range of issues that girls face around the world is broad, especially in adolescence. No issue should be ignored. Cyber bullying, body image and eating disorders, dating violence, and mental health challenges are all being faced at any time among our girls. However, there are still practices taking place around the world that are harmful to girls and young women — practices such as child, early, and forced marriage and unions or female genital mutilation. According to UNICEF's 2022 global annual results report on gender equality, countries in conflict see adolescent girls severely affected in a number of ways. For example, they are two and a half times more likely to be out of school than girls in non-conflict settings. In turn, being out of school increases their risk of marriage and exposure to violence and limits access to quality health care and other services.

As we reflect today on the issues that girls face here and around the world, we must also recognize that much has been done here at home to recognize and address inequalities. To all parents, please be good role models for our children. Continue

to promote gender equality among our children and youth. Raise your girls to be proud and to stand up for themselves and their dreams. Salamat po.

Applause

MLA Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the International Day of the Girl Child. This is a day dedicated to celebrating the voices and power of girls. We repeat again: Girls' rights are human rights. But all too often, we witness their rights being eroded and removed, often violently, as we see conflict around the world. We know that armed conflict and violence and safety for girls do not mix. We know that as wars have left communities destroyed and schools and education abandoned or destroyed, girls are being left behind. We know that girls are fleeing wars and natural disasters and are left with no access to education in refugee camps. All of these ongoing conflicts, wars, and gender-based violence put girls in great peril.

I want to thank again today the people working so hard to make sure that girls everywhere have access to all of their human rights in these places of great peril. So, thank you to everyone on this International Day of the Girl Child.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling today a legislative return in response to written questions for the Member for Porter Creek North.

Speaker: 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. 33: Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I move that Bill No. 33, entitled *Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 33, entitled *Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 33 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House encourages Yukoners to receive the COVID-19 and flu vaccines to protect the health and safety of individuals and our community.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share that our government has reached a historic funding agreement with the Government of Canada under the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*.

Living a life free from violence is a fundamental human right. Gender-based violence remains a barrier to achieving gender equality in the Yukon and across Canada. Nationally, more than 11 million people aged 15 and over have experienced intimate partner violence at least once since the age of 15.

Gender-based violence is a significant and complex issue in the Yukon, with rates three to four times higher than the national average. Mr. Speaker, these figures represent more than statistics; they represent lives. These levels of gender-based violence and related impacts are simply unacceptable. Through the funding received under the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*, our government will work to address these complex issues with Yukon-specific approaches.

We look forward to implementing the bilateral agreement which will bring approximately \$16 million in new funding over four years to help stabilize the sector, support victims, and increase prevention efforts. The funding received will bolster existing supports in the Yukon and create new and innovative programs to address known gaps in services.

Our government is committed to strengthening our ongoing efforts to address, prevent, and eliminate gender-based violence. This commitment is reflected in our government's decision to match the funding provided by the Government of Canada.

The Yukon's implementation plan prioritizes initiatives that align with the objectives of the Yukon's missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit+ strategy, an alignment that we know is crucial to supporting our broader efforts. Today's agreement includes financial supports for Yukon-based non-governmental organizations that respond to and work to prevent gender-based violence. Part of the funding will be used to support gender-based violence programming across the Yukon government. This historic national plan builds on approaches and strategies to prevent and address gender-based violence with the goal of supporting victims, survivors, and their families. Our government is incredibly thankful for the contribution of Yukoners to the development of the plan, and we look forward to partnering with local women-led and gender-equity-seeking organizations.

I also want to thank the Yukon Women's Coalition members and Queer Yukon for sharing their knowledge and expertise of front-line work and helping us identify funding priorities. We know that we are stronger together, and we look forward to collaborating with our partners to end gender-based violence in the Yukon. Together, we can create a safer,

supportive territory for all Yukon women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ community members. Thank you.

Ms. Clarke: Salamat, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the chance to respond to this ministerial statement, the majority of which was already made in a press release issued this morning.

We are pleased to see \$16.4 million over four years flowing to support the implementation of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* in the Yukon. The territorial government says that it will match those costs over the duration of the agreement. However, in February, the Yukon Women's Coalition, representing eight groups — including the Yukon Status of Women Council, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, and the Dawson Shelter Society, to name a few — wrote the agreement. That letter requested — and I quote: “A formal working relationship with Yukon Government on the roll out of National Action Plan funding in the Yukon in the form of an MOU that would demonstrate our inclusion as decision-makers on prioritization of how this funding should roll out.”

That letter also asked for clarity on which funding pots would be utilized and for core funding for women's groups. When the minister announced in May that Yukon government was beginning negotiations with Ottawa to fund implementation of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* in the Yukon, those groups were not included in the press release. So, I have to ask if the minister consulted with those women's groups as per their request. Did they include those groups in discussions with the federal government? Did they indicate to those groups which funding pots would be utilized? Did the government give core funding breakdowns to the eight women's groups who make up the Yukon Women's Coalition so that they have certainty going forward?

I will end by saying that we hope the plan's implementation will create a more supportive and safer territory for all Yukon women, girls, and members of the 2SLGBTQ2IA+ community. I look forward to the minister's response.

Salamat po.

MLA Tredger: I am very excited to be discussing the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. Since the federal announcement of this funding almost a year ago, I and many others have been eager to find out what the funding would look like on the ground. I have to admit that despite reading the press release and hearing the statement, I am still a little unclear on that.

So, my first question is: Will the bilateral agreement be made public? I know that the organizations that work to end gender-based violence, such as the members of the Yukon Women's Coalition, will also be very eager to hear the details. As mentioned in February of this year, they sent a letter, which was tabled here in the House, asking for more information. In that letter, they laid out their chronic underfunding. Some of those organizations doing critical work receive less than \$50,000 a year in core funding. That is not even enough to pay

one full-time staff person. I have had many back-and-forths with the minister on this topic, asking what an organization is expected to do with less than \$50,000 a year, and in the spring, she told me that there would be more funding coming in the national action plan.

So, I would like to ask about those increases to core funding that were promised for this action plan, and I am specifically asking about core funding, not project-specific money, but core funding that can be used for an organization's basic needs, like paying an executive director, renting a building, buying phones and computers, and keeping the electricity on.

So, how much of the \$16 million announced today will go to increasing the core funding of gender-equity-seeking organizations in the Yukon?

In that letter from the Yukon Women's Coalition, they laid out how much they needed in order to be adequately funded. For the entire coalition, consisting of eight organizations throughout the Yukon, they asked for an increase to core funding that added up to less than \$1.3 million a year. So, over four years, that would be around \$5 million, which is less than a third of the funding announced from the federal government today. Has the minister met that request? Will at least \$5 million of this funding be going to core funding for non-profit organizations over the next four years?

Finally, I wanted to ask the minister how she will be measuring the success of this plan. What outcomes does she hope to see and how will they be assessed? Will outside organizations such as NGOs working directly on the ground be involved in assessing the plan and recommending changes, and will those outcomes be made public? I look forward to hearing the minister's responses. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, this bilateral funding agreement is an important step toward addressing gender-based violence across the territory. The investment from the Government of Canada of over \$16 million is something that our government is proud to match. The *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* in the Yukon reflects our commitment to preventing gender-based violence and creating systemic change through community-led solutions.

Mr. Speaker, creating systemic change alongside partners is a legacy that our government is proud of. To receive funding through the national action plan, our government worked with stakeholders to develop a comprehensive Yukon implementation plan, which was a crucial component of our negotiation package. This plan ensures a targeted and meaningful response to the specific needs of Yukon, and it will support work to better address the intersectional needs of diverse populations, including those experiencing gender-based violence in rural and remote communities.

In terms of timing, the implementation plan outlines how the initial funding will be utilized for the first two years. After the first year, we will gather feedback from the gender-based violence sector. Their insights will shape the allocation of funds for the subsequent two years. Additionally, we will seek input and advice from Yukon First Nations that have unique insights

into the needs of their communities, especially in rural areas. This collaborative approach ensures that funding is directed where it is most urgently needed. Moving forward, our government is working toward negotiating a second implementation plan and securing a second round of funding.

Mr. Speaker, our implementation plan includes many new programs that will reach underserved and most-at-risk populations, including the following: funding to enhance existing programs and development initiatives for women and gender-equity organizations and transition homes in Whitehorse, Dawson, and Watson Lake; improving transportation between Yukon communities for victims of gender-based violence; criminal or family law navigators to support victims of intimate partner violence of all genders who are navigating both systems; multi-disciplinary response for children and youth who are experiencing or witnessing gender-based violence; culturally integrated justice programs for therapeutic courts; integrated restorative justice, community-based and First Nation government-led diversion, and therapeutic court programs; and culturally relevant programming to address gender-based violence for women in territorial custody.

The plan also includes new programs aimed at preventing gender-based violence, such as funding for Yukon not-for-profit women's and gender-equity-seeking organizations that currently receive funding through Women and Gender Equity Directorate to develop prevention initiatives, integrated case assessment teams for high-risk intimate partner violence cases, and media literacy programming to counteract the effects of harmful misinformation.

As I see the time, I am going to try to wrap up quickly here. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all Yukoners who contributed to the plan. Collaboration with not-for-profit women's and gender-equity-seeking organizations is very integral to ensuring that we see real change in our territory.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Rural solid-waste transfer stations

Mr. Dixon: Yesterday, the Minister of Community Services demonstrated how out of touch he is with the needs of rural Yukoners and rural communities. He continues to assert that communities are in support of his decision to close four rural transfer stations, including the one at Silver City. In fact, when one looks at the YESAB page related to the closure of the Silver City transfer station, it is obvious just how out of touch the minister really is.

The Kluane First Nation, the Village of Haines Junction, the Association of Yukon Communities, the Arctic Institute of North America, pretty much every business in the area, and dozens upon dozens of individuals have all written to express their concerns and objections.

When will the minister start listening to the people who are directly affected by his decision?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to rise again to talk about how this government is taking waste management in the

territory seriously. Waste management is a crucial part of responsible environmental stewardship. The Yukon's solid-waste management system was not sustainable under previous governments. Changes to solid-waste disposal systems in communities were instigated in response to a 2016 report by the Association of Yukon Communities. Specifically, Mr. Speaker, this report highlighted the problem of peripheral dumping at Yukon government-operated transfer sites and the need to discourage peripheral dumping.

Mr. Dixon: Well, we have heard this all before. It seems to everyone here in the Legislature and in the region that it's no longer worth anyone's time arguing with this minister. His mind is made up, and all of the letters and pleading from Yukoners won't change it. So, now Yukoners have resorted to taking their plea directly to the Premier. A letter signed by about 130 people in the region has now been sent to the Premier, asking him to step in and take over this file from the minister. They have seen this Premier step in to take files off the desks of underperforming ministers before and are now pleading for the Premier to do so again.

So, will the Premier do as these 130 Yukoners have asked and step in to correct the course of this misguided minister?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It may not be surprising to anyone here that I disagree with the preamble from the member opposite. Our government has held consultations and public meetings in each of the communities that may be impacted by waste transfer station closures. Communities like Keno have partnerships with local companies to haul waste away to a nearby facility.

In 2016, Mr. Speaker, the Association of Yukon Communities requested significant changes to the way solid waste was managed across rural Yukon. They didn't receive any answer to that plea. My good colleague the MLA for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes stepped in and actually started to implement the recommendations or the requests from the Association of Yukon Communities. Our actions support the request of the Association of Yukon Communities in sustainable rural infrastructure and services.

Mr. Speaker, we have a number of — most, actually — communities in the territory that did not have a controlled and sustainable waste transfer station that have signed on to our agreement to actually provide the infrastructure needed to provide this service to Yukoners, and I'm happy for that support from municipalities.

Mr. Dixon: Well, my question and the letter were addressed to the Premier. This is no longer a question about dumps or transfer stations or solid-waste management; this has become a question about leadership. The Premier has demonstrated his willingness to interject on files that have been mismanaged by his ministers before — we saw that just last week — but now we have a minister who is actively damaging the relationship between the Yukon government and Yukon communities.

Here is what the letter to the Premier says that the minister has done. He has — quote: "... deeply alienated and enraged inhabitants of vast swaths of the Yukon beyond Whitehorse."

So, will the Premier step in and correct the course of this misguided minister?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are implementing recommendations from a report jointly developed by the Government of Yukon, Association of Yukon Communities, and City of Whitehorse, Mr. Speaker. The plan that we have constructed with those groups is currently being implemented. We are actually in phase 2 of that plan, and we have communities across the territory signing on to actually put controlled waste transfer stations in place.

We know that the recommendations were informed by discussions with all partners, as well as previous work such as the Association of Yukon Communities' solid-waste management vision from 2016. The committee's recommendations were then handed over to an implementation advisory group, which again included the executive director of the Association of Yukon Communities plus representatives from different municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, I have been throughout the territory this summer and before. I have spoken to mayors and councillors across the territory. This issue is not coming up in my discussions with municipalities that are actually providing the service to handle waste in the territory. They ask that it be done better; we are doing that.

Question re: Confidence and supply agreement commitments

Mr. Hassard: The communities, groups, and individuals who utilize the garbage transfer stations at Silver City, Johnsons Crossing, Braeburn, and Keno aren't the only ones concerned about the closures of these sites; the NDP has weighed in as well. In fact, the Leader of the NDP has even taken the step of submitting comments to YESAB about the closure of the transfer station at Silver City.

In that submission, the NDP leader has made it clear that the minister's decision to close the site without meaningful consultation is a violation of the confidence and supply agreement.

My question for the Minister of Community Services is: Why is he breaching the confidence and supply agreement with the NDP?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the lesson on the confidence and supply agreement that we signed with the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker.

We do know that the leader opposite actually endorsed the confidence and supply agreement as well — your leader — so I guess you have done the research.

The territory has to do better and reduce the amount of garbage we are creating. I have committed, through the confidence and supply agreement, to consult with the communities affected by this. I have said in the House that I empathize with these people. The change is difficult. We have had consultations with every single one of the affected communities. We have solutions in place in Keno. We have had meetings with Braeburn, Johnsons Crossing, and Silver City. I know that the members opposite have sometimes participated in those meetings. I know that they have been involved in those

discussions, either in person or by Zoom. We currently have another workshop with residents of Silver City that is scheduled for the end of the month. That was scheduled at the last meeting, which was held several weeks ago. We look forward to hearing what possible mitigations the community can come up with as we continue to work with communities on this file.

Mr. Hassard: So, I am not sure if the minister actually understands the definition of "consultation", but we will carry on.

Yesterday, the Leader of the NDP made it very clear that what has been done by the minister about rural garbage facilities so far has been a violation of the confidence and supply agreement. Just yesterday, the Leader of the NDP told media that what the Liberal government has done so far is not the consultation that was committed to in the confidence and supply agreement.

So, I will ask the minister again: Why has he decided to ignore the confidence and supply agreement with the NDP?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The officials within the Department of Community Services have done an exemplary job, talking to communities and coming up with mitigations, to help make this transition to a much better, much more managed supply of our waste disposal sites in the territory. It is important that we do that, Mr. Speaker, not only for the environment but also because municipalities said that the existing system — the old system — was not sustainable, so we have stepped forward.

