



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 145

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35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Monday, October 23, 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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Deputy Clerk	Linda Kolody
Clerk of Committees	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Monday, October 23, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**Speaker's statement**

**Speaker:** Last Tuesday, October 17, the Minister of Health and Social Services participated in the proceedings of the Assembly by video conference, and during the Daily Routine, she gave oral notice of a motion. A paper copy of the motion was then provided to the Table.

Members will note that the motion, Motion No. 777, is currently on the Order Paper. The Sessional Order adopted on October 12, 2023, when Motion No. 744 carried as amended, allows members to participate in sittings by video conference when they are unable to attend in person due to illness. Providing notice of motion was not one of the permissible actions explicitly listed in the Sessional Order.

I have, however, determined that the intent of the Sessional Order is to authorize the full remote participation of MLAs when they are ill and that the Order of the House can be interpreted to permit members to perform all actions by video conference that they could perform while physically present in the Chamber.

As Speaker, it is my responsibility to ensure that each MLA's right to be heard in the House is respected. I will note that the one exception that I think is warranted would be presiding over proceedings. The Chair must be physically present to ensure the proper operations of the Assembly.

On a related matter, our previous practice was to only accept on motion forms "wet" signatures — that is, original signatures in pen and not electronic, printed, or copied signatures. While our Standing Orders still require motions to be provided in writing, I have decided to permit MLAs to submit motions, amendments, and committee reports with printed electronic signatures.

This will assist the Clerks and members in processing forms for the Assembly as newer photocopiers provide nearly perfect representations of wet signatures and it is very difficult to distinguish from a photocopy or an inserted electronic signature. This will also allow members who are participating electronically to fully participate in proceedings.

I will note that the use of electronic signatures on forms does not apply to petitions.

The current Sessional Order on video conference participation will expire at the end of this Sitting. I urge the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections, and Privileges to consider providing more fulsome guidelines should a decision be made to make remote attendance permanent.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Introduction of visitors.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, we have a couple of guests here today for the memorial tribute to Linda Augustine. Could we please welcome, from the South Klondike Local Advisory Council, Marg Blewett, and from the Mount Lorne Local Advisory Council — and other volunteer duties from them both — Al Foster. Can we welcome them both, please?

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In remembrance of Linda Augustine**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to the memory of Linda Augustine, who passed away this past fall in Carcross. She was a person who always worked to make a difference in her community and the world around her. When I met Linda, we were working together on reducing solid waste and promoting our free stores. She was involved in many, many things.

Linda Augustine was a confident, creative, and beautiful person — inside and out. She loved, nurtured, and cherished her family and had a special spot in her heart for her granddaughter. She cared deeply about Carcross and the Southern Lakes in which she lived and worked. Linda was a master educator with a big heart who worked at the Ghùch Tlâ Community School for many years. Linda influenced generations of children by teaching them both academics and life skills, guiding them through their feelings or their physical challenges, and acknowledging their every success. She complimented the students consistently, always encouraging.

Linda had a knack for breaking down a lesson into understandable parts for the students, and they came home and told their parents about their appreciation for Ms. Augustine.

She was a team player within the Yukon education community and spoke up regarding the collective educational needs of all. In 2003, Linda received a Yukon Excellence in Education Award. After Linda passed, a small scholarship was set up under her name at the Ghùch Tlâ Community School.

By the way, Linda was also a swimmer, and in 2014, she was part of Team Yukon at the Canada 55+ Games, bringing home three golds and a silver in her first-ever appearance at the games.

For a time, Linda was a councillor with the South Klondike Local Advisory Council. She wanted and believed she could make a difference within the community, and she did make a difference in many ways. She was thoughtful and deliberate in her contributions to the council. As her MLA, Linda spoke to me a lot. It was never complaining; it was always with a sense of wanting to make things better.

The Carcross council — which, by the way, helped me to write this tribute — asked me to acknowledge their deep appreciation for Linda's commitment to her community, which she always showed through her actions. They also asked me to

mention her phenomenal administrative skills and record-keeping in regard to the local advisory council.

Linda was diligent and passionate about the recycling of clothing and household items. For years, she volunteered to maintain the Carcross transfer station free store by bringing items, organizing them on hangers, getting hangers, and, as I mentioned a moment ago, pressing government for answers and trying to add value to the transfer station contracts so as to improve the whole recycling situation in Carcross. The community is grateful for Linda's contributions through raising awareness of what can be recycled, reused, or repurposed and, overall, for reducing our footprint at our landfills.

I understand that Linda also did some home care and physical therapy work and was appreciated for her calm energy. Some of the folks she worked with said they enjoyed her company and that she was very articulate and understood their physical situations even more than they did. By the way, Mr. Speaker, I know that several of the people with whom Linda worked with are listening in today.

With great sadness, Linda passed away last fall with her family around her. Family and friends would like to express their gratitude for the support and care provided by nurses and staff at the Wind River palliative care unit in Whistle Bend, with special thanks to Dr. Sally Macdonald and Dr. Alex Kmet for all they do.

Her vibrant smile, community spirit, and creative ways will be missed by many.

Thank you, Linda. Rest in peace.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter dated October 20, 2023 from the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce to the Premier.

**Speaker:** Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House celebrates:

(1) the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the signing of the first four Yukon First Nation final and self-government agreements by Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Teslin Tlingit Council, and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;

(2) the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in final and self-government agreements; and

(3) the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Kluane First Nation final and self-government agreements.

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

THAT this House celebrates the incredible contributions of Christine Sinclair throughout her long career on the international stage as a member of the Canadian national women's soccer team and in her work to seek equal pay with the men's team.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to work with the Town of Watson Lake, the Liard First Nation, and area residents to plan and build a continuing care facility in Watson Lake.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to cancel its plans to close the Silver City, Braeburn, Keno, and Johnsons Crossing solid-waste transfer stations and work with the residents of each area to ensure that they have appropriate solid-waste disposal solutions that meet the needs of their communities.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to adopt the recommendations of Canada's premiers to extend the repayment deadline for the forgivable portion of the Canada Emergency Business Account for an additional year.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to call witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation to appear during the 2023 Fall Sitting to provide information and answer questions from MLAs.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to provide this House with a detailed report showing gaps in emergency medical services coverage over the past three years and table a plan to resolve those gaps in community coverage.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to work with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association and Yukon University to begin offering a registered nursing program for Yukon students.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce short-term rental legislation that will:

(1) require hosts to register their short-term rental accommodations;

(2) limit short-term rental housing to only the primary residence of a host and secondary suite or accessory dwelling on the property of a host; and

(3) apply to Whitehorse with an opt-in option for all other municipalities and communities.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide funding to municipalities to implement sustainable recycling programs.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Yukon convention centre

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, last week, our government, in partnership with the Yukon Convention Bureau, announced that the highest ranked proponent has been selected for the construction of a new Yukon convention centre. Envisioned as a public/private partnership, a new convention centre will lead to a range of benefits. There is strong support within the Yukon tourism industry and business community for a new convention centre in Whitehorse to fully realize our potential as a convention destination.

Conventions, conferences, and other forms of meetings are strong economic drivers and can contribute to year-round, high-yield tourism visitation. With the loss of a dedicated convention space in the Yukon, industry stakeholders have identified an immediate need for a modern and purpose-built replacement to meet the needs of the Yukon's growing events and conferences market, which, pre-pandemic, contributed approximately \$6.5 million to the local economy.

Development of such a facility also aligns with the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy's* goal of doubling the Yukon's tourism business revenues by 2028. In addition to being a place for visitors to convene in the territory, it will be a gathering place for Yukoners to hold events and festivals. The request-for-proposal phase of this process generated strong interest. After thoughtful and thorough assessment, the Chu Níikwän Limited Partnership's concept for a building along the Whitehorse waterfront emerged as the highest ranked proponent.

Highlights of the Chu Níikwän proposal include: direct integration with the existing Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre; convenience of a downtown location showcasing the Yukon's natural beauty; and 100-percent First Nation ownership on First Nation land.

With our government's support and involvement, the Yukon Convention Bureau has now begun negotiations toward a funding agreement, a design/build construction contract, and a maintenance and operating contract. With the negotiation

process only just underway, cost estimates, design specifics, funding arrangements, and other details are still under discussion. But as we have been doing from the start, we will continue to provide updates every step of the way.

Our government is proud to be working in partnership with the Yukon Convention Bureau to support the development of a new Yukon convention centre. I am confident that this new venue will be a source of pride for Yukoners, benefiting businesses, individuals, and communities across the territory.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, as we all know, the Yukon's tourism industry is one of the main economic drivers in the territory. It plays an important role in sustaining a healthy private sector and it affects thousands of Yukoners. That is why the industry, among others, has been asking for a convention centre over the past few years. The issue was pushed further to the forefront with the closure of the Yukon Convention Centre at the old High Country Inn. That facility hosted hundreds of conferences over the years, including the chamber of mines, Geoscience Forum, both federal and territorial government conferences, the Festival of Trees for the Yukon Hospital Foundation, and the ever-popular Yukon Quest start and finish banquets.

The venue is missed by a lot of Yukoners and Yukon organizations. So, like many in the tourism industry, we were excited to see the announcement from the Yukon Convention Bureau and the Yukon government about the identification of a proponent for the new convention centre. That proponent, as announced last week, is the Chu Níikwän Development Corporation. The proposed site will certainly augment the many events that take place at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre. However, we do have some questions about the next steps for this exciting project.

We notice that there is no money currently identified in the five-year capital plan for this project. Can the minister tell us how much capital funding the Yukon government intends to invest in this project and how much funding may be available from the federal government? The news release from last week indicates that the Yukon Convention Bureau will lead the tendering of the design/build contract. We have seen the bid package from the development corporation and it is clear that it is a large, complex project. Is it the intent that the Yukon Convention Bureau will tender the construction and project management of this project, or will it fall to the Government of Yukon?

What can the minister tell us about the operating model for the new convention centre? Will the territorial or federal government provide funding for O&M? Who will collect the revenue that will accrue from its operation? Will the Yukon Convention Bureau play a role in the operations? Is it the intent that it will be profit-generating, or will it run as a non-profit?

Yukoners are obviously excited about this development, but there did not seem to be much information about the timeline of next steps. What is the timeline going forward, and when can we expect the next milestones?

I look forward to the minister answering these important questions.

**Ms. Blake:** Mr. Speaker, this is one example of economic reconciliation, and we look forward to seeing more projects that involve Yukon government and Yukon First Nations. “Kwanlin” means “running through canyon” in Southern Tutchone. Throughout history, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation has always been linked to the Yukon River. It is always important to include truth when we acknowledge reconciliation.

Today, we acknowledge the repeated relocation history of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and how they have overcome much adversity despite the ongoing challenges of being displaced in their own traditional territory. The people of Kwanlin Dün have continued to show up determined and continue to be open to forming respectful partnerships and growing their community to ensure a solid future for generations to come.

Seeing this proud nation and their development corporation moving back toward the water is as powerful as it is moving. We congratulate the Chu Níkwän Limited Partnership’s concept for a building that would be integrated with the existing Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre. We all know how valued and appreciated the cultural centre is within the community and how it impresses thousands of visitors each and every year while always bringing communities together to celebrate cultures and the diversity of our territory.

We look forward to seeing what becomes of this project and look forward to seeing the dream of a new convention centre become reality.

Mahsi’.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** To begin with, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Member for Porter Creek North and the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for their remarks. It is great to see that all of us here in the House support this important project. I can say that when I first took over the role of Minister of Tourism and Culture and sat down with the tourism industry, this was by far their number one concern. We have been working very closely with the Yukon Convention Bureau ever since.

I agree with all the comments that were given by both members regarding the importance of this project. With respect to the specific questions about how many dollars we are going to put toward the project, whether it is going to be the Yukon Convention Bureau or the Yukon government that leads in the building, how much is going to be required for operating, whether it is going to be revenue neutral or profit generating — all of those questions are part of that negotiation that is happening right now.

For example, there can be quite a blend around more focus on capital dollars to go into it with lower operating expenses over the long term, or it can be just the other way around. That’s all part of that conversation that will happen now with Chu Níkwän.

With respect to the timeline, I was talking with the department over the weekend, and we anticipate that we might start to hear things back over several months of that

conversation. There still will be work ongoing, but I will do my best to update the House as I get information. I am sure that when we are here in the fall again, I will have more updates if we haven’t already announced those publicly.

The sorts of things that I just want to finish off here with — this is a comprehensive process and it’s a new process for me where we go out with the expression of interest first and then identify the preferred partner and then negotiate with them through a public/private partnership. I am looking forward to how that model works. We believe that it will yield a better result over time, but, of course, it will always need careful consideration.

I can also say that I have had very good conversations with the federal minister — our new tourism minister — who is no stranger to infrastructure projects because of her history with Cabinet. She has expressed an interest in hearing more about how these negotiations go as well.

Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise today to speak about this important project.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Rent control

**Mr. Dixon:** When the Liberals first intervened in the rental market with their rent control policy, they said it would help with affordability and availability of rentals. However, in the technical briefing for media on their new landlord program, the Department of Economic Development stated that the intent of the program is to try to stabilize the rental market and keep rental units available. This in and of itself is a clear admission that the Liberals’ current policies destabilized the rental market and have threatened the ongoing supply, which have made this new program necessary.

In the words of the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce — quote: “... current policies have unequivocally hampered investment in additional supply.” So, rather than piling a bad program on top of bad policy, why not simply correct the failed policy that started the whole problem in the first place?

Will the Premier set aside this flawed program and actually work to correct the failed policies that they imposed in 2021?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that we will have tremendous debate over this next couple of weeks on the subject. The Leader of the Official Opposition has made his point clear — and again, in that question, requesting to remove rent caps altogether and deregulate and let landlords charge whatever they would like. I think that we are hearing from other sides — and I am sure that there will be some debate with the Leader of the NDP around the implementation of this new program — here we are in the middle of this conversation.

What I will say is that we think it is very important to invest in affordable housing and that is why we have put supportive housing options in for low-income seniors and elders — again, launching the Yukon home ownership loan program and expanding that. We think that supporting the construction of 150 new affordable, energy-efficient homes was a good investment. We think that opening new accessible, affordable

duplexes in Mayo and Carmacks and triplexes in Watson Lake, Mayo, and Whitehorse was good. We think that developing over 800 lots since 2016 was a good investment. We think that the funding of the construction at Boreal Commons for the many, many units that it has brought in — almost 100 units — is a good investment, and we think that the funding of the development of 401 Jeckell Street — again, to create 47 new affordable homes — is a good investment.

I did see, of course, the letter and I look forward to discussing it in questions 2 and 3.

**Mr. Dixon:** Nowhere in the Premier's remarks was any reference at all to the program that I actually asked about.

It seems that everyone in the Yukon except the Premier knows that this program is a bad idea and won't actually solve any of the problems. Here is what the business community said in a letter to the Premier — quote: "Until the Government of Yukon enacts meaningful policy change, lost trust and lost supply will not be recovered."

So, Mr. Speaker, not only have the Liberals' failed policies hurt the rental housing market, but they have undermined the trust that the business community has in this government and this Premier. The Premier's response so far has been that this program is needed to stabilize the rental market until the Yukon *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* can be changed in 2025. However, the program announced by the Premier is only for 2023.

My question is simple: Is this program going to be extended until the amendments to the act are tabled in 2025?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I guess my sense is, from the Leader of the Official Opposition — I would like to know if, for clarity, the point is to cancel this program and the grant. I want to hear that — maybe if we have an opportunity today. That's a fair comment. Do you want us to cancel this? I know you want us to cancel rent caps, but I would like to know on the record.

I do have another letter as well — and I will table this — from the Yukon Residential Landlord Association, which commends and supports the territorial government for the program as well. I'll table that today. That's also business owners and entrepreneurs.

I also think that, as we talk statistically — I have asked officials to set up a meeting with the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce. When you talk about — that it has damaged our investment in residential investment. What I saw on Friday were the stats that came out that showed that, across Canada, between January and August — if you look at 2023 compared to 2022 and so since the new CASA has been in place — over that time frame in Canada, we have seen a decrease in residential investment by 14.1 percent, and in the Yukon, we have seen an increase of 19.3 percent.

I want to look at the numbers that they are looking at. I see the numbers that were tabled by the statistics bureau here in the Yukon.

**Mr. Dixon:** Once again, the Premier has completely ignored the question that I asked.

Since the Premier announced his new policy of handing out cash to landlords in an attempt to, in his words, stabilize the rental market, the response from the community has been

resounding. Advocacy groups have panned the program. The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition called the program perplexing and said that it's not the best use of public dollars. The Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce called the program out of touch, and even the landlord association, in the release the Premier just tabled, has said that this is not actually a solution to the problem.

Now, we know that the Liberals think that this program is needed to correct the problems caused by their previous interventions in the rental market, but it's pretty clear that they are the only ones who think that this is a good idea.

If the Premier really believes that this program will help, then he will need to keep it in place until the act changes. If that's the case, he should be transparent about it.

Will this program remain in place until 2025?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, we've tabled this program. I haven't — I guess it's clear, and I would like to hear, just for the record, if the Leader of the Official Opposition is saying just that this program should be cancelled for landlords. That's what I would like to hear.

Every day we guess which version the Yukon Party is going to show up with on this particular topic. Now again, when it comes to affordable housing, we saw almost \$70 million of opportunity to invest in affordable housing — \$70 million that we have put in place and \$70 million that the Yukon Party has voted against. I have seen a flip-flop on this policy decision. One minute, it's: No, you should not put funds toward landlords — and then: Yes, you should.

What I know is that, if you go across the country, we see British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and a number of jurisdictions that have put rent caps in place. I believe that a rent cap in place is an important instrument at this time. We have legislation that needs to be modernized. The landlords and tenants association is saying that it needs to be modernized, and I want to look after those vulnerable folks. It is also a nod to the fact that there are individuals who do have units and there has been pressure on their costs.

Again, we will stay the course here but would like to hear from the opposition if they support us supporting these individuals who have these assets.

#### Question re: Teacher staffing

**Ms. Van Bibber:** We have raised a number of questions with the minister regarding a shortage of teachers on call, or TOCs, throughout the Yukon. We have heard from two school councils that the number of TOCs on their morning call sheet isn't translating into answered calls and having the necessary coverage. This often means school administrators, education assistants, and learning assistance teachers are pulled away from their regular duties to cover for a classroom teacher.

What is the minister doing to alleviate the shortage in the near term?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I am sure the minister responsible will get back to the member opposite as soon as possible on this particular issue, but I will say that, in the 2023-24 school year, the Department of Education has been able to make some strategic recruitment actions, which the minister has spoken to

on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. We posted positions earlier to be more competitive with other jurisdictions. We have participated with online career fairs and a Yukon University fair. They have also placed advertisements on YuWIN, Employment Central, LinkedIn, Facebook, Google — the list goes on and on. To date, teacher recruitment has been working to make sure that we do get teachers in positions, whether they be in the bigger City of Whitehorse or into those rural communities.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** École Selkirk Elementary School Council wrote to the minister last week asking for short- and long-term ideas to deal with what they call — quote: “... the historically chronic, and now dire, Teacher on Call ... shortage.”