We want to make sure that our garbage is managed in a way that is responsible to the environment and responsible to our municipalities, which want to make sure that the garbage going into our dumpsites is managed in a way that is sustainable and environmentally sound. They want gates; they want to have sorting inside those transfer stations so that garbage goes in one pile and compost in another, which will cut methane and other greenhouse gas-emitting waste.

So, we want to make sure that we do this properly and we are doing that in conjunction with the residents and municipalities.

Mr. Hassard: So, I am not sure why the minister refuses to actually answer my question, but I will try again. We have heard from the NDP over and over that they aren't satisfied with the minister's conduct on this file. They have written to YESAB, they have raised their concerns in the media, and they have even asked a question about it here in the Legislature. It is clear that the NDP think that this decision, made by the minister, is a violation of the confidence and supply agreement.

So, does the minister think that the NDP will continue to express their confidence in him by voting to keep him in power, even when he so blatantly breaks the agreement that they signed with his government?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, unlike my good friend the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, the CASA champion, I would never deign to speak on behalf of the Leader of the Third Party. I will say that the Government of Yukon is working toward a sustainable model for solid-waste management in the Yukon. We are investing in waste management facilities that reflect modern, sustainable practices that benefit the environment and the economy. We are also investing with our regional partners.

We have entered into interim regional agreements with Watson Lake, Teslin, Mayo, and Carmacks. Dawson has operated a solid-waste facility for approximately 20 years. These agreements provide financial support to rural municipalities for modernizing their solid-waste facilities and extending their waste management services to unincorporated residents within the regional boundary.

This system is efficient, it is fair to all Yukoners, and it is going to be a huge improvement for the whole territory.

Question re: Mining project oversight

Ms. White: *Our Clean Future*, the Liberal government's flagship climate change plan, was released more than three years ago. One of the action items in that plan is to include new provisions in quartz mine licences to ensure that critical mine infrastructure, like water plants and tailing ponds, are designed and built to withstand our changing climate. This was due in 2022, so the minister is late in delivering on this commitment and Yukoners are beginning to see the effects of this delay. Three current or former Yukon mine sites — Minto, Mount Nansen, and Eagle Gold — have all experienced problems related to water management recently.

The 2021 annual report on *Our Clean Future* says that the government has — and I quote: “Continued to work on guidelines...” Why has the minister dragged his feet on his commitment to ensure that quartz mine licences reflect protections against a changing climate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I will begin by talking about, as we discussed here yesterday in the Assembly — that we're working on many fronts around how to make sure that our mines are more sustainable. These are including how water is treated but also how we are reducing greenhouse gas emissions — targets that we've set. One of the things that I can say is that we have continued to work with mines on several fronts, including making sure that they are responsible to our environment, making sure that they are responsible to our social structures — meaning our communities — and making sure that they are responsible to our governance models.

We have been working on all three of those, and what I will say is that it's my impression that the work the mining companies have been doing is transitioning to a much more responsible future. I am happy to talk about that, and I will get into specifics in my second and third responses.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the environment unfortunately can't wait for the new minerals legislation to be completed to deal with this issue. In 2021, Victoria Gold was caught storing more water in their heap leach facility than what their licence allows and they failed to report on it. In 2022, Minto mine was found by inspectors to have exceeded their water storage capacity at their tailings facility by more than 200,000 litres, and now, just recently, the tailings pond at the Mount Nansen remediation project was found to be dangerously close to overflowing. The water levels were so high that reports suggest that they could destroy the tailings dam. All three of these mines were spilling heavily contaminated water into tributaries of the Yukon River. This is not just an isolated incident caused by one year of unprecedented weather but a pretty clear pattern

of failure. Will the minister commit to ensuring that his new guidelines are applied to all current, future, and abandoned mine sites?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, are we committed to making sure that our mines are compliant, to making sure that they are honouring their agreements, that we inspect them to do that, that we monitor that the work happens, and that when we find problems, we will report those problems, that we will make sure that the mines have remediated those problems? If there is an infraction, will we charge mines? Yes — yes to all of those answers. It is important that we do that.

As I said in my first response, Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with the industry to move to a new standard. One of the things that I have noted is that mines' safety records weren't so great a decade ago, and now they take safety so seriously. That same transition is happening with their work around the environment. Are there missteps? Yes. Do we find them through compliance monitoring and inspection? Yes, and then we make sure that those issues are fixed. We also report those publicly. So, this is all, from my estimation, how the system is doing the right job to make sure that mines are responsible to the environment.

Ms. White: So, the failure of government to have these mines adequately prepare for a changing climate puts our water, our salmon, and our Yukon way of life at risk.

Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation has noted the downstream effects of the Mount Nansen project. They say that, because of the mine, there are no longer fish in Dome Creek and that fish in Victoria Creek are already unsafe to eat. Recent estimates suggest that if the next spring is similar to this year's, as much as 40 million litres of contaminated water would be spilled into Dome Creek and several major rivers downstream, and that is just for one of these mines.

What assurances does the minister have for Yukoners that these facilities won't fail next spring?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Each time that there is a significant concern raised to me and I ask the department to brief me on what their work is to identify the problem, to work to remediate that problem, and to sanction — if that problem is severe — every report that I have had back has left me with the strong impression that the system is working to make sure that we have protection for our environment over the long term.

Now the member opposite is talking about future challenges, and I want to be careful around answering that, because I have examples here in the Yukon of the Faro mine, Clinton Creek, Mount Nansen. There are examples. Do I think that we are doing the same thing that was done 20 or 30 years ago? No, I don't. Does that mean that we won't have challenges going forward? No, it doesn't. But as I look at the work that's done by Compliance Monitoring and Inspections and the work that is done by First Nation governments to make sure that mines are doing a better job and correcting their mistakes — and the mines themselves in the work that they are doing — they all are working in the right direction.

Question re: Residential lot development

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for the Minister of Community Services. How many residential lots has the Yukon government released since the last election in April 2021?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question. I'm certainly interested in talking about the lot development that we're doing in the City of Whitehorse and indeed across the territory. I hope we can engage in that conversation this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Whitehorse is, of course, a vibrant and growing community, and we expect long-term demand for housing to continue. We work on behalf of our partners at the City of Whitehorse to meet this demand and help Whitehorse grow to its potential.

We also collaborate with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council to support their land development objectives in the city. Under the new First Nation land development support program, we are expanding our partnerships with the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation to support their efforts to develop their own lands and advance joint projects like Range Point road and site-suitability work in the city's future growth areas.

When land development is complete in four to six years, Whistle Bend will provide a full-service sustainable neighbourhood of more than 2,000 lots — about 10,000 people — to accommodate our growing population. I can say, Mr. Speaker, right now that we are well on our way to meeting our commitment to deliver 1,000 lots within the Yukon by the end of our mandate.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, with due respect, I did not hear a number. So, I'm going to ask again: How many residential lots has the Yukon government released since the last election in April 2021?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to continue this conversation this afternoon. Our government, to date, has delivered 807 lots since 2016 in Whitehorse and rural communities for residential, commercial, and industrial development. We are on track to deliver, as I said just a moment ago, more than 1,000 lots over five years, by fiscal year 2025-26. This is a historic investment in lot development. Our Liberal government has built strong, collaborative relationships with municipalities, private landowners, developers, and First Nation partners across the territory to speed up the development of lots and homes in the Yukon. We are proud of that work and we are going to keep at it, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: Public transit funding

Ms. Van Bibber: Earlier this year, the Minister of Community Services told the City of Whitehorse that the Government of Yukon would offer \$1.5 million to replace revenue from fares in the city transit system. The city has made it clear that this is not enough to fulfill the promise of free transit in Whitehorse.

Has the minister been able to reach an agreement with the City of Whitehorse to provide free transit as was promised in the confidence and supply agreement?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Obviously, the Leader of the Official Opposition's influence is starting to wash over his party as they continue to take interest in our confidence and supply agreement with the New Democratic Party and look to make sure that we make good on the commitments that he committed to shortly after our election.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that we are continuing our negotiations with the City of Whitehorse and with the Third Party. When we have more news to present, we certainly will do so.

Ms. Van Bibber: How much money has the Yukon government currently budgeted to provide to the City of Whitehorse to achieve the CASA commitment of free transit?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are currently in talks and have been for several months with the City of Whitehorse on this very issue. We're going back to find out what would be required to deliver free transit in the City of Whitehorse. Those discussions have not concluded, and I'm not going to negotiate with the Official Opposition on our confidence and supply agreement on the floor of the Legislature.

Question re: Rural emergency services

Ms. McLeod: Yesterday, the Minister of Community Services was asked by the media about emergency planning in all Yukon communities. His answer was that this is a responsibility of municipalities — quote: "It's up to every municipality in the territory to evaluate and assess their emergency plans and then, from that, you begin to know who will be active during an emergency." He went on to say that all the Yukon government does is provide a backstop for the municipalities.

Why is the minister not taking a leadership role in working with First Nations, municipalities, LACs, and other communities to complete emergency management plans for all Yukon communities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It's my afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and I really do appreciate the questions. I will again take issue with the preamble of the Member for Watson Lake. I have been working very closely with municipalities and First Nations across the territory — indeed all summer in light of the developments in the fires and floods that we have been seeing in the territory not only this year but in the last several years.

We are working very closely with our municipal and First Nation partners to ensure that they understand the need and have the resources that they need to do the emergency plans in the communities they know very well. They know the communities better than the Yukon government does; they are on the ground. It is in fact a municipal responsibility, but we are there to help them in any way we can to provide those resources.

As far as leadership goes, I believe that's what I am doing by talking to them on a regular basis and trying to make myself available. My phone number is always there. I give it out frequently so that people can call me with questions and, of course, my officials — the great folks at Community Services — are doing a tremendous job working with the administrations

of municipalities and First Nations across the territory on emergency planning.

We are going to have a lot of meetings this winter on this very subject. I will certainly report back in a ministerial statement or whatever in the future on this issue.

Ms. McLeod: Back in 2020, the Liberal government released the *Our Clean Future* strategy. That strategy pointed out that the Yukon needed to plan for emergencies that are evermore likely. In fact, there was a specific commitment for the Yukon government to complete emergency management plans for all Yukon communities by 2022. Unfortunately, we know that the *Our Clean Future* annual report from last year — that the deadline has not been met.

Why has the minister not met the deadline that the Liberal government committed to, to develop and implement emergency management plans in all Yukon communities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the questions, because they are very, very important to the territory; they are certainly on the minds of many Yukoners. Certainly, it is the subject that I have been speaking to my municipal colleagues about more often this summer than at any other time in my political career here, Mr. Speaker.

The Yukon Emergency Measures Organization works with our emergency management partners in municipalities and First Nations to develop emergency management capacity and build emergency-resilient Yukon communities. We appreciate the efforts of municipal and First Nation governments to plan for emergencies and the leadership of these governments in managing the challenges that recent emergency situations have presented. I have spoken at length about Mayor Ellis and Chief Hope up in the Mayo district for the extreme leadership that they provided during this year's fire and emergency situation in that region.

Preparing for emergencies includes personal preparedness. We encourage all Yukoners to prepare themselves, their families, and their homes for emergency events. Resources are available through yukon.ca.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, in closing, that in 2022 and 2023, the Emergency Measures Organization visited Dawson, Mayo, and Old Crow to work on emergency plans and hazard, risk, and vulnerability assessments with municipal and First Nation governments. They will continue to meet with Carcross and Carcross/Tagish First Nation at the end of September. We did that just recently.

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. McLeod: Now, as I said, the *Our Clean Future* annual report from last year makes it very clear that the Yukon government needs to take a leadership role to develop and implement emergency management plans in all Yukon communities, but it also notes that the deadline the Liberals set for themselves has been broken. What is even worse is that the minister's briefing notes from the Spring Sitting indicate that they haven't even started the work. It says that they have been too busy to meet the deadline of 2022 and hope to start engaging with communities this winter.

Yesterday, the minister tried to blame municipalities for a lack of progress, but his own briefing notes show that this just wasn't a priority for him.

Why hasn't the minister even started this work to ensure that all Yukon communities have up-to-date and accurate emergency management plans?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First, I want to commend the Minister of Community Services, because I know that the Emergency Measures Organization team have been reaching out to work with municipalities. Of course, if it was a situation where all the work was done by the Yukon government, I think that the Member for Watson Lake would say that there needed to be more collaboration. That's what I heard from the Minister of Community Services about meeting together, looking at how a community like Mayo did an incredible job with the municipality in the lead role.

Today, what I'm seeing is 30 minutes where the Leader of the Third Party got up and challenged us on policy. Thank you — it was a policy discussion. What I heard in every question from the Yukon Party was criticism — not one new idea. The new leader said that he was going to change the tone and come with fresh perspective — but not one element of a new idea. We are going to spend our time challenging the ideas that we have in place here with the Third Party on the relationship that we have built to move the Yukon forward.

So, again, nothing new — flipped on the promises to Yukoners. Hopefully, somewhere in the next 25 days, we will hear one new idea from the Yukon Party that we can debate.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 756

Clerk: Motion No. 756, standing in the name of Mr. Cathers.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge:

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.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to begin speaking to this as the Yukon Party Official Opposition critic on behalf of my colleagues. This is an important topic and an important need here in the territory. Since the Liberal territorial government has been in power, the demands placed on the Yukon RCMP members have grown due to a combination of factors, including population growth and an increase in organized crime, particularly organized crime connected to the illegal drug trade.

The RCMP released a report a number of months ago that indicated that there are at least five organized criminal

organizations operating in the territory, involving over 250 individuals. In addition to drug offences, the RCMP indicated that the severity of the crimes being perpetrated include weapon offences and even human trafficking. Sadly, the Yukon has the worst rate of opioid-related fatalities per capita in the entire country. Despite declaring a substance use health emergency, the Liberal government has been slow to act on the need to increase prevention, addictions treatment, and enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, the RCMP play a very important role in responding to the substance use crisis. While we believe the number one goal of any strategy for a substance use health emergency should be helping as many people as possible to break free of their addictions and live healthy lives, it is also important to recognize that going after the illegal drug dealers responsible for selling these illegal and often toxic drugs and profiting from the harm that it causes to their fellow citizens requires police actions. This includes arresting, charging, and prosecuting these criminals who are causing this harm to society and their fellow citizens and breaking the supply chain of illegal drugs. That, Mr. Speaker, means that part of the solution is that the RCMP need more resources.

Despite all these growing pressures during the years that the Liberal government has been in power, the ratio of RCMP members per capita in the Yukon has actually declined quite a bit. The Liberals have not even increased funding at a rate that addresses increased calls for service due to normal population growth, let alone provided funding to address the surge in organized crime and other types of crime which have increased according to the RCMP's own numbers.

Property crime has increased and public concerns about safety have increased, especially in the downtown core. The government's mismanaged shelter at 405 Alexander Street causes problems every day for residents and businesses in the surrounding area and, of course, as all members are aware, recently led to the closure of a long-time iconic business in the area.

Calls to the RCMP related to the shelter are responsible for about 10 percent of calls for service to the RCMP in Whitehorse, based on information provided previously by the government. Many of the vulnerable clients that the facility is intended to serve also feel unsafe, according to reports done for the government.

In rural Yukon, my colleagues and I regularly hear concerns from people about property crime, the impacts of the illegal drug trade, and delays in police response to calls for service.