They have asked for two actions: an immediate short-term solution, including secondments from the Department of Education staff; and changes to the recruitment and application processes, including remuneration. We understand that the minister has not answered this letter yet.

Can the minister tell us if these two actions are considered, and if so, when will they be acted on?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** What I can say is that, as of October 18, 2023 this year, the registered TOCs — 151 registered in Yukon, which is 126 in Whitehorse, 25 rural, and an additional 26 applicants pending — and that would be 19 in Whitehorse and seven rural. I think that this reflects a decrease of eight total TOCs since the September 26, 2023 numbers, as these TOCs have moved up to temporary positions supporting schools.

I also know that the department is continuing to recruit the teachers on call and recognize that the demand for coverage continues to be a challenge not only here but right across the nation. We continue to evaluate and we continue to evolve the recruitment efforts to attract those teachers-on-call roles and support staff in accepting assignments as they are available. I know that the department is holding an information session at Employment Central this week and will follow with sessions in communities in the coming weeks. Also, the department has increased advertisement in recruitment sites and recognizes the collective bargaining agreement ending in the current term in June 2024 as a joint opportunity to collaborate with the YAEP through the negotiation process on this and other issues.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The École Selkirk Elementary School Council also asked the minister if they could — quote: “... host a community information session in mid-November to invite community members who may be interested in substitute teaching.” They say that classes at the school may have to close in order to adhere to health and safety standards. They are looking for a response to these requests and others by Wednesday, October 25 because the situation is so dire.

Will the minister write them back by Wednesday and respond to the question that they have raised in this letter?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I can't comment on what that communication has been or the efforts of the minister at this point, but I will again reiterate that there is an information session at Employment Central on October 26 and that there

will be follow-up sessions in the communities in the coming weeks.

### Question re: Affordable housing

**MLA Tredger:** Last week was Poverty and Homelessness Action Week. This government said some very nice words about the importance of ending poverty, so it was a real slap in the face to see them turn around in the same week and hand out \$1 million to landlords.

Instead of prioritizing the people who are struggling to pay rent, or struggling to put food on the table, or struggling to find a home at all, the Premier decided to give \$1 million to the people who already own multiple homes.

Why is the Premier giving public money to people who already own multiple places to live?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think it's important to note — who are the landlords who are out there?

I think about the media scrum I did, and the reporter who was asking questions talked about an example I gave. As he said, that sounds exactly like my landlord. It's an individual, a senior woman who is on a fixed income and who has an extra unit in her home. They are actually using that revenue to ensure that they can support their quality of life. Part of our challenge, in some ways, Mr. Speaker, is that there are not a bunch of big corporations investing in rental space in this territory. Part of our challenge is that we haven't seen large, long-term investments into the rental market. At the same time, it is not big corporations; it is individuals here in the territory.

What we are trying to do, of course, with our rent cap is ensure that individuals who have been vulnerable because of rental increases are supported and at the same time — as we see this legislation that has been in place for a long time. The Leader of the Official Opposition knows full well, as he was responsible for the legislation as the Minister of Community Services. There has been a call to have it repaired and fixed for a long time — that we do that work to also support those folks in vulnerable positions.

**MLA Tredger:** Despite the stories the Premier likes to tell, the biggest category of rental units are units in apartment buildings. Many of these landlords own multiple apartment buildings and will be getting this government's subsidy for each and every unit. A landlord who owns 30 units — one or two apartment buildings — will be receiving over \$10,000 as a handout from this government. Over \$10,000 each to people who own multi-million-dollar housing portfolios.

Does the Premier think that landlords who own multi-million-dollar businesses need thousands of dollars in handouts from this government?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that it sounds very sensational, the way it has been asked, but I think there are lots of challenges with holding four units or six units or eight units, and I think there are lots of costs that come with it. I think that we want individuals to continue to build units. We have seen over the last number of decades that there hasn't been a lot of market rental being built. Over this year — if we compare this year to last year — we are seeing an increase in residential investment, but I also think that, in a proper, healthy ecosystem, we need to



ensure that vulnerable folks are in a position where they are supported, and I also believe that we have to have appropriate legislation that supports both the tenant and landlords. I don't believe that this is some sort of a large leveraging tool by the private sector. I think it is going to offset some of the pressures and costs that have come in for the rent cap. Again, I think that the preamble to the question makes it sound very sensational. But, no, to be very up front, I think it will offset some of the extra costs that are over and above the five-percent rent cap. That's about 1.8 percent of an extra cost. I believe that is the tool that we will use, and I would hope that the member opposite — probably as a landlord — understands that as well.

**MLA Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been saying that he wants to stabilize the housing market. Well, the elephant in the room is short-term rentals. Whether it's through Airbnb or local property management firms, we know that there are hundreds of potential long-term homes being used as short-term rentals. BC gets it. They just proposed new rules that people can only use their primary residence and one other unit on their property for short-term rentals. This will bring much needed homes back on the market. If the Premier is serious about stabilizing the rental market, he will do the same here in the Yukon. So, will he? Will the Premier bring in regulations for short-term rentals?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I was intrigued to see the motion earlier today and this question. I have asked officials to reach out to the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce. My sense is that the Whitehorse chamber, through the letter — there has been dissatisfaction with the rent cap from the Whitehorse chamber since it was put in place; that's a fact.

But I also think that there is a sense there from the Whitehorse chamber that they really wanted to step up and look at helping the situation. In my meeting with the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, I am going to ask them to share with us all the data on short-term rentals. I think that they can help work with business owners so we can understand exactly what short-term rentals mean to our market. I also am going to have a good look with our officials at the legislation that has come into BC. I appreciate the question today, and it's something that we have to deeply look into if we are going to look solutions across the board. Thank you for the question, and yes, it is something that I am very focused on.

#### **Question re: Nurse recruitment and retention**

**Ms. White:** Fortunately for the territory, nurses and health care providers continue to serve Yukoners despite the daily hardships and lack of support from this government. Every day, we hear from health care professionals who feel undervalued, ignored, and unsupported. Community nurses are working in tough conditions and are called on to deal with critical incidents that impact their mental health. Nurses across the Yukon often work in isolation under constant pressure and in workplaces that are understaffed — all of this without the supports that they need to stay healthy.

What is the government doing to ensure that nurses are safe, supported, and have sustainable and healthy working conditions?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I certainly don't disagree with some of what has been said in the preamble to the question. As a matter of fact, it is a primary issue that we deal with every single day at the Department Health and Social Services in supporting nurses. I think that Yukoners will remember that, last year, we put in place recruitment and retention bonuses for nurses so that we could increase the number of nurses that we have working here in the territory, both in Whitehorse and in community health centres — that we could support them going forward with bonuses that were in place when they took a new job or when they stayed in a particular position or moved to another position in the territory.

We have 283.75 budgeted nursing positions across the Department of Health and Social Services. This includes nurses working in communities, long-term care homes, home care, public health, and mental wellness and substance use programming. Front-line health care staff are key to our success at providing health care for Yukoners and it is absolutely critical.

**Ms. White:** The Yukon Hospital Corporation recently decided to cut funding for infusion services in Dawson City. This directly impacts patients with MS, arthritis, and other conditions that require regular infusions. These patients must now commute to Whitehorse for their essential care. We know that there are nurses available in Dawson right now who are willing and able to do infusions. In fact, several nurses have told us that they are frustrated at being denied the chance to use their skills in their community. Yukon Hospital Corporation's funding cut makes no sense from a budgetary perspective and it makes no sense from a community perspective. It is bad for the morale of nurses who already feel let down by this government.

Will the government work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to reverse their decision to end infusion care at the Dawson hospital?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** What I can do is explain to Yukoners and advise them that we work every day with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to improve and to provide services across the territory. Of course, there are three hospitals for which the Yukon Hospital Corporation is responsible. They provide excellent care to Yukoners. If a particular program, like the infusion program in Dawson City, is an opportunity for us to make sure to investigate and to make sure that we can provide those services as close to home as possible — and if we can do so in a safe way that supports nurses to do so —

Again, often, as I say when asked about particular issues and I'm told across the way that there are individuals who are suffering because of a particular decision or situation, I ask the member opposite to have those people contact us and we can resolve issues with them directly, and I do so again today.

**Ms. White:** So, those folks have reached out to the media and there are published articles on the issue.

So, the last time my colleague asked a question about flexibility for nurses, the minister responded — and I quote: "... we support health care providers."

Sadly, there's a serious disconnect between what the minister says and what we hear on the ground. Nurses from

different Yukon communities have told us that they were turned down when they asked for flexibility, like job sharing, to prevent burnout. Instead, they had to quit their permanent job so they could take auxiliary-on-call work, costing them their benefits and their job security, and still the government refuses to meet their scheduling needs. Some nurses have since quit altogether.

So, this government tells us again and again that they are taking measures to retain nurses and we keep hearing the exact opposite. When will this government starting listening to nursing staff in communities instead of making their jobs even harder?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Again, I'm very pleased to hear from individuals who are making those kinds of personal decisions based on concerns that they have about the process.

Community nursing is currently experiencing a vacancy rate of approximately 19 percent for primary health care nurses, which is an improvement of approximately 29 percent — an improvement of 29 percent — since the fall of 2022. Long-term care homes are experiencing a vacancy rate of approximately 21 percent for nursing staff. They employ licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, and nurse practitioners.

We have introduced flexibility for nursing positions across the territory. We have met with individual nurses who have experienced that. We have worked to address that particularly in health centres across the territory and will continue to work with every nurse who wants to stay and provide great service for Yukoners. I look forward to working with them going forward.

#### **Question re: Health human resource strategy**

**Mr. Cathers:** In July, the Premier travelled to Nova Scotia. While he was there, he did a photo op and signed a letter of intent with the Premier of Nova Scotia regarding — quote: "... potential collaboration between Nova Scotia and Yukon related to Health Human Resources..."

Can the Premier tell this House what, if anything, is actually happening a result of that letter he signed with Nova Scotia?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, there are two things that come to mind right now that we have been focused on. One is that it has also led to a deeper conversation about seeing if there is an opportunity for doctors to join the Atlantic Registry and give them more flexibility but also use that system for credential recognition.

I think more importantly right now, we are looking at different solutions for red-tape reduction. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has one of their representatives who has worked on the Nova Scotia red-tape reduction for doctors' billings coming to the Yukon. We have reached out to the Yukon Medical Association to see now, as next steps, if there is an opportunity for them to collaborate with the medical specialists in Nova Scotia on that red-tape reduction.

We have requested that — this could happen in the first week of November. They are working here. It's the same time frame as the Yukon Medical Association's AGM, so they are

just looking at other dates. I think that will probably be some of the first work. It will really be focused on improving our billing and reducing some of the burden that we see doctors face across the country.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would remind the Premier that his government wasn't even paying doctors on time.

The Yukon's health care system is facing serious challenges. One of the most serious is the shortage of health professionals. Several provinces have taken decisive action, including fast-tracking the ability for doctors and nurses trained in a shortlist of other countries to practise in their province.

In contrast, we have seen photo ops and heard platitudes from the Premier and the minister, but there has been a disturbing lack of action. The Premier did a photo op and signed a letter of intent with Nova Scotia about collaboration on health human resources months ago.

Can the Premier tell this House if this agreement has led to even a single new health professional coming to the Yukon and working here?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First of all, I would say that we did early work, which was a letter of intent. Both departments reviewed that work. We are finalizing — I spoke with health officials and the minister last week about this — and finalizing some of the work to define that.

We have made a commitment to go out and look at a number of things. The member opposite is going to criticize me for trying to do something innovative with another jurisdiction. He was a Health minister and nothing like that was ever done. He was in a situation where there were capacity challenges when he was Health minister.

At the same time, I have tried to work with our Health officials to go abroad and look for areas in this country where other provinces are doing — they have gone out to recruit and we have gone out to recruit, and we are still having good conversations and looking at that opportunity. But in that case, it is: Do what others do sometimes but maybe not when it adds to a good political question here in the House.

At one moment, you are telling me to reduce the burden and work with other provinces; that is what we are trying to do. On the other side, some of those provinces are going and recruiting in India. We have gone to do that, but you are telling me that it is not something I should do.

It is going to be a criticism each and every time. What we are going to do is we are going to look to make sure that we use every tool available to us — and the minister is doing that — to ensure that we can improve the health care system in the Yukon.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, this is an unprecedented problem. Thousands of Yukoners currently need a family doctor and rural communities have seen an unprecedented series of health care centre closures. They want action now.

This Liberal government ignored our calls for a new health human resources strategy until rural nursing vacancies hit almost 50 percent. The Premier signed a letter with Nova Scotia this summer but hasn't been able to point to any real results.

I will finish with a simple question for him. Early this year, Nova Scotia began allowing doctors and surgeons trained in the

US who were board-certified to practise there without writing exams. The province is promoting this, telling US doctors that — quote: "... it's as easy to move your practice here as it is to fall in love with your new home."

Is the Yukon government considering following in Nova Scotia's footsteps by allowing US-trained doctors to practise here? If so, when will they make a decision?

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** You are on mute.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** My apologies, Mr. Speaker. Health human resources presents one of the greatest challenges facing Canada's and Yukon's health system today.

But I think that what the member opposite needs to remember is that this is not unique to the Yukon Territory; this is Canada-wide and, in fact, worldwide, including the United States and Europe. Domestically and globally, we are facing unprecedented challenges, including an insufficient supply of health care workers.

It is something that was exacerbated by COVID-19. It has to do with a growing and an aging population here in the territory. This is something that we will solve together.

As a result, this government has taken on the Health Human Resources Steering Committee, which is jointly led by the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation. It is an unprecedented group of decision-makers who have put together a strategy that I expect to be able to introduce at any time now. This is the work being done by the professionals here in the territory to help us solve this problem — front-line people.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### **Bill No. 33: *Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)* — Third Reading**

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 33, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Mostyn.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking each of the honourable members who have risen to speak on Bill No. 33, *Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)*. This amendment will facilitate the recruitment of registered nurses and nurse practitioners in the Yukon and protect Yukoners' health. It paves the way for four new classes of licensing for nurses in the Yukon at the request

of the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, which regulates the profession in the Yukon. This legislation allows them to regulate their profession consistent with national trends. It also gives these health providers greater access to the Yukon as a place to work, while continuing to protect the public.

The amendment allows for the creation of four new classes of licensing and regulation, Mr. Speaker. An interim class will allow newly graduated nurses, as well as nurse practitioners and internationally educated nurses, to register directly in the Yukon. They will also be able to work while they wait to write their practice exam or for other documents.

The virtual class will allow registered nurses and nurse practitioners in other jurisdictions to provide care to Yukoners for a specific purpose via virtual means like telehealth. The courtesy class is for a specific purpose and time frame. For instance, it will allow specially trained nurses to join the specialists who come here to work for a set period of time. It will also include those who provide training or workshops here in the territory. Lastly, the student nurse class will allow student nurses to be registered to work here under supervision — for example, during their practicum.

These amendments are an important step that supports labour mobility and removes red tape for health care providers who want to be working in the Yukon. They expand the ability of the Yukon Registered Nurses Association to enter into agreements with other jurisdictions. These changes allow for portable and flexible nursing services by health care providers who are registered and hold a full licence in either the Yukon or any other participating jurisdiction. This is a major move forward as we compete with other jurisdictions to recruit more nurses to work in the Yukon.

As well, we are replacing the restrictive annual licence with a time-flexible licence to support these new classes. These new classes will be enforced by the Yukon Registered Nurses Association when the amendment to the regulation is completed and passed and the bill comes into effect.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to thank the folks within Community Services and Justice for all of their work on this file. I want to thank the opposition for the debate that we had just the other day.

I move that Bill No. 33, entitled *Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Mr. Cathers:** In rising to speak to this as the Official Opposition critic for Health and Social Services, I do want to note, as I did at both second reading and in Committee, that we recognize that changes were asked for by the Yukon Registered Nurses Association. We do support those moving forward.

Again, as I noted in rising to speak to this in the House previously, we were told that the draft legislation was not shared with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association and expressed concern with that practice. I also noted that we had been advised that the government was not planning on sharing the text of the draft regulations pursuant to this act change coming into effect with the YRNA before Cabinet approved them. I raised that as a concern with the minister at second

reading. During Committee debate, he indicated that in fact they would share those draft regulations with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, and I thank him for agreeing to do so. We believe that it is very important that stakeholders have the opportunity for input on legislation and regulations that will affect their lives and their livelihoods and, in this case, doubly so because the Yukon Registered Nurses Association is not just a stakeholder. In fact, as a self-regulating profession, they are the regulator in this area. It is vital that they see the details of regulations and legislation before they come into effect. I do thank the minister for making that commitment to share that with the YRNA, as I had requested.

I also expressed concern, as we had heard from nurses about potential changes to the model of regulating nursing here in the Yukon, including an indication based on an e-mail from officials that the government had chosen a model that they hadn't actually consulted on with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association at the time. I was pleased that the minister did indicate that — and I will quote him from October 19, page 4065 in Hansard: "... we are in the early stages of policy analysis for the review and no doors are closed." The minister then went on to say: "I want to state that just because health professions will come under the broad *Health Professions Act* does not mean that the nursing association will lose its autonomy." The minister then went on to committing to consultations with the YRNA regarding that. I would advise him that we will be holding him to that commitment and monitoring the progress in this area because we do believe that, in the interests of Yukoners, it's important to ensure that nurses see and have input into the regulations before they are put into place.

I do want to emphasize, as I did previously, that my colleagues and I see health care as a high priority, and it is very important to take access — including increasing access to nurses and other health professionals, strengthening our public health care system, reducing wait times — and also, it is fundamentally important to ensure that high-quality standards in patient care continue to be in place within the Yukon's health system now and for the foreseeable future.

I look forward to discussing health care on a number of occasions — hopefully throughout this Fall Sitting — but I will conclude my remarks on this legislation at this point in time. As I noted at the beginning, we will be supporting the passage of this legislation.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in Committee of the Whole, I do have concerns about the future going forward as we move toward the *Health Professions Act*. As highlighted by my colleague from Laberge, there is an interest with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association to see the regulations before they are adopted — that being the fact that this is very much affecting the organization and that's what these changes are for.

As also indicated in my first reading speech and in Committee of the Whole, we will be supporting this legislation.

**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. Mr. Clarke:** Agree.

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

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

**Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Blake:** Agree.

**MLA Tredger:** Agree.

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

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 33 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 33 has passed this House.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of Yukon to grant assent to bills that have passed this House.

*Commissioner Webber enters the Chamber accompanied by her Aide-de-Camp*

### ASSENT TO BILLS

**Commissioner:** Please be seated.

**Speaker:** Madam Commissioner, the Assembly has, at its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the Assembly, I respectfully request your assent.

**Clerk:** *Act to amend the Environment Act (2023) and Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023).*

**Commissioner:** I hereby assent to the bills as enumerated by the Clerk.

*Commissioner leaves the Chamber*

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

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### Bill No. 211: *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — continued

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

#### French Languages Services Directorate

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would just like to begin by welcoming the departmental folks who are here to assist us today — Deputy Minister Manon Moreau and Nancy Power, pour la première fois je pense, la gestionnaire des communications bilingues de la DSF. Nancy is the manager of bilingual communication and it's her first time here in the Assembly.