Rural RCMP detachments are small, and vacancies due to turnover, leave, or other absences leave the members on duty often struggling to meet the demands and the needs of the communities they serve.

Some governments in rural Yukon have specifically asked this government for more police resources to address rising crime in their communities, yet those calls seem to have fallen on deaf ears with the Minister of Justice and her Liberal colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun' First Nation, the Village of Mayo, and Watson Lake have all made public

requests for more police resources in their area, yet, to date, there has been no evidence of any action by the Liberal government to respond to these requests from those governments.

I mentioned how the ratio of RCMP members per capita has gotten worse under the Liberal government. Here are the numbers. Last Thursday, the Minister of Justice said that the Yukon has 139 regular RCMP members, and she told this House that this equalled a police strength of 320 officers per 100,000 people. In March 2016, when the Yukon Party was in government, the Department of Justice noted that the Yukon's police strength in 2016 was 402 officers per 100,000. So, under the Liberals, the police ratio dropped from 402 police members per 100,000 people to just 320 police members per 100,000 people. Mr. Speaker, we are seeing the results of that throughout the territory.

In speaking to the trends, I want to cite information that will show how things progressed under the first years of this Liberal territorial government as well as under the last couple of years, according to information from the government as well as the RCMP. We have seen that, during that time, particularly in the first part of the government's mandate, the crime rate was increasing while funding remained relatively static. In speaking to that, Mr. Speaker, I am going to refer to the numbers provided by the RCMP themselves in their year in review released in 2020-21, as well as recent statements after that date by RCMP leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I am just trying to find the right page in this document here to begin the first excerpt that I intended to quote here.

So, according to the report by the RCMP entitled *Yukon RCMP Year in Review 2020-21* — on page 12, it notes — and I quote: “The Yukon Bureau of Statistics Population report, First Quarter, 2021 indicates the population of Yukon to be 43,025, an increase of 2.3% compared to the previous year. This represents thirteen percent... population growth in Yukon in the past five years (2016).

“The Yukon RCMP have seen a steady increase in annual calls for service in the past five years. The occurrence count for 2020/2021 indicates a slight decrease over the previous year; this variance can be attributed to COVID-19.” Again, that is on page 12 of that report.

Further, in that same document, which I believe has been tabled in the Legislative Assembly in the past — I am going to make reference to some specific numbers from that report. On page 21, that document notes, under the heading “Specialized Response Unit” — and I quote: “In Yukon Violence in relationship totals have increased 43% (224) over the past four years. Approximately 74% of Victims of Intimate partner violence in Yukon are female.

“In addition, Sexualized Assault totals in Yukon have increased 27% (48) over the past four years.”

So, again, in that five-year period covering from the end of March 2016 to five years after that date, that period — comprising largely the Liberals' first time in office — saw an increase in that category of violence in relationship totals of 43 percent, according to the RCMP.

Additionally, on the previous page — page 20 — they note that from the 2016-17 fiscal year to 2020-21, sexual assault was up 31 percent, robbery offences were up 25 percent, offences related to death were up 55 percent, kidnapping/abduction was up 65 percent, and assault was up seven percent.

Again, on page 20 of that same document, the RCMP themselves noted, under the heading “Crimes against Persons” — quote: “The following graph represents fluctuations in the volume of Crimes against Person offences reported to the Yukon RCMP over the past five years. As the Yukon’s population base is smaller, changes in statistical results, year-over-year, can appear significant. This five-year comparison notes an increase in all categories of persons-based crime in the Yukon.”

I won’t break down the subcategories, though that is found in that report for those who wish to refer to them.

Again, quoting from that same report from the Yukon RCMP, moving on to page 23 of that report, under the heading “Drug Offences” — quote: “The following chart represents fluctuations in the volume of Drug Trafficking & Possession for the purpose of Trafficking offences reported to the Yukon RCMP over the past five years (April 1 to March 31). In the past five years Drug Trafficking offences have increased 90%.” I will read that last sentence again: “In the past five years Drug Trafficking offences have increased 90%.” That was, of course, 2020-21, but we have seen a further increase since that time, Mr. Speaker, according to information provided by the RCMP. And that increase in crime carries with it a need for the police to be able to respond to that, and that requires resources. But as I noted slightly earlier in my remarks, the police ratio has not kept up with population growth, and we have seen under this Liberal government the police ratio dropping from 402 police per 100,000 people when the Yukon Party was in office in 2016 to just 320 police members per 100,000 people, according to the numbers the minister herself provided this Legislative Assembly last week during Question Period.

Mr. Speaker, last year, we also saw the unprecedented situation where the commanding officer of M Division of the RCMP, which is the Yukon’s division, took the very rare step of publicly expressing strong concerns about the lack of resources being provided by the territorial government.

While more details on that can be found in Hansard from last spring during April 2022, I will recap a few of the highlights from that. Of course, as you recall, Mr. Speaker, local media also reported on his comments at the time.

In April 2022, the commanding officer of the Yukon RCMP took this unusual step of expressing public concern about the lack of resources, which provided us with further confirmation of this Liberal government’s failure to properly resource the Yukon RCMP. In a CBC Yukon interview, the commanding officer made it clear that the police force is seriously under-resourced. Despite the Yukon’s rapidly growing population and rising trend in criminal activity, funding from this Liberal government has not been sufficient.

In April last year, Chief Superintendent Sheppard noted that the Yukon RCMP had not seen a single new investigative or front-line position since he took over the position in 2016.

This is despite the fact that the Yukon’s population has grown significantly and the challenges facing the force have too. Despite the fact that there are as many as five organized crime operations in the territory, according to the RCMP, this Liberal government has still not provided adequate resources to the RCMP.

Again, let me connect the dots to remind members that the numbers I just quoted earlier in my speech from the RCMP’s report outlining the increases in drug-trafficking offences of some 90 percent in that same five-year period and an increase in crimes against persons in all categories going up were in the same time period that the commanding officer of the Yukon RCMP said that his division had not received an increase of a single person to help them meet that demand.

It is clear that the RCMP are struggling. We have heard it from RCMP senior members, we have heard it individually from RCMP members on the front line, we’ve heard it from Yukon communities, and we have seen the results translated into increased calls from businesses and citizens who are experiencing the harm caused by this increase in crime.

Stepping back to April of last year, the commanding officer of the Yukon RCMP told CBC Yukon at the time that the Yukon RCMP were struggling to make ends meet. He indicated that they have had to pull resources out of other branches to keep up with the challenges facing the crime reduction unit, and he told media that the RCMP will be operating at a deficit for that year.

Now, again, stepping back to some of the comments made by the RCMP at the time — again, and for the ease of reference for Hansard, I’m referring to page 2007 from April 25, 2022. Here is what the RCMP superintendent said — quote: “We haven’t kept up with the cost of policing. And it’s all sort of coming to a head now. We need an injection of O&M and we need more members.”

A further quote from the same page, also from the same person — quote: “... just to make ends meet. We’ve been running vacancies for years just to pay the bills. So, it’s been really, really tough. But we spoke with the Justice Department and we said, listen, we can’t go on like this.”

So, Mr. Speaker, in response to that, as well as pressure that my colleagues and others have put on the government, we have seen some additional money provided to the RCMP; however, we have also seen the minister and, at times, her colleagues attempt to overstate the significance of those increases by ignoring and glossing over the fact that in last year’s budget, while the number on the surface sounded significant, when one read the fine print, it was clear that the vast majority of the increased resources provided to the RCMP were directly due to the RCMP union, the National Police Federation, signing its very first collective agreement that it had negotiated and a significant increase for members, which directly translated into forced growth without new positions being associated with it. So, while, of course, the government was appropriate that they provided those additional resources, those resources were simply to pay for forced growth directly due to that agreement with the union representing RCMP members.

This year, again, at face value, the number cited by the minister could sound larger than it actually is, but in breaking down those costs — just referring back to March 6 of this year — when you look at the fine print — and again, for the reference of Hansard, this is page 2963 from March 6, 2023. I am quoting the Minister of Justice: “Specifically, this increase includes \$874,000 in one-time costs, including the replacement of Yukon RCMP’s aircraft engine, the payout of excess leave liabilities, and some onetime costs related to RCMP’s force-wide arms, armour and equipment modernization initiative. There is more than \$122,000 in term costs, including a multi-year boat replacement plan, other equipment needed by the officers, and increases to the operation and maintenance portion of the RCMP’s infrastructure program. There is \$2.521 million in ongoing costs, including lab costs, block training requirements, ongoing IT and equipment cost increases, budget erosion related to inflationary measures, negotiated pay raise impacts, and 7.5 new full-time positions for our police service here in the territory.”

So, most of that list and the vast majority of the funding were related to maintenance, ongoing costs, training requirements, IT, equipment costs, et cetera, and did not result in an increase in front-line personnel or boots on the ground, to use the expression.

We did see the minister commit to 7.5 new full-time positions for our police. She later explained in this House that a number of those were administrative, and in the spring, she had indicated that there would be two front-line positions resulting from that, which would include two in Whitehorse and two in an unspecified rural community or communities.

While we appreciate that there was an increase, again, it has still not come close to making up for the decline in RCMP resources per capita, which, as I mentioned, has gone from 402 RCMP members per 100,000 and dropped to 320 per 100,000 under this Minister of Justice.

Another couple of questions that we have are related to the positions that the minister committed to this year. What is the status of those commitments? The minister committed that funding in the budget in the spring. We are now in the fall. When my colleagues, including the Member for Watson Lake and the Member for Porter Creek North, asked questions of the minister, they were unable to get a good answer from the minister about this issue.

My colleague from Watson Lake asked her about whether the Mayo area had received any increase in police resources and whether Watson Lake had received an increase in police resources — again, because those two specific requests had been made by governments in those areas — the minister danced around the question, but the bottom line from her answer seemed to be that, no, they had not received any resources, and it didn’t sound like the minister was planning on providing additional resources in response to the request from those governments.

There is a simple question for the minister. She told us in the spring that the government was providing funding this year for two new positions for the RCMP in rural Yukon. Where are those positions going, and have either of them been filled?

The next question is: With the other two positions that the minister committed to that are actually front-line positions this year, have those positions been filled? Because if the funding was allocated but it’s not actually translating into increased boots on the ground, the bottom line is that Yukoners are continuing to see the impact of a rise in crime and Yukon’s RCMP members are increasingly bearing a heavier and heavier load individually, trying to meet the needs of the communities they serve and the territory as a whole.

I look forward to hearing the minister, when she rises, provide an update on whether any of the positions that they committed to in this budget have actually been filled and if she can tell this House where those positions, particularly the rural positions, are located.

I know that a number of other members wish to speak to this motion. As you noted at the top, Mr. Speaker, when you read the wording of this motion, I would recap that noting that the reason the motion was worded to say that we urge the Yukon government to increase resources and funding to the RCMP and to support the additional hiring of front-line police officers in the Whitehorse area and in rural Yukon communities is that we believe that both are in urgent need of attention. We believe that our communities need more resources. We believe that Whitehorse needs more resources, as well as the ability for the RCMP to fill in gaps across the territory, wherever those may occur.

Unfortunately, as I noted, at a time when the population has grown significantly, the drug trade and illegal drug trafficking has increased. According to the RCMP’s own numbers, in a five-year period, drug-trafficking offences increased 90 percent. We have seen, as well, the situation with increased property crime in a number of communities, as well as especially in the downtown core in Whitehorse.

As my colleague the Member for Porter Creek North pointed out, we know that the local business community made a specific request for an increased focus on dealing with property crime, and unfortunately, the minister chose not to include that or even mention it in her policing priorities issued to the RCMP.

While I know that the minister will likely speak to the fact that the Police Council provides advice on those priorities, as the minister knows full well, the minister ultimately holds the pen on that letter and does have the ability to make adjustments if she feels that the Police Council has missed recommending any areas that they should have, and, of course, as the minister knows full well, the Department of Justice is also involved in helping to guide and provide advice to the Police Council in the first place. So, to try to suggest that ultimately it isn’t her responsibility is simply another attempt by a minister of this Liberal government to dodge ministerial responsibility when they have been called out for a failure in leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I think I will wrap up with that being said. I hope we will see other members of this House, particularly in the Liberal caucus and in the NDP caucus, support us in this role. We have deliberately not been prescriptive in speaking to where those front-line police officers should go in rural Yukon communities or in the Whitehorse area, because attempting to

get into a detailed list would undoubtedly not see support from all members. But we hope that our colleagues from other caucuses will join us in recognizing that the Yukon RCMP and its members are working very hard under an increasingly challenging load, dealing with an increase in organized crime, dealing with responding to a substance use crisis and their role in going after illegal drug dealers, and, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, they need help and they need more resources, and they look to government and to this Legislative Assembly to support them in that area.

So, I commend the motion to the House, and I hope that members will choose to support it.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to speak about Yukon's RCMP, Yukon's RCMP complement, and the important work that they do across the territory to keep all Yukoners safe. I am also very pleased with the relationship that our government has with the senior leadership of the Yukon RCMP, and I can indicate that prior to coming to this position, I spent many, many, many hours working with individual RCMP officers and leadership of the RCMP, and I know first-hand very well the stresses and the importance of the work that is done by front-line officers and by the teams of individuals who work to keep Yukoners safe throughout their careers.

I am also acutely aware of the fact that the Yukon and M Division provide a very well-respected position for officers and front-line officers and regular members to come for their career. It is a well-sought-after placement for new RCMP regular members and for seasoned veterans who come to provide services to Yukoners. I have experienced this personally, and certainly in my role since 2016 as the Minister of Justice, I have been proud of the relationships that we have built over this period of time and of the work that the RCMP does on behalf of Yukoners.

I am extremely proud to be the person with the responsibility of working directly with the RCMP with the purpose of providing that safety to Yukoners. I am extremely proud, as I have said, of the relationships that we have built as we have moved forward to meet the challenges that have been put before us by the substance use health emergency, by a growing population here in this territory, by COVID-19 and the challenges that it presented not only to all of the government and all of my colleagues as we managed through that — I have no hesitancy to say — probably in the best way of any government in Canada for the purposes of keeping Yukoners safe and protected and for the purpose of managing and striking the balance between what was required by public health and the requirements for us to meet the challenges put forward by not only the federal government in Canada — by the world — with respect to how restrictions would be required on Yukoners' and Canadians' lives but, in addition to that, striking a balance between keeping them safe and providing a process and a place where Yukoners could move around quite a bit more than they could in other places in Canada.

I won't address the individual statistics brought forward by the member opposite. I don't think there is value in that for

Yukoners. What I expect and will say to Yukoners is that we work extremely hard to ensure the provision of a professional and accountable and appropriately funded territorial police service that is responsive to the priorities of Yukoners and worthy of the public's trust. Now, those words — my colleague across the way will say they are just words and will constantly challenge either my sincerity or, with a few other choice — I would say likely inappropriate — words used to describe the work that I do in this role, but that is neither here nor there for me. What is important is my responsibility to lead the Department of Justice and the work that we do there to ensure that there is a police service that is professional, accountable, and appropriately funded. It is required to be so, so that it can respond to the priorities of Yukoners and it must ensure the public trust.