I am going to give my opening remarks in French and English, completely in both, and I will just go back and forth.

Je prends la parole cet après-midi au sujet du budget supplémentaire des dépenses de la Direction des Services en français. I rise this afternoon to speak to the supplementary budget for the French Language Services Directorate. Il y a deux raisons à l'origine de ce budget : la réorganisation de la Direction et la nouvelle convention collective entre le gouvernement du Yukon et le Syndicat des employés du Yukon. There are two reasons for our budget today: the directorate's reorganization and the Government of Yukon's new collective agreement with the Yukon Employees' Union.

La Direction a récemment terminé sa réorganisation, un exercice entamé le 1er juin 2021. L'objectif était de concevoir et de mettre en place une nouvelle structure axée sur la clientèle. Conforme au mandat de la Direction, cette nouvelle structure favorise une approche à l'échelle du gouvernement pour satisfaire aux exigences de la *Loi sur les langues* du

Yukon. The directorate recently completed a reorganization that started on June 1, 2021, and the goal was to design and implement a new client-focused structure aligned with the directorate's mandate to foster a government-wide approach to fulfilling the requirements of the Yukon *Languages Act*.

Parmi les points importants de la réorganisation, mentionnons la création d'une nouvelle division de l'aménagement linguistique et le remodelage des services de communication et de conseils stratégiques offerts aux ministères et aux organismes publics. Ces nouvelles fonctions vont les aider à fournir de l'information en français à la population yukonnaise. Aucun nouveau poste à temps plein n'a été créé, mais la réorganisation a entraîné des augmentations de salaire rétroactives au 1er juin 2021. Highlights of the reorganization include a new language policy and planning unit and an enhanced communication and strategic advisory role to better support departments and public bodies in providing services and information in French to Yukoners. There are no new full-time employees, but the reorganization led to wage increases that are retroactive to June 1, 2021.

La Direction a été en mesure de couvrir l'augmentation des dépenses liées au personnel pour l'exercice 2022-2023 à même son budget existant. The directorate was able to cover the increase in personnel costs for the 2022-23 fiscal year within its existing departmental budget.

La nouvelle convention collective ratifiée cette année prévoit des augmentations de salaire rétroactive au 1er janvier 2022. La Direction a été en mesure de couvrir ces paiements pour l'exercice 2022-2023 à même son budget existant. The new collective agreement ratified this year included wage increases that are retroactive to January 1, 2022. The directorate was able to cover these retroactive payments for the 2022-23 fiscal year within its existing departmental budget, and that's why we didn't see it here earlier on the 2022-23 supplementary estimates.

Toutefois pour tenir compte des paiements rétroactifs et de l'augmentation salariale après le 1er avril 2023, le présent budget supplémentaire des dépenses prévoit une augmentation de 548 000 \$ pour la Direction des services en français. However, to address the retroactive payments and wage increases after April 1, 2023, the supplementary estimates include an increase for the French Language Services Directorate in the amount of \$548,000.

Voilà qui conclut mes remarques sur le premier budget supplémentaire des dépenses de la Direction des services en français. Deputy Chair, this concludes my remarks on first supplementary estimates for the French Language Services Directorate.

Je suis prêt à répondre aux questions des membres sur le sujet.

I welcome any questions from colleagues.

**Ms. Clarke:** Thank you for the introduction and welcome to the staff. I understand that the supplementary budget vote request for the French Language Services Directorate is to address increases from the collective agreement. Due to that, we have no additional questions and I will pass this over to my colleague.

**Ms. White:** Merci beaucoup. C'est toujours un plaisir d'avoir la Direction et les membres officiels du département ici pour en parler. Comme je l'ai dit avant, la première fois que l'on a eu un débat en français été en 2012. Alors c'est une grande chose. It is a pleasure, of course, to have the officials here. The challenge here is always that, when we talk about the French Language Services Directorate, we have come so far in the last 12 years that there aren't too many questions or criticisms. It's more about finding out what's next and what the next big thing is. As an example, I am currently on the yukon.ca website en français. At this point, with my very quick perusal, I believe the entire Yukon government website has been translated, which is an achievement in itself.

One of my favourite things in the briefing for the French Language Services Directorate is the infographic. I have encouraged the minister before, but I will encourage him again — that infographic, if ever there was a place to share it so people could see just how far the French Language Services Directorate has come and just how far it will go — I think it is really eye-opening about how much has been accomplished and those goals going forward.

The only real question I have for the minister is: What's next? What are the goals of the department and what are we working on now?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I thank the member for the question. There are a few things, of course. Every three years, we have a new strategic framework, and the department has been working very diligently on that. That is going to the Cabinet Committee on Priorities and Planning shortly. I do hope to have it back in front of us, as a House, maybe next month sometime. That is my hope — but soon, anyway. It might be sooner.

The timing of that framework is very good because we will be coming toward the end of our agreement with the federal government in terms of funding, so it sets us up to talk to the federal government about where we are trying to go. Our director, Mr. Andre Bourcier, is out-of-territory right now. He has been doing work with national counterparts to talk about issues like justice and how to support French language through issues related to justice. Then he is on his way to meet with colleagues — I think he is actually just in-between right now and on his way to talk with colleagues about the federal-provincial-territorial meetings.

There are a couple of specific areas that I think we are looking at. Really, we are concentrating on how, as much as possible, to improve our services across departments. I thank the member for her comments about the website and about the French Language Services Directorate's infographic. There will be some infographics in the new strategic framework, so I will make sure to table that here and I will, of course, pass her compliments on about the translation services.

**Ms. White:** Deputy Chair, I just wanted to make sure that the minister — if there is anything else that he would like to say about the French language department or whether we want to celebrate that there are 71 French speakers offering the on-the-spot translation or 23 at the Yukon Hospital Corporation or any of those things — so if there is anything that he would

like to celebrate right now, I am happy to hear it and then look forward to our spring debate as we map things on a go-forward basis.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will make one more comment. When I was out this summer at the meetings for the ministers of French language, we were asked to do a small presentation about technology and about how it's working. One of the things that we have been doing is trying to think about how we deal with communities that are far-flung. We found a way to use a translation service where you could provide French translation and you didn't need to be face-to-face because we were using this sort of technology — like a Zoom type of technology, but bringing people very close to each other. Amazingly, that same technology will work very well for a myriad of other languages, and it has been, including for American Sign Language, which is super important because it's a visual thing, not an oral thing.

The interesting thing that we discovered as we were looking at this technology and starting to use it — and then reporting on it to our national counterparts — was that we had employees across government who were nervous to say that they had French language in their background — to identify it. The reason was that if they identified, they were worried that they would be called upon in situations where they didn't feel completely comfortable to use their French — for example, in areas of health care where you have a bunch of French and you could assist but you would struggle if you got into very technical conversations which are not your area of expertise. But when we started to supply that ability to provide that translation service, suddenly we had other people who were willing to designate themselves as bilingual or on the spectrum.

This was one of the really key points that we made to colleagues across the country: When our public service feels supported, they are willing to go further themselves. It was actually a really nice moment that was shared. We got lots of questions and had lots of conversation around the table about the program, so it's an example.

One of the things that I will always say about the team at French Language Services Directorate, or DSF, is that they are always looking for ways to stretch the resources that we have to try to serve as many Yukoners as possible.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate?

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

**Ms. White:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

### **Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 27, French Language Service Directorate, cleared or carried**

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures*

*Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$548,000 agreed to*

*On Capital Expenditures*

*Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to*

*Total Expenditures in the amount of \$548,000 agreed to French Language Services agreed to*

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Deputy Chair:** Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

*Recess*

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

### **Department of Community Services**

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

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Deputy Chair, I'm going to start debate this afternoon by welcoming my two officials to the room here. We have John McGovern, director of finance, and Matt King, the deputy minister. So, John McGovern and Matt King.

This afternoon, I'm pleased to present the Department of Community Services' *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for 2023-24, the total increase being \$21.3 million in operation and maintenance expenditures and a decrease of \$6 million in capital.

It was an extraordinary year for fires, which is the focus of our request — \$19 million and change for Wildland Fire Management — as this summer was intense. Fire management crews and our emergency measures team were challenged by the scale and intensity of the wildfires this summer, some of which were on the doorstep of our communities. There were several evacuation alerts due to fire activity and evacuation orders issued in Mayo and Old Crow and for the Eagle mine — the Yukon's largest gold mine — as we can all remember; it wasn't that long ago.

Responding to these events was a collaborative effort. We are thankful to our Yukon Wildland Fire Management and Emergency Measures Organization teams, our partners in Yukon First Nations Wildfire, First Nation and municipal governments, and the additional personnel from other parts of Canada who joined us under our Mutual Aid Resource Sharing

Agreement through the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre. We thank everyone involved for keeping us safe.

Deputy Chair, we are requesting \$19.6 million in this supplementary estimate for Wildland Fire Management's response this season. We are also requesting an additional \$1.7 million for increases resulting from the latest collective bargaining agreement.

In terms of capital funding, we are scaling back our spending — we're returning a little bit of money. This \$6.2-million decrease includes money from the deferred Investing in Canada infrastructure program projects happening in future years, a reduction in the local improvement charge program estimate given the reality of the reduced consumer spending due to rising interest rates and a deferral of the purchase of a fire truck.

With that, I am going to open the floor up to my good colleagues to ask all of the many questions that I am sure they are chomping at the bit to get at.

**Ms. McLeod:** I want to welcome the officials back with us in the Legislature to discuss this department that affects all Yukoners. The minister just touched on the decrease in the supplementary budget of \$5 million for the Investing in Canada infrastructure program funding. Can the minister explain this decrease in a little more detail, please?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We have a few projects here that are still priorities of this government and certainly for the communities involved. They are just not happening right now and so we are deferring them to a future year. They include: the Beaver Creek lagoon — there is \$1 million there; the Haines Junction water well replacement — \$100,000; Watson Lake infrastructure phase 1 construction — \$3.9 million. Those are basically the projects that we are deferring to future years because they just weren't able to get off the ground this year.

**Ms. McLeod:** If the minister could speak closer to his mic, I would appreciate that.

I do have a few more questions about the Watson Lake infrastructure project, but we can talk about that in a little bit.

What is happening to the federal extension to the ICIP program, and what does it mean to Yukon's funding?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. When we know more, we will certainly inform the House.

**Ms. McLeod:** Now, of course, this program is very important to Yukon communities, so when will the minister have some inclination? That program does expire this year.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have had several meetings this summer with ministers of infrastructure from across the country, ministers of municipalities from across the country, and public safety ministers. The new infrastructure money has certainly been a topic of conversation at all of those meetings. The federal government is currently putting its plan together, and as soon as they know more, they will inform us and I will certainly inform the members opposite.

**Ms. McLeod:** I am sure the minister knows this, but, of course, our Yukon communities are looking forward to something very soon. They need this information in order to plan, of course.

With regard to phase 4 of the infrastructure project in Haines Junction, has this been tendered yet? If it has, when is it anticipated to begin?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As far as I know, the \$100,000 project in Haines Junction has not yet been tendered. I can certainly look into that for the member opposite, but to my knowledge, it has not yet been tendered.

**Ms. McLeod:** Some projects are tendered and they come in overbudget, and they are sent back for redesigning to bring down the costs — such as some fire halls in our communities. Other projects, even though they are considerably overbudget, are allowed to proceed. What are the criteria for the projects to be changed before they move forward, and who makes those decisions?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We are talking a little bit about the abstract here. If the member opposite has a specific project that she would like to delve into — generally speaking, the projects, after they are tendered, come to Management Board, so that's a decision that Cabinet takes at the Management Board table on whether or not a project proceeds. It depends on many, many criteria, I guess — how important the project is to the community involved, how much overbudget it is, what the circumstances for the overage are. There are lots of factors that go into such decisions at the Management Board table. If the member opposite has a specific project that she would like to talk about, I am happy to talk about specific projects. Of course, I have to respect Cabinet confidentiality at the same time, but we can get into specifics as opposed to hypotheticals.

**Ms. McLeod:** As I understand the minister, it is Management Board that makes those decisions and not the minister or his department staff; is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Yes, that is correct. Generally, those decisions are taken by Cabinet at the Management Board table. I can confirm that the tender is planned for the Haines Junction project that the member opposite was talking about. The tender is planned for the spring of 2024.

**Ms. McLeod:** I thank the minister for that update on Haines Junction.

Now, this summer, AYC passed a resolution calling on Canada to increase Yukon's share of the community building fund, or gas tax, and I believe that FCM has requested an increase for all three territories. Has the minister written to the federal minister to make this request as well?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I indicated earlier, I had several meetings at the federal-provincial-territorial level in several places in Canada. At every single one of those meetings, I have spoken to my federal counterparts about the amount of funding that the territory receives and how we would like to see more funding given to the territory.

I have also worked very closely with my two colleagues in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. We have communicated several times and have actually had conversations as the northern region with federal ministers on the amount of funding coming to our northern jurisdictions. We have also written the federal minister about that as well.

**Ms. McLeod:** If the minister has been raising this at every opportunity and has written to the Government of Canada

to make these requests, what has the response been so far? When can Yukon communities expect to hear that they are getting increased funding?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The federal government has received the requests, I guess, from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and, of course, from the Association of Yukon Communities. We have not yet heard what the federal plans are for the increase in the former gas tax fund. We are still waiting for word on what the federal government is going to be doing in terms of increasing funding to regions of this country, including municipalities.

**Ms. McLeod:** Can the minister give us his impression of how these discussions are going? Are they being received in a favourable light? Obviously, the minister has some sense of where these discussions are going.

What is his sense of how this will go?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** In addition to the letters and the work that I have done with my colleagues in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, I have been reminded that the three territorial premiers have also written to the federal government about the importance of more funding for the north.

I can say that for the upcoming renewal of our infrastructure programs, we are engaging with the Government of Canada — ultimate recipients, meaning municipalities and First Nation governments, as well as the Association of Yukon Communities — over the winter. We look forward to continued work to enhance the next generation of this fund. Again, we are getting a little bit ahead of ourselves; these conversations are happening this winter, and we are working with the feds.

I can say to the member opposite that we have heard from every single municipality and every single provincial and territorial minister that they are all looking for more infrastructure funding. There is a hunger for this. With the unprecedented investment that Ottawa made in our infrastructure after years of drought, it has built up a hunger for more investment in our infrastructure. We all know how important it is. We do know that there are some in Parliament who are urging restraint at the federal level. I don't have to tell the members opposite who those folks might be, but the federal government is looking to balance investment in the communities across the country with the political realities of a minority Parliament.

**Ms. McLeod:** Given the minister's comments there, it doesn't sound like the minister is too encouraged, let's say, that the requests are going to be looked upon favourably.

I am going to move on to an issue that we have discussed in this Sitting in this House, and it is regarding the issue around the City of Whitehorse's drinking water and the letter that the minister sent to the city about it. The minister expressed a lot of concern about the issue, but he didn't seem to commit any funding to the city. We notice that there doesn't seem to be any money in the five-year capital plan for this project.

So, can the minister confirm that the Yukon government will not be providing any funding to the city for this water project, and if not, why not?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Right off the hop, I want to just make sure that the member opposite understands that my previous



answer was not meant in any way to indicate that the federal government is not receptive to our requests — the requests from every single province and every single municipality in the country — for more infrastructure.

As I said, the federal government invested historic amounts of money in our infrastructure across the country, and that opened our eyes to how important this funding is. The federal government is very receptive to the requests that we are making of them. They certainly understand that. They understand the needs across the country for renewed infrastructure funding and they are working right now to get a new program before us, so I don't want to indicate in any way that they are not receptive. We are in a time of high inflation. The economy is rolling along very well. I am sure that the federal government is balancing all of these factors in designing and delivering their next infrastructure project.

The member opposite has brought up water in Whitehorse. I am sure that it's shared across the House that water in our municipalities and certainly in Whitehorse is a very important subject. I made my thoughts known on this subject to the Mayor of Whitehorse. We have since had a meeting together — a very fruitful meeting between the mayor and me on this and many other issues just last week. I want to say that the City of Whitehorse has made the prudent decision to go ahead with the planning for a new water treatment facility. We, on this side of the House, are glad to hear that they are proceeding with the planning for this project and we look forward to seeing what that plan looks like once it's completed.

**Ms. McLeod:** May I presume that the City of Whitehorse would feel some measure of comfort if they knew how this project was going to get paid for? While I can appreciate that the planning process is going ahead, it makes it easier to plan for the project, as I said, when you know where the money is coming from.

Can the minister confirm whether or not they are going to be contributing financially to this project?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The planning for this project was actually funded through what was formerly known as “gas tax funding” provided by the federal government.

We are very heartened to see that going ahead. We don't know what the price or the scope of the project will be. Once we know what that is, through the planning process that is now underway, we will have more information to go with, but at this time we don't have that information.

**Ms. McLeod:** Keeping our discussion within the City of Whitehorse, what work has the Yukon government done with the City of Whitehorse regarding the Robert Service slide? The mayor indicated that a significant capital project was needed to stabilize the bank and prevent future slides. How much funding will the Yukon government provide for this project?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Once again, the member opposite is — I am sure there is a lot of excitement about these projects. Once we get a request from the City of Whitehorse that has a plan attached to it, we will certainly deal with that when it comes. I haven't had that at the moment. We provided \$2 million in emergency funding for the year previous to this last year. The city has spent all of that money. The slide this

last year did not actually amount to an actual emergency eligible for any federal support for that slide. The city is dealing with that; we are working with the city on their emergency planning. When they come forward with a request for a project for the Robert Service Way, we will certainly have a look at that and work with them on it, as I have told the mayor.

**Ms. McLeod:** There has been a lot of talk about recycling in the City of Whitehorse. Is the government working with the city to provide a blue bin household pickup service? If so, when will that be in place and how much has been budgeted?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm sorry, Deputy Chair. I am going to ask my good colleague to please repeat the question.

**Ms. McLeod:** My question was about recycling in the City of Whitehorse and whether or not the Yukon government and the city have been working to provide a blue bin household pickup service. If the answer to that is yes, my question is: When will it be in place and how much is the budget for this?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I want to go back to the disaster mitigation funding. We are working with the City of Whitehorse on a proposal for the federal government on the disaster mitigation for the Robert Service Way, so we are working in tandem with the City of Whitehorse to come up with a plan to deal with Robert Service Way.

As far as recycling goes, yes, recycling has been an issue on many people's minds, certainly since Raven ReCentre has announced that they are going to stop drop-offs in the City of Whitehorse as of the end of the year.