Our government funds, Mr. Speaker, significant and ongoing investments in Yukon's police resources through a territorial police service agreement with the RCMP, as well as through investments in the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program. It is an important way in which work, not only supported by the RCMP, but supported in Yukon, Canadian, Inuit, and Indigenous communities — the importance of the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program cannot be overstated.

This year, the Government of Yukon approved a policing budget increase of a significant amount over last year. I note that the Yukon Party voted against those budget increases for all kinds of services and programming for Yukoners. In particular, I am puzzled by a motion that asks for increases that the party opposite will not vote for anyway. They take the position that, in opposition, they are to challenge. I think I heard the member opposite say — maybe even yesterday — that they challenge such things because they are confidence votes and they have no confidence. We're talking about confidence in Yukoners, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about services for Yukoners. We are talking about front-line workers, and I will speak more about that in a moment.

Voting against the increases for the RCMP in the spring of 2023 budget — well, we saw them vote at second reading against the supplementary budget, and I expect that when we get back to the other supplementary budget, they will do the same thing. I find it, frankly, to be irresponsible to bring a motion before this Legislature to speak about increasing budgets and resources for the RCMP. I am not sure if you could speak against such a thing. Clearly, public safety and the public trust in the RCMP are incredibly important, but to use this Legislature's time to debate such an issue when — if I did bring in such budget increases, they would be ultimately not supported. So, puzzling, yes. Irresponsible? I would say yes.

The increase that we have brought in the past number of years to the budget of the RCMP has been significant. It will be ongoing. It will be done through the work that our government does with the RCMP leadership and in response to observing and dealing with their request for such funding and how they might spend those dollars and in consultation with government as we proceed through our budgeting process.

We are not sure what the members opposite did when they were in government, but we work now on the next year's

budget. Requests have gone out for the need — increases — what is being sought by government departments and government responsibilities, like the RCMP or NGOs. Those kinds of requests are now being brought into the mix with the Department of Finance, and the conversations are beginning with respect to how we will respond to those in drafting a budget that meets the needs of Yukoners.

The increase that was brought in the spring of 2023 budget increased and reaffirmed our staffing commitment to the Historical Case Unit. While it added two officers to the crime reduction unit, two additional resources have been added to bring the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program up to a complement of 19 resources — 19 individuals who are responsible for policing pursuant to that program. Most recently, this government approved additional resources for the Car 867 program under the substance use health emergency strategy. These resources expand the capacity of the mobile crisis response team from five to seven days a week to cover critical call periods and to provide trauma-informed, client-centred support for people experiencing mental health-related issues.

I can note that the strategy for the substance use health emergency includes \$326,000 of additional support for the Car 867 program. As I have noted, it is a mobile crisis response team that offers a range of services, including mental health and suicide assessments. It is operated and the work is done by an individually and properly trained RCMP officer as well as a mental health nurse who attends with the RCMP officer in Car 867 for the purpose of responding to those kinds of calls in the territory. Car 867 is a pilot project that currently operates in Whitehorse. At present capacity, service providers in the program respond to 47 percent of all incoming mental health-related calls.

Additional support will increase Car 867 to cover, as I have said, up to seven days a week to help cover critical call periods, and an evaluation and expansion of the program is being contemplated as the evaluation is being completed.

The Government of Yukon will collaborate with Yukon First Nation governments and provide support for Indigenous-led, community-based therapeutic courts and other restorative justice approaches that focus on healing and treatment alternatives for justice-involved clients struggling with substance use issues.

So, these are just two of the programs noted and priorities in the substance use health emergency for which Justice is responsible.

I can note, having had the strategy brought to the attention of this Legislative Assembly today in this debate, that the strategy is an adaptive one; it is considered to be an opportunity to move forward and to declare the intended plans with respect to the work that can and will be led in some cases by government and led by other community members in other cases. We work closely with First Nation governments and community groups to coordinate the response, focusing on, as it does, prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and community safety.

The substance use health emergency strategy contains 43 recommended actions to be led by the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice. Of those actions, 14 are being implemented immediately and many others will be developed over time in collaboration with our partners.

The strategy, as I noted, is an adaptive one. It will continually be assessed — regular reports on progress — and adjusting our response to reflect the changing circumstances and emerging needs to meet our long-term goals is the intention of the strategy.

The strategy includes recommended medium- to short- and long-term actions based on the four areas I have noted, but because we have not had too much of an opportunity to discuss it, I want to reiterate that the four areas of focus are: prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery support, and community safety and well-being. The desired outcomes of the strategy are the desired outcomes of any response to the substance use health emergency. They include our ability to delay the age of initiation of substance use of any kind. A desired outcome is to minimize substance use across the lifespan of an individual to help people be safe when they are using substances and to learn to be safer, to reduce the harms of substance use, and to improve the health, safety, and well-being of Yukoners and communities. The Department of Justice will oversee the fourth area of growth — community safety and well-being — and 10 of the 43 proposed actions will be led by the Department of Justice.

An important part of the work of the Department of Justice over the last year — actually, two years — has been the initiation of a community safety planning program. It was initiated in early 2022 and launched in February 2023 and provides up to \$200,000 to each First Nation for development and implementation of community safety initiatives that are uniquely designed to suit their citizens. A proposed phase 2 will consider expanding that program to municipalities.

I am pleased to note that, according to the 2022 *Police Personnel and Expenditures in Canada* report, the Yukon has the third highest police-per-capita ratio in Canada, with a police strength of 320 officers per 100,000 population — 139 officers in total.

Now, the member opposite has taken much umbrage with that statistic. Clearly, the reduction since his party was the government of the day is likely the result of an increased population growth that we know to be between 12 and 13 percent here in the territory.

But we should note that despite that population growth and the total of 139 officers in total — which is, by the way, an increase in the last number of years — only the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have higher police-per-capita ratios. Of course, one has to only consider their geography and size in order to perhaps understand that statistic.

As of May 15, 2022, the Yukon experienced a decrease in police strength mirroring the trend across the rest of Canada when compared to 2021. Currently, the total number of RCMP regular members, also known as “officers”, assigned to the territory is funded as follows: 114 through the *Territorial*

Police Service Agreement; 19 regular members through the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program; six individuals are the divisional administration, for the total regular members of 139.

The RCMP forecasts its anticipated human resources operational funding and capital investment needs to the Yukon government on an annual financial planning process. We work on this throughout the year. I meet regularly with the RCMP leadership on a personal basis. As well, the Deputy Minister of Justice and the Assistant Deputy Minister of Justice meet regularly with counterparts in the RCMP so that we are working on a schedule that allows issues of human resources, operational funding, and capital investment needs to be a topic of discussion between Yukon government on an annual basis but certainly more times than once throughout the year.

In response to the recommendations of the 2010 *Sharing Common Ground* — the policing review that was done at the time — evolving community safety concerns, and the requests of the RCMP's M Division, the Government of Yukon has authorized significant increases in front-line and specialized police resources over the period of time that we have been here in government. There have been increases as well as a result of the *Sharing Common Ground* review.

For the 2023-24 fiscal year, the Government of Yukon increased the operational budget of the RCMP's M Division by \$3.301 million. This included funding for a total of eight new RCMP positions. One and a half are for regular members for the crime reduction unit, two regular members were assigned to the specialized response unit, two regular members were assigned to the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program, and two public service employees were assigned for the crime reduction unit. Important aspects of the work done to support the crime reduction unit are done by public service employees.

Provost duties were devolved from the RCMP in 2018, which removed three full-time equivalent positions, and this resulted in a net increase of eight officers over that period, despite 11 positions having been added. Those officers — if they had chosen to do so — were, as I understand it, assigned to different duties. As of April 2023, 19 regular members are now funded under the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program to provide community policing services in First Nation communities.

The RCMP resources within the criminal operations, which are included in the M Division, include the following units: In the Whitehorse detachment, we have the general investigations section; we have the regular members of the Whitehorse detachment; and we have the operational communications centre.

In the district policing unit, we have the responsibilities for 12 district detachments including a relief unit, which is a number of officers who are experienced and well trained and are available to fill vacancies when there are vacancies in communities. The impression that communities are being left without officers to either provide for their own protection or the protection of that community is not accurate. There is a relief unit that is used for the purposes of allowing individual officers to be away for a number of reasons. There is a traffic services unit in the district policing section, there is a forensic and

identification section, there is the police dog services, and there is the air services unit, and the emergency response team, sometimes known in the public as "ERT".

In the plainclothes unit, there is the crime reduction unit, there is a specialized response unit, there is a major crimes unit, there is an Internet child exploitation unit, there is the historical cases unit, the national sex offender registry, disclosure and major case management, and the intelligence analysts. There is also a federal policing unit and operations records management.

Mr. Speaker, the M Division Historical Case Unit was created in March 2018 in response to increasing demand in the Yukon for dedicated resources to investigate historical homicides, missing persons, and investigations related to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirited people. The unit investigates historical unsolved homicides and suspicious deaths. It investigates missing persons cases where foul play is suspected; it investigates M Division's outstanding missing persons investigations and cases of unidentified human remains. The three-member Historical Case Unit became operational in February 2019 and was officially established as a permanent entity during the fiscal year of 2022-23.

I will make only brief reference to the considerable attention brought by the member opposite to the comment made by Chief Superintendent Sheppard in April 2022 that no new positions had been created since he had come in 2016. It is unfortunate, because despite many explanations and evidence to the contrary, the member opposite continues to bring that up, but the chief superintendent unfortunately, during that news information item, did not have accurate information.

The chief superintendent and I spoke on several occasions with his officials and my officials about the development and the beginning funding of the Historical Case Unit, the reason for doing so, the funding that would be needed to do so, and the new positions that would be assigned to that unit. So, unfortunately, that information in the news at the time was incorrect, but fortunately, there have been positions created since 2016 on several fronts. The federal investigation unit supplements territorial policing resources and is tasked with federal policing priorities, including drug investigations, enforcement of federal laws, protective policing, commercial crime investigations, and integrated border enforcement and intelligence functions. In the work of the federal investigation unit, their priorities and their responsibilities include a number of things that have been mentioned here today, including federal policing priorities and drug investigations. There is no issue that the drug trade here in the Yukon Territory is a scourge on our community and our society, and the RCMP are well aware. It is a part of the policing priorities and has been for several years, and it is something that they are working hard to address.

In 2019, M Division created the crime reduction unit to address specific issues in the Yukon such as drug trafficking, property theft, and organized crime. In 2019, the CRU was created. To staff the crime reduction unit, M Division initially drew resources from other work units that, in turn, were forced to work in different ways with respect to their core policing

activities. But in February 2022, funding was approved by this government — not voted for by the members of the Yukon Party — for two additional regular members to be temporarily assigned to the CRU for four years beginning in the fiscal year 2022-23. In 2023, the RCMP budget included funding to support one and a half permanent regular member positions and two public service employees for the crime reduction unit.

It is not the case that the increases brought for the RCMP in the budget in 2023 were only, as noted by the member opposite, for the purposes of dealing with the retroactive pay of the unionization of RCMP members. It is simply not the case.

I am going to speak just for a second about the crime rates from the 2022 report recently released. In 2022, police reported a total of 10,366 criminal incidents in the Yukon: 2,264 were violent *Criminal Code* violations; 4,475 were considered to be property crimes; 2,688 were considered to be other *Criminal Code* violations; 662 *Criminal Code* traffic violations; and 277 were federal statute violations. The Yukon's 2022 police-reported crime rate was 5.9 percent lower than the revised 2021 rate and six percent lower than the 2020 rate.

To ensure the safety of all communities and RCMP members, particularly those working in communities, detachment complements and the current staffing snapshots will not be shared with respect to what vacancies there may be. It is not the practice of the RCMP to release those numbers. Like other RCMP divisions across the country, Yukon RCMP will at times experience vacancies resulting from movement like promotions and transfers but also from temporary vacancies due to a variety of reasons including training, sick leave, or even parental leave.

The vacancies at the M Division as of September 1 in total are: nine unfilled positions for which there is funding, and four vacancies are due to different types of leave currently — things like training or different opportunities for, as I've said, leave that is available. M Division has the third-highest RCMP-per-population ratio in Canada, as I said earlier, next to the NWT and Nunavut. The vacancy rate, as I've said and noted and wanted to emphasize, is generally low. Retaining and maintaining a sufficient complement of members to ensure public safety is of ongoing importance, as demonstrated through the proactive, internal regular-member staffing and recruitment efforts. As I've said, M Division is well-sought-after with respect to the opportunities that avail themselves to regular members and others in their careers here in the Yukon Territory with the RCMP.

In addition, a team of dedicated officers works to fill vacancies, as required. Our government funds significant and ongoing investments in the Yukon's police resources through the *Territorial Police Service Agreement* with the RCMP, as well as through investments in the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program. This year, as I've noted, the Government of Yukon approved a policing budget increase over last year's budget, and this increase included eight new positions, which includes the addition of two members for Car 867 so there can be expanded services.

The Department of Justice works very closely with the RCMP to understand their resourcing needs each and every

year, and as I've said, that work is ongoing to determine their needs for the next fiscal year.

I would like to make one note with respect to the capital projects, because these have also been an important opportunity for this government — the Yukon Liberal government — to respond to the needs of the RCMP. The *Territorial Police Service Agreement* includes a cost-shared capital asset management program called the "accommodations programs charge". The RCMP and the Government of Yukon jointly decide on projects in each five-year cycle of the program.

The *Territorial Police Services Agreement* was signed in 2012 and that full cycle of time, prior to our government being elected in late 2016 and then taking responsibility of this file in our work after that time, there had been no response to that accommodations program charge, there had been no new capital projects identified by the former government, and the third capital cycle for an accommodations program change commenced in April 2022 and ended in March 2027.

We have responded throughout our time here in government. We have funded the construction, in conjunction with the RCMP, of a new detachment in Old Crow. This third cycle will address Old Crow and the life-cycle maintenance and investments for the Yukon RCMP's existing infrastructure. This includes detachment buildings, accommodations, and other RCMP structures. Our work so far has resulted in, from 2017 to 2022, identification of what was cycle 2 through that program; our government funded three major detachment projects in Faro, Carcross, and Ross River.

Through collaboration, the Government of Yukon and the RCMP continue to work together, ensuring that policing infrastructure in the territory meets operational requirements. This, too, is an important way in which our government has and will continue to support the RCMP and the programs and services that are needed. I note that the buildings and modern facilities and modern work items are required by those detachments in those communities for the purposes of serving those Yukoners and those communities.

Mr. Speaker, if I have not, let's just say, made it abundantly clear with respect to the support that we have for the Yukon's RCMP and if I have not made it abundantly clear about the support for the capital projects to support the work of the RCMP in communities programming to respond to the needs of Yukoners — the Historical Case Unit, the CRU, the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program — then perhaps I have not made myself clear this afternoon.

All of the work that I have outlined, supported by our government in conjunction with the RCMP in M Division here across the territory, as well as the funding initiatives and the budget initiatives — both in main budgets and supplementary budgets throughout our time here and the increase of those funds — of course, lead one to determine that we support ongoing funding and increases, as discussed in our consultation with the RCMP, and the opportunity for us to do that, as I've said, on a regular basis.