We met with Raven ReCentre and the City of Whitehorse shortly after that announcement was made. Raven indicated to me in that meeting that they had never had a committee to look at this. I believe we had our first meeting of that committee that very week, and the city has been involved in that as well. The city, the Yukon government, and Raven have been working on the recycle file since that meeting earlier this year, and those talks are proceeding with a goal to find a way to deal with the city's recycling — either through a blue bin program or whatever program comes out of the work of that committee. That committee's work is continuing and I have every confidence that we will find some sort of solution that will give recycling options to the citizens of Whitehorse. It is very important, as we deal with waste, to make sure that we divert as much out of our landfills as possible. That has certainly been a goal of mine. I have spoken about it often enough here in the House, and I will continue to advocate for better waste handling in the territory as a whole. Recycling is a huge part of that solution.

**Ms. McLeod:** I heard the minister say that the City of Whitehorse is working with Raven ReCentre to come up with a plan. Has there been a request from the City of Whitehorse to the government for any assistance — financial or otherwise?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We work with the City of Whitehorse on their requests all the time. Personally, I have not yet had an official request from the City of Whitehorse. As I said, I spoke with the mayor just last week. We did discuss recycling. We are going to have to find a way to fund recycling

in the City of Whitehorse — an approach that has not yet been designed or planned.

I have just been told — okay, so a letter was received by my deputy from the city manager on Friday. I haven't had a chance to discuss that in any depth with my good colleague to my left. The city has sent a letter to us on the recycling issue.

Again, we are working in tandem with our partners to make sure that there is a recycling solution in Whitehorse in the coming months. I am sure that we will find a solution to this because recycling is so important to the city, it is important to the Yukon government, and it is certainly important to the residents of Whitehorse.

**Ms. McLeod:** Can the minister tell us what the effect on rural Yukon communities will be as a result of Raven's reduced services and/or closures?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** In all of the discussions that we have had with Raven over the last several months, the stream of recycling from the communities has never been an issue. The recycling that we obtain from the rural Yukon communities is going to continue to come into Whitehorse as it always has. We are talking about a drop-off location in Whitehorse for citizens of Whitehorse to drop off their garbage. Raven has said that in order to meet the goal of increasing from roughly 30 percent that we are now capturing in our recycling stream, they need a new model. We can't get beyond 30 percent — that is a rough number — and so they are looking to increase the amount of recycling to do it — the amount of recycling collected in Whitehorse. To do that, they are looking at having a new system in place. Perhaps curbside — I think that is sort of the model that everybody is looking at right now. But we are not talking about the stream from rural Yukon; that is going to continue to come in. Of course, we will have to see what that looks like when the new city-side recycling program is up and running.

**Ms. McLeod:** The Yukon government is supporting the city's bid to host the Arctic Winter Games in 2026. Often, of course, there is an expectation that some infrastructure projects are done to support these games. What projects is the Yukon government supporting and how much is budgeted?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Currently, there are no needed infrastructure projects to support our Arctic Winter Games bid. The existing infrastructure is more than enough to deal with the Arctic Winter Games. The budget for the financial in-kind contributions of up to \$4.35 million is what we have committed to as a government.

**Ms. McLeod:** I am going to move on now to some resolutions that AYC has passed. One of them calls on the Yukon government to provide sustainable and long-term funding for the humane society. What was the government's response to that resolution?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I will say that the Department of Environment is actually leading the response to that specific resolution from AYC.

**Ms. McLeod:** Another resolution was to review the peripheral property tax rate. What was the government's response and what works have been done on this?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm curious — I would like to ask the member opposite what her position is on peripheral tax rates.

**Ms. McLeod:** I would be happy to answer that if I were the minister and I were the government, but I'm not, so I'm requesting that the minister provide a response.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can say that, on this specific matter, it is Community Services, of course, leading the review and the review is currently underway. That is really all I have to say about that this afternoon.

**Ms. McLeod:** Can the minister tell us what the timeline for the review is?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have been consulting with my officials this afternoon. We don't have a timeline for that review, but it is underway. We were going to balance it alongside all the other reviews, emergency planning, and all the work of Community Services so it is part of the mix that we are currently working through.

**Ms. McLeod:** I feel that I need to point out that the resolution, as it was just pointed out to me, was actually from 2018. I am hoping that we can put a bit of gas in that tank, because it has obviously gone on for quite a while.

A resolution that was passed called for a more respectful and meaningful consultation with municipalities, so what was the minister's response to this resolution and what action has he taken?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** First of all, to the member's preamble, the motion in 2018 was responded to. This is a new resolution from the Association of Yukon Communities — the new executive there — so we are dealing with that.

As far as the respectful and meaningful relationships, I have asserted that we do have respectful and meaningful conversations with all of our municipal leaders, and I am going to continue that practice that was established by my predecessor in this role — the good Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes.

**Ms. McLeod:** I stand corrected on the previous resolution regarding the property tax rate.

I have a bit of a question as to — if the minister is having these great conversations with communities, why in the world would they pass a resolution saying otherwise?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I think that's a question the member opposite can have with the Association of Yukon Communities and its members.

**Ms. McLeod:** With regard to the resolution regarding a review of the *Municipal Act*, what is the government's position? What's the timing for this review? Who might be leading it?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We have asked the Association of Yukon Communities to share specific information and context on the issues that municipalities would like addressed in the *Municipal Act*. This will be informed through ongoing dialogue between the Yukon government officials, CAOs, and the executive director of the association.

**Ms. McLeod:** If the government has asked municipalities, including AYC, to provide their input into the

changes that they think need to be made to the *Municipal Act*, was there a timeline provided by the government?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have toured Yukon communities now every year that I've been in this role, and I will continue to do so. When I've been talking to municipalities, many have expressed how busy they are and how busy they have been post-COVID. We have asked, on this subject, for more information. I'm not going to further stress our municipalities. I'm waiting for information and I will assess that information once I get it from municipalities. I have not put a timeline or put a deadline on municipalities for this information. I'm waiting to hear back from them to hear what they have to say about the *Municipal Act*, and then we will assess the information we receive from municipalities and then make a decision on their concerns.

**Ms. McLeod:** With regard to a review of the CMG, the report by the consultant was completed this summer. It makes some longer term and shorter term suggestions. I have that document here. I will just briefly read from it to go over the short-term suggestions.

One is to: "Increase the per person and per property or dwelling value to reflect more updated values (such as the per person amount contemplated in the Regional Landfill Agreements) as these were created in 2012."

Point 2 is: "Increase the Asset Maintenance factor percentage to better reflect both the cost of aging infrastructure and new capital projects as well as to better align with the CPI over time."

Point 3 is: "Reduce the Property tax room calculator percentage further to reduce the penalty in the grant for growth and development."

If the minister would like me to go through those one at a time, I am happy to do so.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have also read the 23-page document, the comprehensive municipal grant review and analysis by the Association of Yukon Communities. I have thanked them for the information. The department has actually reached out to the association. They have put two members forward to work with us on this matter. We have put a team together, so those folks are working through the analysis that we were provided.

I am going to let the team that we have put together to work through this project do their work, so I'm not going to negotiate the analysis or the comprehensive municipal grant on the floor of the Legislature today.

I have the analysis, the team is looking at it, and we will deal with it with the Association of Yukon Communities in the manner in which they have prescribed, which is putting forward a couple of members to work with us.

**Ms. McLeod:** I thank the minister for that and we look forward to hearing further on those items.

I would like to turn to land development, including land development in rural Yukon. How many lots have hit the counter for sale this year, and where are they located? If the minister could provide a number for each community, that would be appreciated.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** In the spring of 2023, we released 117 new lots in Whistle Bend and 17 new rural lots in the — this year, we are just finishing up on phase 7. The asphalt and concrete work has been done. We are waiting for the city to finish their inspections of said work. We are looking at getting 133 lots to tender this winter for the next construction season next year and up to 75 rural lots for release in 2024 as well — so, 133 in Whitehorse and 75 in rural Yukon.

**Ms. McLeod:** With all due respect to the minister, those are planned releases for next year. If I'm to understand the minister's numbers for this year, it was 117 for Whitehorse and 17 rural — if he could confirm that.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Those are the numbers that I have for what went out in the spring of this year — yes.

**Ms. McLeod:** Of the 17 rural lots, can the minister tell us what community that was in?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm looking through my notes here — three country residential lots in Carmacks, four infill lots in Dawson; so that's seven. We are looking at seven urban lots in Haines Junction — that takes us to 14 — two infill lots in Mayo, and five vacant infill lots released in the spring of 2023 in Watson Lake. That actually takes us to above 17.

**Ms. McLeod:** I didn't catch that last part, but those numbers are more than 17. I'm going to let that go.

Of the 117 lots released in Whitehorse in 2023 — this year — how many of those were in 6B of the Whistle Bend development? Do the residents have access to them?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** In the spring, we let lots from phases 6 and 8.

**Ms. McLeod:** Can the minister repeat that, please?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Absolutely. The lots sold in Whitehorse this year were from phases 6 and 8.

**Ms. McLeod:** Was there a separation in different phases of lots for phase 6?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** There were phases 6A and 6B. The City of Whitehorse collected all those lots and issued development permits for the whole of phase 6, so 6A and 6B were rolled into the city's development permits.

**Ms. McLeod:** I am wondering if the minister can tell us: Since the spring of 2021, how many lots have been released?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** In answer to the question, there were, in the time frame provided by the member opposite, 214 lots in Whistle Bend and four at the end of my street on Logan.

**Ms. McLeod:** I would like to have a little discussion about the subdivision development in Watson Lake. The work for clearing started before the tender for development was awarded — and when I say "development", I mean the underground work. My question is: Was this a separate contract, and what was the value of the contract?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The Frances Avenue urban residential project — a long time in the making. It is actually a partnership with the Town of Watson Lake, the Liard First Nation, and the Government of Yukon. It involves some lands that were set aside by the federal government for the Liard First Nation.

The Frances Avenue civil and lift station work has started and is set for completion in the fall of 2024. The yield will be

43 serviced residential lots and a new water lift station for the community.