I'm just going to check my notes about addressing some of the comments made. I think I've addressed all of them. I think there was a question about the First Nation and Inuit policing

officers and where they would go. My early discussions were that they would be assigned to the community of Mayo and to the community of Haines Junction. There has also been some discussion about one of those officers being assigned to the Teslin detachment with respect to addressing some issues in the area regarding the increase of individuals who now reside in that community for the purposes of working on the bridge project and the increased community safety issues that might arise as a result of having a huge increase in population. That is something also being dealt with in Mayo.

I won't speak on behalf of the RCMP today to say where those ultimate decisions have been made, but I can assure you that those conversations have happened with me and the chief superintendent as well as his senior officials for the purposes of expressing our point of view and the concerns that we have heard from communities. They're expressed to the RCMP. As well, we are at work in conjunction with one another. There is not a request, perhaps, that comes to me or a concern that comes to me that isn't shared with the RCMP and, I would say, in particular with respect to a community response. Responding to the needs of communities across the territory is a key element of the work that we do together.

Perhaps lastly — or almost lastly — I would like to return to where I started. Despite calling for debate in the Legislative Assembly on funding for the RCMP, the Yukon Party has voted against the increases for RCMP officers, for firefighters, for EMS, for community nurses, and for health care providers — all of which I would consider front-line responders. It is cynical for the opposition to express concern about first responders while also voting down wage increases for those individuals and voting against funding for the RCMP.

We will continue to express our support for all first responders during today's debate, and we hope that the members opposite will also see the light, put actions behind their words, and vote in favour of the wage increases that exist in the supplementary budgets that are before this Legislative Assembly during this Sitting.

The 2023-24 territorial budget, Mr. Speaker, significantly increased funding for the RCMP by \$3.3 million. This was the largest increase in recent years and resulted in the RCMP's ability to add seven and a half full-time staff positions, most of whom were police officers, and allowed them to purchase updated equipment to keep officers safe during the work that they do.

As I have noted, unfortunately, all MLAs of the Yukon Party voted against that increase, and the Yukon Party continues to fail first responders in this way by voting against what is before the Legislative Assembly to support these ongoing programs in the fall of 2023.

They voted against \$7.3 million in personnel costs for Yukon government fire crews, management, and crews contracted through agreements with other jurisdictions. They voted against a 10.5-percent wage increase over three years for firefighters, nurses, social workers, and EMS individuals, in line with the recently negotiated agreement for federal public servants. They voted against increasing the shift premium from \$2.25 to \$3 an hour. They voted against increasing the retention

allowance for social workers. They voted against a new retention allowance for corrections officers. They voted against new nurse pay grids. They voted against a new midwives pay grid. They voted against new retention allowances for primary care paramedics and critical care paramedics. They voted against the new retention allowance for primary health care nurses and primary health care nurses in charge. They voted against the cultural leave for Indigenous employees who observe or participate in traditional activities.

No doubt we will hear from the other side that this is somehow just the way things happen in a legislative assembly and they take their position in opposition to be that it's their job to vote against budgets. I see it somewhat differently, Mr. Speaker. I think that their job is to hold us to account, to question at every opportunity, to speak on behalf of Yukoners who speak to them about concerns that they have, and to do this all publicly in the Legislative Assembly. Voting against, ultimately, when they have satisfied themselves that these are expenses that are necessary for the purposes of running a successful government and providing successful services to Yukoners — and they clearly do, since they brought this motion to say that we should financially support the RCMP — but to then vote against it certainly is questionable.

We value our first responders and so do Yukoners, and they want to know that the government has their back. I think that the members opposite do have another opportunity. It is not too late; I hope that they will reconsider their consideration of the supplementary budget. I know that some will call me naïve, but I too believed the Leader of the Official Opposition when he spoke, I think, during the election in 2021 and certainly after that he intended to do things differently. So, a blind dispute or a blind ignoring of the benefits of a Yukon government budget on behalf of providing services to Yukoners may have been a new way to do things, and I don't believe I have been naïve with respect to this understanding.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will take the opportunity at this stage to move an amendment to Motion No. 756. I move:

THAT Motion No. 756 be amended by adding the phrase "continue to" between the words "to" and "increase".

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice: THAT Motion No. 756 be amended by adding the phrase "continue to" between the words "to" and "increase".

The amendment is in order.

Motion No. 756, if amended, would read:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to continue 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.

Is there any debate on the amendment?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I can say that my amendment is to give an accurate picture to the statement that is made in the motion. The motion is fine as it stands, indicating that the Yukon government is to increase resources and funding

to the RCMP and so on, but I think it is not completely accurate. It implies that there have been no increases. Perhaps if someone was uninitiated or didn't have all of the information, it implies that an increase to resources and funding to the RCMP would be something that is brand new; that is not in fact the case. I have laid out much evidence with respect to the changes that have been made since our government has come to office in 2016 and, probably most importantly, the relationship that we have built with the Yukon RCMP and our conversations with them about the resources they require, how to best serve Yukoners, and how to invoke public trust in the public safety system that we have here.

I ask the members here in the Legislative Assembly to consider adding the phrase "continue to" between the words "to" and "increase". As you have said, Mr. Speaker, it would read, in part, that the Yukon government continue to increase resources and funding to the RCMP to support — and it goes on to deal with the hiring of additional front-line police officers in Whitehorse and rural Yukon communities. I think that reflects an accurate picture. I hope members opposite will take the amendment into account in us moving forward so that we can all, as it sounds — certainly the members of the Yukon Party and the Official Opposition in the Legislative Assembly — move forward supporting the important work of the RCMP to provide community safety and to serve Yukoners.

I look forward to hearing from the Third Party on this as well.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Speaker, it will not come as a great shock to the minister that we will not be supporting this amendment and we do not feel that it paints an accurate picture. I also note that it was also somewhat amusing as the minister spent quite a bit of time in the House trying to spin the narrative that relied on hoping that Yukoners listening had never paid any attention to federal, territorial, or provincial politics and would be surprised by the allegedly shocking revelation that the Official Opposition typically votes against the government on budget bills since they are confidence votes, which, of course, is exactly what we have done.

I remind the minister that the Liberal Party, in opposition, has also voted against budget bills. So, thank you for that revelation for anyone who has never paid attention to politics.

I did want to just briefly make mention of something I meant to refer to in my initial speech, which is on page 34 of the RCMP report that I cited — the year in review from 2020-21 — in outlining the resources provided to them for the item identified on page 34: salaries, operation and maintenance cost. In 2017-18, the total budget that they had was \$38,208,000. By 2020-21, that had grown to just \$39.109 million, which is a very small increase, keeping in light the inflation that was occurring as well as population growth.

This Liberal government, in fact, has probably the worst record in Yukon history of responding to the needs of the RCMP, and we will not be supporting the proposed amendment.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, just to add some spice to the mix, we actually won't be voting in favour of any motion today on this and this issue and we will explain that later on. We aren't interested in the amendment, nor are we interested in the motion as it stands. So, we are going to abstain from this vote. We will let the Liberals and the Yukon Party battle it out, and we'll come back and speak our piece to whatever motion we end up with.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, the members opposite — in particular, the Member for Lake Laberge — have been referencing the RCMP report — the most recent one — the year in review from 2020-21. He has been talking a lot about changes that we have seen. Then, just now in speaking to the amendment, he cited it again. I will talk about this notion about whether we have seen increases to support RCMP or not. I think, in the end, I will refer back to that report as well.

The first thing that I want to start by saying in talking to the amendment is that I want to thank the RCMP for what they do to support our communities. They have a tough job. I often go to community meetings in my riding where they attend to give reports about what has been happening in our communities. I have to say that I appreciate what they do all the time in our communities. I think that there are challenges that they face. I think it is fair to say that we need to support the RCMP. It doesn't mean that there aren't challenges that we need to sort through, but it is important that we show our support, both morally and financially. I will move from saying thanks to the RCMP to saying thanks to the Member for Lake Laberge for bringing forward the motion today, because I think it is good to show that support.

What we seem to be debating right now is whether there has been an increase in that support or not. Let me just get straight to it — to talk about that support for a second. I have numbers in front of me that talk about the budget that has gone before the RCMP, and I am going to reference the change over the past five years. Their annual report, which the Member for Lake Laberge was referencing, is a couple of years past. Those annual reports always catch up, but as the minister noted, there is an increase in the budget this year of \$3.5 million to the RCMP. But how does it look over the past five years? What does that increase look like? It turns out that the budget for the RCMP has gone from just under \$27 million five years ago to just under \$36 million this year. That's an increase of 33 percent. That's a real increase. If you look, in this year — in the budget that we are working from right now, the 2023-24 budget — the jump has been the biggest increase that we have seen in that five years.

So, that is an increase. The Member for Lake Laberge has just stood and indicated that it is not an increase, but I can see the numbers in front of me, and so let me also reference some other parts of that report that he is using to talk about. I listened to him because I have spent a lot of my life dealing with numbers and I watch as people present information. So, immediately, as he talked about how crime has increased in the Yukon, I went to the very same report and I started to take a look at it in more detail. One of the ways that I wanted to look

at it was across all of the sectors that are reported in the 2020-21 year in review by the RCMP, and there were some sectors, or types of crime, that had gone up over the past five years. That is correct. I thought: Okay, let me look at all of them, because they publish a whole range of numbers. They publish them in groups: crimes against persons, crimes against property, drug offences, and other *Criminal Code* offences. I took a look at each one of them, and I saw that in crimes against persons, over the five years reported in the report that the Member for Lake Laberge just referenced in speaking to the amendment, on average, crime had gone up 14 percent. However, our population has gone up 13 percent. That is pretty steady. It is an increase, and therefore we agree with the notion that we should increase resources, and for all the reasons that the Minister of Justice outlined about additional programming that we are doing to support the RCMP and the demands that we are putting on them to try to address issues like the opioid crisis, it is important that we increase it. But when I took a look at all of the crimes against persons, it has gone up 14 percent — population up 13 percent.

Then I took a look at the RCMP year in review and added up all the crimes against property. How much have they gone up over the five years reported in that document? Up 14 percent. Then I went down to the one where there is a bigger increase, and in particular, the Member for Lake Laberge kept referencing one statistic specifically. Let me just make sure that I get that one up so that I see it. He referenced a 90-percent increase in one statistic — pardon me, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It wasn't drug offences, actually; it was trafficking offences. But when we add up all of the drug offences which the RCMP reported in their document, it turns out that they only went up 29 percent — still significant, but not 90 percent. But the Member for Lake Laberge decided to focus on the one that had gone up the most rather than looking at the aggregate.

When I looked at the other *Criminal Code* offences, they actually dropped in the five years reported by 18 percent. He also didn't mention that. If I take all of those offences together from offences against persons, offences against property, drug offences, and other *Criminal Code* offences and I take a look, they have not increased significantly.

Now, I just say this because I am always trying to be careful with how we present numbers in this House, because it's about painting a picture. The members of the RCMP are individual people who have chosen their careers to serve, and the communities in which they are serving are dealing with these challenging situations, which, again, are very personal to the communities and very meaningful. So, when the member opposite paints a picture that crime is going up through the roof but fails to show it across the board, I'm not sure that this does Yukoners a service. My view is that we should be trying to give that fulsome picture to Yukoners.

In terms of the amendment, is it worth supporting the RCMP? Absolutely — and I look forward to when the NDP speak to the main motion. Is it worth noting that they face additional challenges and that we should see increases?

Absolutely — again, I agree with the member opposite about that. Is it also true that we have seen increases to their budgets and support from the Department of Justice? Absolutely — \$3.5 million in this budget, a 33-percent increase over the past five years.

You can't ignore those things. Those are real numbers and they exist. So, what I understand from the Yukon Party is that they are going to then vote against the amendment, which says to continue to increase, because they don't want to agree that there have been increases to the RCMP despite the fact that the evidence is in front of them. But truly here, at the base of this motion, it's that we support the RCMP and make sure that they have the resources that they need in order to do the very difficult job and the very important job of serving our communities — incredibly important. We will continue to put forward that the \$3.5 million in this budget is significant, and the Yukon Party will continue to vote against it on principle while asking in a motion in front of us today that we increase it, which is just so strange to me.

I will leave it there for the amendment. I feel that the amendment is simply saying that we are currently increasing resources to the RCMP. I get that the Yukon Party is voting against that, but it doesn't make it not true that it's happening and that we should continue to do that. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the amendment? Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

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.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

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

Speaker's casting vote

Speaker: On the amendment to the motion, Standing Order 4(2) states that, in case of an equality of votes, the Speaker shall give a casting vote. In general, the principle applied to amendments is that decisions should not be taken

except by a majority and that, where there is no majority, the main motion should be left in its existing form. I therefore vote against the amendment and declare the amendment defeated.

Amendment to Motion No. 756 negated

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the main motion?

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I just want to reference back to a comment made by the Minister of Justice about how unhappy she was to be debating this matter in the House because, really, she didn't feel it warranted the House's time.

I think that there are a lot of Yukoners who put us here to debate issues that are important to them, so it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to the motion brought forward by my colleague the Member for Lake Laberge.

The matter of policing is a very important topic in my community and indeed for all of rural Yukon. As the minister pointed out last week, Watson Lake has a complement of nine police officers serving the community and the surrounding area. That number has been in place for many, many years. However, the demands of policing have changed significantly.

Police are called upon to assist in EMS situations, to assist in coroner's duties and, of course, traffic accidents that can take place far from the community. There is also the matter of resources from Watson Lake to deal with issues in our northern communities, most notably Lower Post. All of these situations take time — a lot of time, in some cases — time that takes away from dealing with the ever-increasing crime that's taking place in and around our community.

The business of policing has changed a great deal as well. It can take months to staff a position in our communities. The administrative duties for an officer have increased beyond measure. Where it may have taken a half hour to perform these duties, it now takes several hours. This takes away from the necessary investigation and enforcement of our laws.

Aside from our vacancies that occur from the usual moving in and out of officers, there are things like extensive administrative leave, vacations, medical, and training. That leaves our communities without the appropriate level of coverage. This has not been addressed.

The minister may use her statistics to try to make the case that we have enough police officers, but the community disagrees. The public does not feel safe in their communities.

Last week, the minister said that Watson Lake was supported through other officials in the community being available, and I said to myself: What is that? The community is unaware of anything that would make sense of that comment.

Also, last week, I asked the Liberal government to commit to providing additional resources to the RCMP specifically for addressing crime in our rural Yukon communities. In response, the Premier said that we did, we have, and we likely will again — but the minister was unable to substantiate that comment.

Property crime, break-ins and thefts, assaults, and drug dealing are all things that the public wants addressed. So, for the minister to state that she believes the RCMP are adequately resourced — well, Mr. Speaker, that tells me that she is out of

touch. The Town of Watson Lake will be holding a public meeting to discuss our concerns with crime and policing and will be considering whether or not a state of emergency should be declared.

I am sure that an invitation will be extended to the minister and we look forward to her attending, as she said she was interested in doing so.

This is nothing new, and the minister has been hearing the same concerns related to crime and safety issues for quite some time. I hope that she will take these concerns seriously and that the government votes in favour of the motion.

Ms. White: We were asked to say our reasons why I indicated that we would not be voting in favour of either the amended motion — if it was to go forward — or for the motion as it stood, so let me explain.

You can't police your way out of trauma. You can't police your way out of poverty, and you can't police your way out of where we are — society as a whole or even here in the Yukon.

The minister made clear — explaining that the budget for the RCMP increased this year by 20 percent, but what we would really like to see is a year where the health care budget, the housing budget, the education budget, or any budget that supports social programs is increased by 20 percent, year over year.

We talk about upstream investments; we talk about solving problems. You know, the hard truth is — and it is not a truth that everyone wants to hear — that we can't police our way out of trauma, we can't police our way out of poverty, we can't police our way out of addiction, and we can't police our way out of housing insecurity, and that is really where the core of the issues is. Putting a police officer on every street corner is not going to help people stop living with the impacts of intergenerational trauma or living with the effects of a lack of safe and affordable housing, of the economic crisis, of an education crisis — and we can't police our way out of the societal failures that government after government after government has created here in the territory and in Canada as a whole.

I can think about the track record from the Yukon Party when we talk about affordable housing, and there was \$13.5 million left in the northern housing trust fund. In the end, it went to landlords with no stipulations. We saw rents increase. They turned down the lot development — at the time it was called "lot 262". They didn't want to give it to a developer that had said they would put hundreds of units on it, run it for 10 years, and then hand it back to government, because they wanted to sell it for a profit.

It was the Yukon Party that built the correctional facility — I think that it could house 160 people — because policing was their answer; justice was their answer; putting people in a system, as opposed to supporting them to stay out of the system, was their answer. What have we seen with the correctional facility? Well, D block is now the John Howard Society's answer to supportive housing, which is still Corrections — I am just going to put it out there. It is still part of the building, it is still part of that envelope, it still echoes in the same way, and it

still feels the same way. There have been some cosmetic changes, but it is still a jail.

I think about the number of times — I was talking about wording off-mic, and I think about my very first opposition Wednesday — just about 12 years ago, probably to a couple of weeks from now, to be honest — and I put in a motion that we should develop a housing strategy, that we should all work together and we should try to tackle it, because in 2011, we were still in a housing crisis — and the Yukon Party changed the wording. They said to implement its housing strategy and we didn't see anything happen. We didn't see the Yukon Party tackle the systemic issues, the upstream issues of poverty. I didn't see them tackle the upstream issues when we talk about access to education. The 2009 report, of course — the 2019 report that came back and said that we were still not doing enough — concerns that we were going to get another report in 2029 that says we still haven't tackled the systemic issues in education — I'm hopeful. I'm hopeful, but it's not moving fast.

So, here we have a motion on the floor. We talked about the way forward — the way forward was to invest in policing. I'm saying that it's not the answer. That's not the upstream investment to solve the problems. I understand why the Yukon Party would want to cling to the idea that the police are the answer to the many social issues that we face in the Yukon, because ultimately, it would be so much easier and so much simpler if that were the case — remove a couple of bad apples from the community and the problem is solved. But we all know that it has never been that simple, and it's not that simple. To be honest, communities across the territory have been having this conversation for years. If the answer was that simple, then we would have already made that decision.

So, again — I'll say it again — we can't police our way out of poverty; we can't police our way out of trauma, out of isolation, out of hopelessness. So, we need to invest in more upstream prevention and long-term solutions. So, that's how we build lasting changes that will improve community well-being. We invest ahead; we prevent the outcome. Even the RCMP agree; they have said it before. Issues like substance use and addiction are not police matters; they're health issues. They don't want to be the ones having to respond to overdoses, but they are called to do it.

I think about substance use and addiction, and I think about the Liberal government declaring a substance use emergency and then having to take 18 months to come up with a plan — and a plan that I'm going to call a document because it's a long-term plan, but little in that document will save lives in the short term — but bring concrete changes on the ground today or tomorrow. That plan doesn't have the solutions for right now. There is the investment for the downstream, but they are not immediate.

We can talk about the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. Mr. Speaker, I can go back in time to when I was on the floor in a different spot from where I stand now telling the then-Yukon Party government that investing in mats for the Salvation Army was not adequate to deal with the issue of homelessness. There wasn't dignity to adding mats at the Salvation Army so people could sleep on the floor.

The answer to that was a building in a terrible spot, without community consultation, without planning, without thought, without outdoor space. We have seen the problems that building has caused. The Yukon Party handed that building over to the Salvation Army. The leaders of the Salvation Army at the time said "Well, we don't have experience in this, but we'll try." I spoke to the commanding officer of the Salvation Army when they were desperately trying to figure out how they were going to deal with a building that was going to try meet all those needs. We know how that went. The Yukon government did have to take the building over, absolutely; they absolutely did. But the truth of the matter is that the Yukon Party and the Liberals both failed shelter users. They failed the community in the surrounding areas and they failed local businesses. It's a hard reality.

You know, there have been reports after reports published without ever actually taking the actions that had been recommended in those reports. It's important. I went to so many meetings with surrounding businesses when this was all going down — the initial construction and when the shelter initially opened — and no one said "Not in my back yard". Not a single business and not a single neighbour said "Not in my back yard"; they never did. But over years and years and years of dealing with the consequences of a space that was poorly designed, people started to say "No more." We saw that when Alpine Bakery announced that they were closing their doors. That was the line in the sand, and we've seen government act now.

This is why I am talking about upstream solutions, upstream investments. Think about the Beaton and Allen report. Dr. Beaton unfortunately just recently passed away. Dr. Beaton and Chief Allen were given the task of looking at acutely intoxicated people and how to deal with it. They said we needed a sobering centre in downtown Whitehorse. What did the Yukon Party do in response? They built the arrest processing unit at the correctional facility. I guess, to be fair, they had just built a multi-million-dollar massive facility, so maybe they wanted to make sure it was used more, but that wasn't what was recommended. What was recommended was a sobering centre in downtown Whitehorse.

So, when we look at the problems that we're facing, it's not a policing issue. It's so much bigger than a policing issue; it's talking and it's recognizing that we need to make those upstream investments. All of that is hard. It's not immediate; it's not fast. It was on this floor in 2016 that I first started talking about opioids — in 2016. Or we can talk about how long ago we started calling for a managed alcohol program. It wasn't yesterday; it wasn't the day before that either. It has been a really long time working us toward that.

A managed alcohol program is what people on the ground are saying is needed, similar to the supervised consumption site. Neither of those were mainstream — to be honest, still not mainstream — but we knew it was a good idea because we listened to the experts and we listened to the people with lived experiences. We looked toward other jurisdictions that were taking action on these issues and trying to tackle the issues that we were seeing. That was the way; it is the way.

The truth of the matter is that there are solutions that exist outside of the Assembly and outside of this territory that could help us get to those upstream investments. Ryan Meili was the leader of the NDP in Saskatchewan. He was a family doctor. He came up long before he got elected because he had put out a book that was really about tackling the downstream. It was all about having to correct your course and tackle upstream investments. We invited him up between the 2011 and 2016 time because we were trying to talk about the challenges we were facing as a territory. He was really clear: You tackle the problems upstream to prevent the downstream causes. So, it's frustrating to know that solutions exist outside of this territory and outside of this Assembly, but over and over and over again, politicians are choosing not to act on them. It's frustrating because the decisions that are made are leaving people behind.

It's important to note that the Yukon NDP, along with many community organizations, have never stopped advocating for these changes that we think are important: a sobering space, a managed alcohol program, affordable and safe housing, seniors housing. We talked about an increase to minimum wage, and there are some people in this Chamber who said that I was inexperienced in advocating for a \$15-dollar minimum wage. Here we are, just under \$17 an hour.

Taking actions to tackle the upstream are really acts of reconciliation. Trying to support people through trauma and trying to support people through poverty are all acts of reconciliation and walking together.

I have a firm belief that we as a territory and we as a community can do better than we are. If I didn't think that, I wouldn't still be here. Today, when we talk about the motion on the floor about policing, really, for me, it's not about policing; it's about those other investments, so we are going to be voting against the motion.

At some point, I hope we can have a conversation about what those upstream investments can look like and how we can help support our community in a better way. The conversation I am having right now is important, because you can't police your way out of this. More police isn't the answer to poverty reduction; more police isn't the answer to homelessness; more police is not the answer to trauma. So we have to figure out a better way than just looking at policing.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise to add my voice. This has been a really interesting debate today, listening to all of the folks who have entered into this discussion. It is certainly an area that I have spent a lot of my life working on prior to coming into the position that I am in right now. I worked very closely with the RCMP throughout my career. I believe fully — and just in listening to the Leader of the New Democratic Party speak right now, I think there is a need for a balanced approach. This is a debate we had for many, many hours when we were working on this plan here, the MMIWG2S+ implementation plan. I can tell you that we had a lot of hours of discussion about this very thing.

We went back in time; we looked back and looked at *Sharing Common Ground* and we looked at the 2010 review of policing and said "Hey, we need to go back to that; we need to

go back and we need to look at that review." Because, at the time, certain aspects of that review were adopted and others were not. Again, that was a Yukon Party government that was in receipt of that review at that time.

I know that there are a lot of different opinions about us going back in history, but I think it's really important when we're talking about this, because we were set on a very specific track when we came into government. You cannot turn the ship on a dime. It doesn't work that way. You have to really work to ensure that you have the right plans in place and that you do start really looking at those upstream investments.

As I said when I first started speaking to this motion, I have spent a lot of my time and many years — in fact, decades — working to find the right solutions prior to coming into government. It's really one of the things that drew me in — to get to those upstream approaches. I believe that is where we are in education. I believe that is where we are in *Putting People First*. I believe that we need to continue to invest in our RCMP and policing in the territory but supplement it with a lot of other different things, and that is what we are doing. We are investing in community safety, for instance. I know that approach works. That's why it's a priority in the strategy for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, because we know that an Indigenous-led approach in planning for community safety is an approach that works.

I actually had the great honour of working with Kwanlin Dün and watching the work that was undertaken in that community to completely transform it to what it is today. Folks in leadership will tell you that it was that community safety assessment and approach that really transformed that community to become the thriving community that it is today. That is why we are investing. The Department of Justice has initiated — and this fits with a number of different strategies — the investment into community safety planning, which is \$200,000 per community, to get the community safety plans done and to then get the plans underway. So, those are all approaches that are being implemented now.

I hear the Member for Watson Lake talk about the levels of crime in Watson Lake. Well, I'm happy to tell the member that community safety planning is on the agenda. All of the leadership officials in Watson Lake are talking about the assessment that is going to happen in Watson Lake, Lower Post, and the surrounding area. That work, I believe, in reference to the community meeting that was spoken about, will be a very big focus of that meeting, Mr. Speaker. So, I just wanted to address that.

We have had a lot of discussion about statistics. We've had a lot of discussion about the ongoing investments that we are making in community safety and in our policing services. I know that the next motion that is on the table will get deep into what is happening in education, and I will get there, but I did just want to say a couple of things, again, based on my experience and the work that I did before coming into the Legislative Assembly as an elected official.

I really want to remind the Member for Lake Laberge of the negotiations that happened around 2010 to 2012 and the policing agreement that the Yukon Party government entered

into — a 20-year agreement, Mr. Speaker. That was a 20-year agreement; it goes to 2032. So, that is currently the policing agreement that we have with Canada that we are working within. The Yukon Party was in government at that time, and I believe that the Member for Lake Laberge would have been at the Cabinet table at the time that decision was made. Another aspect of that is that, at that time, I was actually a technician working with Yukon First Nations and working really hard to implement, particularly, the administration of justice negotiations and trying to get the First Nation that I was working with an agreement. At that time, we were also reviewing the *Corrections Act*. We were helping to try to advise the government on the type of correctional facility that we would need, and we ended up with — I agree with the Leader of the Third Party — a centre that is totally out of scope for a territory like ours, but that is what we inherited as a government.

That is what we came into; we came into the shelter building as well. I want to go back to that agreement — the policing agreement. That is a 20-year agreement. At that time, we begged the government to allow First Nations to be part of those negotiations, because we knew that there was a shift happening — that we have self-government agreements now — and those self-government agreements allow for us to draw down certain areas: corrections, policing, courts, and anything else that we would agree on as three parties.

We knew at that time that our territory was absolutely at a tipping point in terms of what the trends were, the opioids that were coming in — potentially, that was happening in other jurisdictions and it would eventually get here. We felt that Yukon First Nations could bring a very different perspective to those negotiations as we were looking forward with an agreement that would take us 20 years into the future, and that is where we are today. It is always very surprising to me when the Member for Lake Laberge brings forward the type of debate that is brought forward from this particular member, because I know how we got to where we are today.

I think that it is really important to look at the past and see where we are today and where we need to go. I agree in upstream investment and an upstream approach, and that is what we are doing as a government. I, coming into government, thought that things could change very quickly and that you could do things very quickly. I quickly learned that you have to take the time. You have to take the time to plan, you have to bring folks along with you, and you have to put the right strategies in place. When we did the financial review, it resulted in *Putting People First*. It resulted in universal childcare and now a whole early learning investment in the Yukon, and so that is the approach. That started in 2017, I believe — the financial review.

So, when you look at all that planning that happens along the way and the strategies — I worked on this document, the MMIWG2S+ implementation plan, since the day I walked through the door here — seven years — and we now have an implementation plan that ties to all of these strategies that we are talking about.

When I knew that this was going to be debated, those are the things that came up for me, Mr. Speaker, in terms of really looking at the work that is underway right now compared to what we inherited when we came through the door and where we need to go. I agree with a lot of what the Leader of the Third Party said in terms of what we need to be investing in, but we do need to have a balanced approach.

Again, going back to comments about having hours and hours of debate about this, we talked very long and hard about the debate that was happening with policing worldwide — about what was happening in North America, what happened in the United States — because that was all unfolding at the same time that we were talking about how we wanted to approach this within that strategy, so we had very deep discussions. Folks around the table believed that we needed to work with the RCMP and that we needed to bring them in and ensure that they are an active member and partner at the table in terms of our approach to addressing crime. I mean, I just did a number of things today — talking about the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* and talking about the statistics we have in the north. They are staggering; they are absolutely staggering. We need the RCMP as a partner at the table with us to ensure that we work in a collaborative way to address the tragedy that is happening within our territory and in Canada.

I am proud of the work that we have done. Can we do more? We can always do more. We can always do better, so I welcome the ideas from all members of this Legislative Assembly, because at the end of the day, my hope is always that folks are here because they really, truly want to serve Yukoners and that it's not the move toward just gaining power at all costs.

Those are the things that I debate and struggle with a lot, because I sometimes see that approach from certain members. It really bothers me, Mr. Speaker, because I think that what we need is more compassionate leadership and leadership that comes from a place of true, true service to Yukoners. That is what they elected us to do.

I know for certain that I, absolutely — every single day — come to work and I really hold up this team of people I get to work with. I really have a lot of respect for other members within the House, but I'm happy that we're in a confidence and supply agreement with the New Democratic Party, because I believe that we have a lot of similar approaches and concerns and that we're here in that same way. I want to believe that to be true of all members of the House, but sometimes that's not what I see.

I see the Member for Lake Laberge probably not really enjoying what I'm saying and what has been said by others today, but that is truly how I feel. This is an area that is of the most concern, I think. It weighs heavily on Yukoners throughout this entire territory. We're going to keep investing and balancing our approaches.

I'm happy to be able to add my voice to this today. I know that we'll be able to have a lot of other discussions around what we're doing and what the work is that I'm doing in leading in education in other motions that we may get to today, but I thank

you, Mr. Speaker, and all the members of the House for allowing me to speak today.

MLA Tredger: I just want to add a few more words to this discussion. When we started the debate this afternoon, the Member for Lake Laberge started by talking about the substance use health emergency. It made me wonder if he has read *Getting to Tomorrow Yukon*, which is the Yukon's report from a community public health dialogue on solutions to the overdose crisis. It doesn't talk about asking for more policing, but it does talk about people being afraid to call ambulances when they overdose because they are afraid that the police will respond and they will be charged with crimes. It talks about that as a barrier to people getting the medical services that they need.

The war on drugs has been going on since the 1970s and all we have to show for it is a skyrocketing number of people dying from drug overdoses. The war on drugs has failed. We have to admit that it has failed. Trying to police our way out of a substance use crisis has completely failed. What's more, money going to increasing policing means that this money isn't going to all these things that we do know help reduce crime. It's not going to housing, it's not going to food security, it's not going to income support, it's not going to education, it's not going to early development programs and supporting families, it's not going to health care or mental health care or addictions support, and it's not helping people leave the criminal justice system behind and build stable lives. It's not even going to community safety officers.

I do know that there are communities in the Yukon that have asked for increased policing, and I would not presume to know what they need more than they do. They are the experts on their communities. I know that many communities struggle with capacity. I think the way forward is for YG to do an individual assessment with each community to identify their needs. I will only speak about my riding, which has struggled a great deal with crime. We have had a lot of discussions about the area around the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter — last week, this week, and for a long time before that.

I have heard from the RCMP that they have actually increased policing in the area. I have also heard from the people in the area who have concerns that it hasn't helped. I just want to repeat that: Policing has increased in the area and it hasn't helped. What we do have is a report full of recommendations that could help the area around the shelter and the shelter operations. That is where extra funding to deal with downtown crime should go.

Before I conclude my comments on this topic, there are a few more things that I need to bring up. As a queer and a trans person, I can't talk about increasing policing without bringing up the history and relationship of my community with the RCMP. My community has been targeted for a long time, unfairly, by the police. It has been failed by the police, and this is not in the distant past. Just a couple of years ago, the police here in the Yukon were asked not to attend pride events in uniform as a result of that history and they ignored that request.

We also can't talk about policing without talking about the systemic racism present within the RCMP and other institutions. I think of the way that women of colour and Indigenous women are discriminated against when it comes to addressing issues like sexual assault and other forms of violence. I think of the number of racialized people, particularly Black and Indigenous people, who have died at the hands of police. There are many people out there who are not safer when policing increases.

These are all the things that I am considering as we discuss this motion, and I will be voting against it.

Deputy Speaker (Ms. Blake): If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Mr. Cathers: Madam Deputy Speaker, to begin with, it will be interesting to see how the NDP lands since they indicated that they were abstaining from votes, but now we heard an indication that they plan to vote against this motion.

I do have to remind this House what the motion itself actually says — the motion that apparently the New Democratic Party and the Deputy Premier from the Liberal Party so strongly object to. The motion itself says quite simply this:

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.

That is what the motion is before this Assembly. As my colleague the Member for Watson Lake noted, this is important to many Yukoners. Her community, which she represents, is actually considering declaring a state of emergency because of the severity of crime. I cited the statistics from the RCMP themselves. Members themselves should be well aware of the pleas that we have heard from Yukoners, particularly in downtown Whitehorse but also from the surrounding area, regarding the impact of the mismanaged Whitehorse shelter at 405 Alexander Street. We have seen the closure of Alpine Bakery as a result, and we have all received the e-mails and calls from Yukoners who are concerned about that and calling for government action to address the crime in the area, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is interesting that the NDP and apparently the Deputy Premier don't support increasing resources to the RCMP to help them cope with the rising demands on them, and as I mentioned, the population increase as well has led to the police ratio per capita declining strongly.

This summer, we have all seen, I'm sure, the posts from Yukoners in Whitehorse and the surrounding area, as well as from rural Yukon, about increased property crime and people feeling fearful for their safety as well as having lost property. Yet the response to that from the Liberals is that everything is just fine, no additional action is necessary, and the NDP have been clear that they do not support increases to policing.

I want to just remind all members, since both the NDP and the Deputy Premier tried to suggest otherwise, that we have never said that policing is the only solution to deal with the

substance abuse epidemic. While the NDP was fixated on harm reduction, it was the Yukon Party calling for increased prevention and addictions treatment as well as enforcement to respond to the substance use health emergency. Mr. Speaker, the RCMP play a very important role in responding to the substance use crisis.

I would just note before wrapping up my comments in the interest of getting on to the next motion for today — I'm just going to quote from a *Whitehorse Star* article from last summer — July 27, 2022 to be specific — regarding a report issued by the RCMP. That article includes comments by the chief superintendent of the RCMP as well as from the Minister of Justice herself. Mr. Speaker, that report noted — quote: “Illicit drugs, overwhelmingly provided by five organized crime networks, are estimated to have cost the Yukon \$113 million in 2021, says a report released Tuesday afternoon.”

The article further goes on to note: “As well, in 2021, illicit drug overdose-related deaths in the territory occurred at a pace of 48.4 per 100,000 people, the report notes — the highest rate in Canada.

“This is significantly higher than a Canadian-wide average of 19.4 and even the British Columbia average at 42.8, the previous high across the country,” says an executive summary of the research.”

Further in the article: “The report released Tuesday is entitled *Organized Crime in Yukon: An Examination of Criminal Networks and the Associated Impact*.

“It analyzes criminal activity in the territory which, the Yukon’s RCMP said, ‘provides important information with respect to guiding future enforcement activities.’”

The article, again referencing the report, further goes on to note — and I quote: “The effects of illicit drugs in the Yukon, the report says, is significant as a result of: illicit drug overdose related deaths; organized crime, whose members supply and operate most of the illicit drug activity; and rising costs and harms to the community from illicit drugs. ‘Organized crime in Yukon is responsible for more harm than which occurs from alcohol and tobacco,’ the report has found.”

Again, that is a report released by the RCMP, and the minister herself was quoted in this article. Further from the article — and I quote: “Organized crime, both in the Yukon and surrounding provinces, has persisted and is becoming entrenched, the report says. ‘There are at least five organized crime networks operating in Yukon, consisting of more than 250 individuals located within, and outside of, Yukon. In 2021, it is estimated that organized crime generated \$12.5 million from trafficking crack cocaine, powder cocaine, and opioids. An estimated \$1.5 million of that profit was used for other criminal activity, such as violence, weapons trafficking, money laundering and human trafficking,’ the document reports.”

I would just note that the article also goes on to quote, as I mentioned, the Minister of Justice as well as the commanding officer of the Yukon RCMP. The commanding officer notes that — and I quote: “As indicated in the report, illicit drugs, and opioids in particular, have both a human and financial impact...” It goes on to further note: “... RCMP in Yukon will continue to work with local partners to minimize this impact

and reduce the opportunities for criminal organizations to introduce toxic drugs to Yukon communities through targeted enforcement activities.”

Mr. Speaker, again, what I wanted to emphasize in quoting from the report issued by the RCMP as well as quotes from the commanding officer is the fact that enforcement is part of tackling organized crime and the illegal drug trade. Members will show by their votes this afternoon whether they agree with that or not.

Again, the Liberal government had suggested that they have done a wonderful job, but whether it is with funding for the RCMP or the substance abuse action plan, Mr. Speaker, when all is said and done, there is a lot more said by the Liberal government than is actually done.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Ms. White: Disagree.

Ms. Blake: Disagree.

MLA Tredger: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 14 yeas, three nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 756 agreed to

Motion No. 762

Clerk: Motion No. 762, standing in the name of Ms. Blake.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide children and youth with comprehensive and consistent mental wellness supports and programs in every Yukon community.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this motion, which states:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide children and youth with comprehensive and consistent mental wellness supports and programs in every Yukon community.

This motion is necessary because there are many children and youth across the territory who struggle to access mental health supports in their communities, in their homes, in their schools, and in spaces where mental health supports can be beneficial.

Throughout my career, I have witnessed the ongoing challenges that families face when they are in dire need of getting their child or youth connected to a counsellor for immediate or urgent support. Parents don't know where to go, who to talk to, or even where to start. They are left to navigate a multitude of resources, and it becomes overwhelming and leads to frustration and feelings of isolation and hopelessness, while they continue to work toward supporting their child or youth who may be dysregulated and emotionally unstable or even physically unsafe. I have seen circumstances like these occur far too often for families and their child or children across the Yukon.

Today, I continue to hear from caregivers, service providers, and young people that when there is a young person struggling — whether it is at home, in school, or in a public setting — no one knows what to do. At present, there seems to be no one really taking the lead on supports for the Yukon's child and youth mental health system, including navigation, referrals, advocacy, case management, and follow-up. Parents and caregivers end up in a continuous cycle until they get connected with a resource person who is willing to take the lead on advocacy and referrals to help a young person who is often in a crisis situation.

The gaps in mental health services and programs for children and youth have been a long-standing issue in the Yukon. This is not a new issue for caregivers today, nor is it a new issue for parents who have already raised their children. This is why it is so important for action to be taken. There is a great need for efforts to be invested in for children and youth to have more consistent and reliable access to assessments, diagnosis, and treatment options that meet their specific and unique needs. At present, we have parents who can access a child psychiatrist if and when an appointment is available. We have parents who are accessing private therapists with support from Jordan's Principle, which is then not connected to a Yukon government public service.

Parents continue to truly do the best they can to meet the ongoing needs of their children's and youth's mental health with very little options for support. What parents urgently need is access to a coordinated case manager who can deliver support and advocacy in getting their child or youth connected to services in a timely manner.

Let's think back to before we had the mental wellness hubs in place. During that time, Alcohol and Drug Services provided mental health nursing support, while Child Abuse Treatment Services, which I previously worked for, had a designated

outreach worker for every community outside of Whitehorse. Many Rivers also had a youth counsellor travelling to communities, and ADS would do outreach to communities where gaps existed. This structure of support ensured that children and youth had access to mental health supports that were responsive, reliable, and long-term.

This allowed for better case management, assessments, treatment planning, and relationship building to support children and youth accessing any of these services, as well as their caregivers and extended family members. It is important for the Yukon government to provide children and youth with comprehensive and consistent mental health and wellness support in every Yukon community and across all systems in Whitehorse, because I have heard and continue to hear and witness the ongoing struggles that children and youth are facing across the Yukon — challenges that we all know as far different from our time when we were youth or children ourselves.

I understand from the communities that I have visited since coming into this role the high numbers of our children and youth who have lost their parents to suicide, addictions, and drug poisoning. These children and youth are living with trauma, grief, loss, homelessness, disconnection, heartbreak, and early onset of addictions at ages far too young.

There are children and youth who have been placed in extended family homes. I have heard and continue to hear from caregivers in many communities the challenges and frustrations they face as they try to find mental health supports for their children and youth in their homes who are dealing with very complex challenges, including mental health disorders. For many of these caregivers, the issues that they are trying to address are foreign to them — like opioid addiction. Many elders always ask me when they are caring for young people: How do you tell when they're on opioids?

There are few supports for those families and young people who want support but don't know who to reach out to, where to go, or where to start. When we talk about the impacts of colonization, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and the historical numbers of child welfare apprehensions across our communities, these events continue to have a direct impact on children and youth no matter what family they grow up in or what institution they may be connected to. It is also evident that there has been and continues to be detrimental impacts stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic with all children and youth across the territory.

Today, many front-line workers are continuously responding to crises, and with the hard history that has brought us to where we are today, I feel that the mental wellness of children and youth in the Yukon has not always been held as a priority. Children and youth need better mental health supports. They needed it yesterday, they need it today, and they'll even need it more as we move into the future. Children and youth in the Yukon need a mental health system and access to programs that allow for a collaborative response from all who are involved in their lives, including family members and service providers. We have heard from many folks across the Yukon about the ongoing issues of service providers or agencies

continuing to work in silos. We continue to hear from service providers, caregivers, and various government workers about the challenges of accessing an appropriate treatment program for children and youth in the Yukon struggling with mental health and addictions.

At present, there are very limited options for children or youth treatment in the Yukon. Service providers and families at times may have access to a select few treatment centres out of territory, and there are currently no agreements with the wide range of youth treatment programs that exist outside of the territory. It is so critical that children and youth treatment programming be established in the territory, as history has shown that there have been far too many children and youth who have been sent out of the territory, away from their families and home environment, to get help.

There are leaders in this House who have attended past youth town hall events where they have heard directly from young people personal stories of the current struggles these youth face with various types of drugs and alcohol addiction. There have been many brave and courageous children and youth who have shared in town halls and youth engagement forums that they continue to live in difficult environments through no fault of their own — environments where they, as children and youth, experience neglect while being exposed to environments plagued with addictions. They are experiencing losing family members at a faster rate than we can understand. They are growing up with no mom or dad or have lost both parents and numerous siblings due to the drug crisis in our territory.

During any community visit, including to my home community, I visit the schools, youth centres, or spend time on the land with youth. I connect with parents and I also hear from service providers. One of the common concerns expressed across the board is that anyone trying to find help or trying to help a child or youth who has faced a lack of support when they feel the child or youth is in need of comprehensive mental supports really has nowhere to go. I continue to hear that there is a huge gap in access to service when it comes to counselling for young children or any type of mental wellness support, including being wait-listed and having to be in Whitehorse to access the counsellor.

Ensuring a secure, long-term, therapeutic approach to supporting children and youth in the Yukon is critical. This message continues to be clear in the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office annual reports, school attendance reports, the *Empty Spaces* report, and also in their 10-year review and their most recent review of sexual abuse in Yukon schools. I also continue to hear from educators about the urgent need for mental health supports in the community, as many teachers end up providing more emotional support for children in schools, as these supports are not available in the school, nor are they available in the community.

The priority of investing in mental health resources and programming supports for children and youth in the Yukon can also be found in recent government reports, including the *Putting People First* report and the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*, which states — and I quote: “It has been

found that ACEs...” — adverse childhood experiences — “... can predict an earlier age of drinking onset, a higher rise of mental and substance use disorders as an older adult, tobacco use during adulthood, prescription drug use, lifetime illicit drug use, drug dependency and self-reported addiction, suicide attempts, and even pregnancy outcomes.”

As the daughter of a residential school survivor who is now deceased and the daughter of someone who has been through Indian day school, I also think about the hard things that I and many others have witnessed and experienced growing up in our homes, including violence, various forms of abuse, growing up on our own, becoming caregivers for our siblings, becoming caregivers for our parents, and basically surviving through each day. I know that the experiences of my parents have impacted and continue to impact me in my daily life while also affecting my own children who I have been privileged to raise. There are many people who share this same story today and yet continue to try to find the resources to help their own children and youth to ensure they have better outcomes in life.

What I hear from young people during my community visits are the common questions: Why are things the way they are? Why does life have to be so difficult? Why did my parents have to die? Why?

I also think about sexualized violence in the communities — something that not many of us talk about in our communities with the history of sexual abuse. Sexualized violence impacts children and youth across the territory. Domestic violence also continues to have direct impacts on many children and youth whose caregiver is living in or fleeing from violence.

I can't help but also think of the yearly reminder of the high rates of alcohol consumption in the territory. Those figures alone directly impact children and youth in the territory. The substance use crisis that has been declared by numerous First Nations in the territory and by the Yukon government also has a direct impact on every child and youth across the Yukon. All children and youth are not immune to these issues — issues that will continue to create challenges and barriers in any environment where children are growing.

Now is the time for all levels of government — the federal, territorial, and all levels of First Nation governments — to truly make the mental well-being of children and youth across the territory a priority by ensuring that there are financial resources to build programming and capacity that can be sustained long-term.

Our young people need more than a pilot project or a band-aid solution. This is everyone's responsibility — not only to our children and youth of today but also to those not yet born. The young people are in dire need for resources to be put in place to ensure that every child and youth has access to whatever it is they need in terms of support, whether that is therapeutic support, a counsellor, a traditional healer, or going out on the land.

When we talk about mental wellness, it encompasses everything. From access to safe housing, access to health care services, access to social supports, access to education, and all the supports that could be available in those environments that are children- and youth-specific. Anything that we do to

positively impact a child's life or contribute to supporting children and youth also contributes to enhancing better outcomes for their life, no matter what each may face individually. We know that adequate age-appropriate and culturally appropriate supports build resilience, connection, sense of purpose, and self-esteem.

We are losing far too many young people to suicide, addictions, and violence to continue to sit idle. The young people across the Yukon are struggling. They are crying out for help and yet feel that very few are listening. What the young people want is action. Action means investing financially, physically, and structurally. Our youth don't need another framework to be developed, as we can't risk losing another young life, which happens far too often.

As I begin to further understand the history and the impacts that affected my parents and grandparents, I am better able to compassionately understand that parents are truly doing the best they can with what they have. The more we focus on enhancing supports that contribute to mental wellness for children and youth in the territory, the more we are showing through tangible action that, yes, children and youth are important. Yes, we do care about their well-being. We are taking the well-being of children and youth seriously, especially when it comes to their mental health. We hear their concerns; we hear the challenges they face and we hear that there are challenges to accessing supports, and now is the time to do something about it.

To end, I would like to thank my colleagues for listening to me today as I share these words. I also want to thank the many children and youth who have reached out for a visit or to teach me something on the land while they also share their stories and concerns that matter to them. The time spent has been admirable and appreciated. I hope that I have been able to bring forward the young people's experiences in a respectful manner while shedding light on the urgency for comprehensive and consistent mental wellness supports and programs to be available in every Yukon community. We can't predict the environments or experiences that any child will face after birth, but we can influence the services and supports that are there for them.

I hope that my colleagues will vote in favour of this motion, and I hope this motion will be a call to action to this government to take concrete steps so that children and youth in the Yukon can gain access to secure, stable, long-term mental health services and programs that they urgently need and deserve.

Mahsi' cho.

Hon. Ms. McLean: It is my pleasure to stand today to speak to Motion No. 762, brought forward by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

I will start by saying, of course, that the health, safety, and well-being of students and staff is our first priority. We certainly recognize that the challenges of the last few years, including the pandemic and the toxic drug crisis, have brought with them an increased need for mental health supports, especially for youth. Mental health supports for children and

youth are critically important, and we are taking steps to ensure that students have access to mental health support.

We understand that students' well-being is not just about academic success; it's about creating an environment where students can thrive emotionally, socially, mentally, and spiritually. We are committed to fostering equity and inclusion for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances. Reimagining inclusive and special education, also known as "RISE", will serve as a cornerstone to this commitment.

The Department of Education is developing a comprehensive mental health and wellness approach. This is an important part of the overall work that we're doing to reimagine inclusive and special education. Our comprehensive mental health and wellness approach will include prevention and promotion of positive mental health as well as intervention supports and responses in and out of school. The approach will be developmentally and culturally responsive. It will align with Yukon's mental health strategy and be guided by the recommendations from the Yukon youth territorial strategy from the 2023 Yukon Youth Summit, which shares important perspectives from youth to support that work for them.

The main estimates include \$500,000 for mental health supports in schools in the 2023-24 budget in recognition of the increased mental health and wellness needs of students. These supports and services may range from assessments, counselling, consultation and programming, case management, and education, depending on what the specific needs are of the individual schools and communities. Meeting the mental health needs of students requires flexibility in how we approach meeting them where they are at. This can include raising awareness of mental health for all students through inclusive, culturally appropriate programs to target services for acute mental health challenges. No one student is the same and may certainly have different needs.

We will continue to work with the school boards and councils, First Nation governments, and other education partners, including youth, to determine how best to coordinate student services and access to services, how we will provide additional training for school counsellors, enhance student outreach and awareness, and offer training and supports to school staff in developmentally responsive approaches to mental wellness and awareness of mental wellness needs. We continue to offer ongoing training and access to confidential counselling services to staff as well. We are actively working to enhance the links between mental health and well-being resources available within the community as provided by partners and stakeholders as well as resources that will be accessible within the school environment.

Conversations about mental health are very important. Through increased awareness, our curriculum, and developmental supports, we are providing students and staff an understanding of mental health. This includes teaching them the language to talk about it and where to seek support. School counsellors support students to achieve their personal, social, emotional, and academic development and their career potential. Through the Yukon school curriculum, students learn

about social and emotional skills, decision-making, their health and safety, and strategies to strengthen their resilience and well-being. For acute mental health challenges, school-based staff help students and families connect with the most appropriate supports that are available within the community, including clinical counselling services.

I will just move to RISE and will speak a bit more about that initiative, because it is, as I've stated, a cornerstone to the work that we're doing. We continue to work with our partners and stakeholders to reimagine and create schools that are safe, inclusive, and that build on students' strengths to ensure that every child feels connected and supported to thrive. It's really about reshaping education overall.

In November 2021, the First Nations Education Commission and the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education provided the reimagining inclusive and special education work plan, which addressed the review of inclusive and special education as well as the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate review on attendance.

The department hosted an educational summit in November 2021. This was when we were still doing most things virtually. We had approximately 600 online participants representing our educational partners, stakeholders, as well as broad representation from the department.

In May 2022, the department hosted a conference for members of the community of inquiry, the First Nations Education Commission and the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education. The communities of inquiry have a variety of representatives from First Nation governments, non-governmental organizations such as the Child Development Centre, Autism Yukon, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, school councils, and school-based and central administration staff. Membership varies from the various communities of inquiry within RISE.

Just considering the time, I'm going to move through a little bit quicker.

Several Yukon schools are also — and I think it's really important to note this — offering experiential learning programs. From Golden Horn, which is very successful — that includes academic, athletic, cultural, and social endeavours through an experiential lens. Elijah Smith Elementary School is working very closely with the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate and Kwanlin Dün First Nation to host experiential, culturally based weeks of activities throughout the year. Wood Street, of course, offers a wide variety of experiential learning programs where academics are integrated with heritage, adventure, outdoors skills, theatre, and art.

Hidden Valley students can access on-site camping, hiking, snowshoeing, kicksledding, and cross-country skiing. These are some examples, but really, this is embedded and is the move throughout all of the schools within the Yukon — to move toward more experiential learning. Of course, when we moved to the BC curriculum — it was right around the time when the pandemic happened, so some of that had to be put on hold, but it's now really gaining ground and schools are becoming very creative in their approaches to meet their school and community needs.

A key initiative that was launched in the fall of 2022 was Ready-to-Learn Schools, based on the groundbreaking work of Dr. Bruce Perry's neurosequential model. The program is grounded in understanding that children can only be ready to learn when they feel safe and calm. This model trains teachers and staff to be developmentally responsive to recognize that a child's chronological age may not match their emotional, cognitive, or social age. Most importantly, it helps the educators understand how developmental adversity impacts brain development, functioning, and learning. This initiative empowers our teachers and school staff to understand, honour, support, and guide our children so they can learn as they travel along their own unique path. Again, the move with the Department of Education is to have this implemented in every single school in the Yukon, and many of them are now. Takhini has been implementing it for a number of years already. Others are in their second year and some are just moving into the introduction of the approach. Others will continue to be onboarded throughout the next couple of years.

The Yukon government has committed 81 new positions over the next three years, including school wellness specialists, education assistants, learning assistance teachers, and other support positions. We are creating a school wellness specialist or similar position for every Yukon school. The role of the school wellness specialist will be to provide a variety of direct supports to students, families, educators, and the community, which may range from assessments, counselling, consultation, programming, case management, and education, depending on the specific needs of the individual schools and communities. In addition, we are working with First Nation governments to develop the First Nation wellness role. This role will provide culturally appropriate supports that meet the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual academic needs of students.

We have also allocated an additional \$1 million in funding, which can be used for other types of services to support students. Part of these funds will be used to work with First Nation governments to hire these new roles. We are currently working with superintendents and school board executive directors to prioritize the implementation of both positions over the next two years. The success of these new roles is dependent on thoughtful, purposeful, and comprehensive planning. We really want to ensure that we get this right and that it meets the needs of the school community and the communities where the schools are situated.

We are looking to a broad range of approaches, from inclusive and culturally appropriate programming to targeted services for acute mental health challenges, including clinical counsellors.

In addition to providing the supports, we believe that working to make schools safer and more inclusive for students will support their mental health. One way we are making schools safer is through our work on the sexual orientation and gender identity policy. All students, staff, and parents have a right to be and feel safe in Yukon public schools. They also have the right to be treated with respect and dignity regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, ancestry, place of origin, ethnicity, citizenship, religion, age, or ability.

To further support 2SLGBTQIA+ students, the Department of Education updated its sexual orientation and gender identity policy, or SOGI policy, as outlined in our inclusion action plan.

In our work to implement and evaluate the updated SOGI policy, we will continue to engage with students, educators, and other members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Schools are required to develop school-based procedures and guidelines under the umbrella of the Department of Education's SOGI policy.

One other area that I wanted to note was the recent partnership between the Department of Education and the ARC Foundation — a charitable foundation supporting SOGI inclusion in education.

We are working to implement tools and resources of the SOGI 1 2 3 program to create more inclusive schools and just to ensure that the educators and school communities have the right tools to be able to implement this policy. All counsellors and administrators have been provided with local and national SOGI and gender and sexuality alliance information. Several schools have gender and sexuality alliances and other 2SLGBTQIA+ initiatives. It is really great work that is happening throughout our schools in the Yukon.

One of the other areas that we have really worked on is language, culture, and heritage revitalization in public schools. Safer, healthier, and thriving communities are inherently linked to rebuilding First Nation identity and connection to heritage. A specific priority of the Government of Yukon is to work toward a shared commitment with Yukon First Nations and the Government of Canada to address and take meaningful steps to revitalize Yukon First Nation language, culture, and heritage. Yukon government is interested in continuing to work with the joint education action plan, in which all Yukon First Nations and Canada are partners, as well as advancing specific funding conversations with Yukon First Nations and Canada on how to advance language, culture, and heritage priorities in public schools, so that is a very important part of our work.

Also, the Department of Education's role in truth and reconciliation is, of course, very important and vital and a responsibility that we take very seriously. We want to highlight the work that has been done on action 63 to maintain an annual commitment to aboriginal issues, including developing and implementing kindergarten to grade 12 curriculum and learning resources on aboriginal peoples in Canada's history and the history and legacy of residential schools. This is really important work. I am happy to provide more information at various times, I think, during the Sitting around the curriculum that is already in place, the curriculum that is currently being developed, and what is next in the queue.

The safer schools action plan is another important area that definitely relates to the well-being of students, teachers, and families. The outcome of the safer schools action plan — we completed the 23 commitments in the safer schools action plan and released that this last summer. While recognizing that the work to ensure that students are safe at school will never end, the action items in the safer schools action plan really emphasize creating safe and caring environments,

transparency, accountability, victim-centred approaches, collaboration, and reconciliation in educational settings.

Again, as I've stated, this work will be ongoing, but I think our government has certainly taken meaningful steps to improve government-wide coordination in response to any critical incidents that may occur so that we can ensure timely and appropriate supports for children, their families, and the school community.

Another area, I think, as we speak today about upstream approaches and the earliest intervention — we continue to work with Yukon First Nation governments and stakeholders to enhance early learning and childcare programming in the Yukon as we move toward a future where all families have access to high-quality early learning and childcare that is affordable, accessible, and inclusive.

We heard loud and clear in various engagements on universal childcare that, in addition to affordability and the accessibility for families — and, of course, to address quality. So, we have taken great strides in all three of these areas. We are investing heavily in professional learning and development opportunities. This includes innovative and flexible training options for childhood educators. This year alone, Mr. Speaker, we are investing \$43 million in our early learning and childcare. We are, I believe, one of the leaders in the country now in terms of our ability to fully implement our agreement with Canada and to really invest in our youngest Yukoners.

I know that folks in the Assembly were able to come and be part of the opening of the new Child Development Centre — very proud of this investment and what it is going to mean to have all of our services for the Child Development Centre in that new space. If you haven't had a chance to see the new centre, please reach out to ask for a tour and to see the space that is now there for this important program. What it means is earlier intervention, and I know that we are making the right investments, Mr. Speaker, in terms of investing in these types of services.

I wanted to just touch on a couple of other areas as I wrap up my comments today. Obviously, we're in support of this motion and I hope to try to get to a vote today, but I really wanted to highlight the work that is happening in the Department of Education. The other areas where we continue to support children and youth who require access to mental health wellness supports through services, through the child and youth and the family treatment team, which offers counselling services to children, youth, and families — this team is currently supported by 11 clinical counsellor positions and two clinical supervisors. We also continue to support the Roots of Hope initiative, which is an evidence-informed community suicide prevention and life-promotion model that aims to build capacity to prevent suicide. In August 2023, our government released the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* that was informed in collaboration with Yukon First Nations. We are moving forward with 14 initial actions outlined in the strategy to respond to the substance use health emergency. We are also working very closely with the Council of Yukon First Nations to increase funding and support to

Yukon First Nations to develop and implement land-based mental health and substance use treatment initiatives.

There is so much more that I can say. I hope that folks, through the comments that I have made today, see that this is a very important part of our work in the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Social Services, and throughout government. There are supports that are available to children, youth, and families throughout the territory. I hope that folks are accessing them. I listened very carefully to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin and the comments made, and I will directly follow up on some of those, because I think that it is very important to ensure that if there are gaps, we are filling them, and that is truly the intent of our government.

I will end there, and hopefully we do get to a vote today.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. Blake: I thank my colleague across the way for her words. I have heard many times that this government is taking things seriously. Unfortunately, this is not what I hear from children, youth, and families in the communities. That's the reality I uphold as I talk to this motion.

During visits to several Yukon communities, I have been taken by community members to graveyards so I can see the number of youth and sometimes children who are dying from suicide and drug poisoning, and that's the harsh reality that I'm made to see — that people live with every day when there are no specialized supports.

Our young people deserve better and they need better services, so I hope people vote in favour of this motion.

Mahsi' cho.

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: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 762 agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

The following legislative return was tabled October 11, 2023:

35-1-102

Response to Written Question No. 38 re: electricity supply and demand and Written Question No. 39 re: power outages (Streicker)