Under the Frances Avenue agreement, YG will provide up to 18 of the 43 lots to the Liard First Nation as well as contracting opportunities, including the clearing and preparation of all lots. I do not have any information on the cost of the clearing work. The bulk of the work has gone through procurement; we are looking for that information, as well, for the actual civil works and lift station. I am going to get that information from my officials, but that is where the bulk of the procurement was. The clearing work was done by the Liard First Nation and I am looking for information on that as well.

**Ms. McLeod:** The clearing was a sole-source contract to the Liard First Nation, if I understand it — or maybe more correctly First Kaska. Perhaps the minister could confirm that, but I would like to know what the value of that contract was.

By these agreements that the Yukon government has with Liard First Nation, I'll presume that this was not put out for public tender, of course.

The in-ground work for the subdivision was — I think it was awarded for \$4.8 million. That's kind of why I'm curious to know what these numbers are. But it's substantially higher than what has been in the capital budgets. I'm wondering how the government is going to handle this quite big increased cost and whether or not that's going to be passed on to the purchaser.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The member opposite is, of course, correct that First Kaska was contracted for land clearing. We are looking for the numbers for that contract. Under the civil tender, there were two contracts issued: One was for pipes and the other one was for the lift station. We are hoping to get that project underway in the 2024 season. We are seeing costs escalate in residential developments. For all of the infrastructure to support residential developments, we are seeing costs rise. That is partly because this housing is an issue in every single jurisdiction in the country and indeed in many across North America. We are seeing prices rise because everybody is trying to build houses and there is a lot of competition for resources to build houses — be it pipes, lift stations, the whole bit — so we are seeing increased costs on those things.

We do develop lots on a cost-recovery basis. We are seeing increased costs here, but we are going to work with the Town of Watson Lake, the Liard First Nation, and our partners to deliver lots as inexpensively as we possibly can to communities, including Watson Lake.

**Ms. McLeod:** Subsequent to the \$4.8 million for the underground work on this subdivision, the minister referenced the lift station that clearly must be in tandem with the subdivision work. There was a \$600,000 contract awarded for landscaping of the lift station, which is all well and good, except we have not seen an award for the lift station. When might we see that tender awarded?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We are looking into the landscaping contract. That's something I wasn't familiar with. As far as the actual contract for the lift station itself, I am led to believe that it has been awarded and we hope to have the whole project completed by the fall of 2024.

**Ms. McLeod:** Deputy Chair, did the minister say that contract has been awarded?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am right now trying to confirm that information with my officials, so I will get back to the member opposite with a firm answer on whether or not it has been awarded yet.

**Ms. McLeod:** I would appreciate some kind of date on the award plus the tender amount.

The minister can maybe guess where I am going with this. If we add up the clearing costs — I don't know what that is at this point — the in-ground work was almost \$5 million; the landscaping for the lift station; the price of the lift station, which is some — who knows? — \$5 million to \$7 million — more than my allowance. Given that extreme high cost for the development of those lots and that it's the government's practice to recoup that money from the purchasers, I am wondering how in the world is anybody going to be able to afford one of those lots.

I do know that the Town of Watson Lake is contributing \$3 million to the lift station project. Of course, we are thankful for that; it does help to keep the price down, but I would still like the minister to comment on that.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Deputy Chair, the reality in the territory — indeed, the reality across the country — is that development costs for housing-related development are going through the roof. We have certainly seen increases in the territory. It varies depending on the contract, but the reality is that we are seeing increased costs for housing infrastructure. The government works to recover the costs of the land development through the lot sales. This has been a long-standing practice.

We realize that it is not always possible to do that in rural Yukon, because it is a much smaller scale development and costs can be higher, so we do everything we can to recover as much as we can from rural lot development. We have an option to go with either the market price or the development cost, depending on how that plays out. We are working very closely with our partners to keep lots as inexpensive as possible, which is why we have a procurement system to try to get the lowest and best price we can for the citizens of the territory when we put these lots on the ground.

I don't know what other options there are. The cost of developing these lots is the cost of developing these lots. We hear from the members opposite and from rural Yukon how important lot development is for their community growth and future, and we are working very, very hard to provide those lots in rural Yukon as cheaply as we possibly can. We are going to continue to do that.

The lot price will be the lot price once we know how much the whole development is. That's hypothetical right now. We will know more at the end of 2024 in the case of Watson Lake, and we will work with our partners, both the Liard First Nation and Watson Lake as a community, to keep those lots as inexpensive as possible. But in this time, we are seeing the cost of that infrastructure increase, and that's just the simple reality of contracting for houses here in the north these days.

**Ms. McLeod:** Well, interesting times is what I have to say about that; that doesn't provide too much comfort.

On the topic of lift stations, there was the government-built lift station in Haines Junction, and as I understand, there have been a lot of problems with it and it likely isn't working to this day. What discussions has the government had with the community to get this piece of infrastructure working?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have not heard from the community of Haines Junction on the lift station; neither has my deputy. We are looking into this as we speak. I have a meeting with Haines Junction in the coming weeks. I'm sure that if it's an issue, I'll hear it there, but I haven't been made known of this issue personally of late. This is really the first I'm hearing it — from the member opposite.

**Ms. McLeod:** Deputy Chair, just for the minister's reference when he is having that discussion, it's the lift station that was built in the municipal yard.

So, let's move on. Earlier this Sitting, I asked the minister about the work to meet the government's commitment in *Our Clean Future* to create hazard identification and risk assessments for communities by 2022. Can the minister tell us what work has been done to complete hazard identification and risk assessments for all Yukon communities, and why is this work so behind schedule?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** What we are talking about this afternoon is our nation-leading *Our Clean Future* plan. So, realizing that the territory didn't have a plan, we actually drafted one, and it is one of the best in the country. It has performance measures that we have to meet. As the member opposite has identified, we were to have a complete hazard identification and risk assessment for all Yukon communities by 2022 that included climate change risks and we were to work with First Nations and municipalities to complete emergency management plans for all Yukon communities by 2022, informed by community hazard identification and risk assessments.

The member opposite is absolutely correct: We did not make that deadline. There was a little matter that hit the territory that we generally call "the great lockdown" or "the pandemic". So, yes, we are behind in our plans for doing these things. I will say, though, that the department has been extraordinary in its work on this file and continues to advance it.

The Emergency Measures Organization is, as I've said, tremendous. It has visited priority communities this winter to begin their hazard identification and risk assessments and to update their emergency management plans. They're encouraging neighbouring First Nations and municipalities to follow a joint approach to their risk assessments and emergency management plans. This joint approach will increase and improve coordination and resource-sharing between First Nations and municipalities during incidents.

Priority communities have been selected based on past incidents, future risk, and their interest — that is the community's interest, either First Nation or municipality. Current priority First Nations and communities for the winter of 2023 — and this is depending on community uptake — are:

the City of Dawson and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation; the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation; the Village of Teslin and Teslin Tlingit Council; the Village of Carmacks and Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation; Watson Lake and Liard First Nation; Ross River Dena Council and the Village of Faro; and the Village of Mayo and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun.

Yukon government is also engaged with the City of Whitehorse on joint emergency preparedness, including collaborating on the latest joint task force north operation.

**Ms. McLeod:** The department also committed to developing a territorial disaster financial assistance policy that will support recovery from natural disasters that result in expensive property damage or disruption to the delivery of essential goods and services.

Can the minister provide an update on this work? Will the new policy cover investments in long-term mitigation projects that have been requested by our municipalities?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Deputy Chair, that work is underway and we hope to have a policy and program implemented in the spring of 2024. That's generally the target date that we're looking at.

**Deputy Chair:** Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Ms. McLeod:** I do have a considerable list of topics and questions for the minister, but I am going to turn it over to my colleagues from the NDP at this time. I do want to thank the officials for joining us here today. Thank you.

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I do thank my colleague for Watson Lake for sharing the floor today. Of course, I say hello to the officials who are here today.

My first question is: When we look in the capital budget of this supplementary budget, we see a cut of \$239,000 from Protective Services, we see a cut of \$5 million from the community Investing in Canada infrastructure program, and we see a cut of \$1 million in the Property Assessment Taxation for the Better Buildings program. My first question is: Was the minister asked to find areas where there could be reductions in this budget?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The succinct answer is no. It is the regular run of government. We have budget targets. We spend what we can spend, and if we can't spend the money that we have been allocated, we return it to the pool, which is par for the course. This is how our government has operated since day one.

**Ms. White:** When we talk about the Better Buildings program, there has been lots of debate here previously around better buildings and different things. I know that, at this point in time, we have had little uptake in it. As we can see, there is \$1 million reduced from the \$1.517-million budget.

Can the minister again share with us in which communities those successful applications have been? We know that some are in the City of Whitehorse and we know there is one in the community of Haines Junction, but can he remind us again how many successful applications there have been to that program so far?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We have had applications for the Better Buildings program submitted from 47 homeowners from Whitehorse, Dawson, Faro, and Haines Junction as of September 30, 2023. There are six clients actively participating in the Better Buildings program, with funding agreements signed with the Department of Community Services for a total of \$253,000. Three new clients joined the program between July 1 and September 30. Five of the active clients are located in Whitehorse and one is in Haines Junction. As I said, 47 homeowners have put in eligibility applications, so the uptake is going from six to 47. There is a lot of interest. With interest rates coming up — as the member opposite knows from the discussion we had in Question Period, interest rates are having a dampening effect. Unfortunately, we weren't able to capture the lower interest rates in the debate that we had earlier.

**Ms. White:** Maybe the minister can tell us, then — because he is right that there have been some changes. Can the minister tell us how much now a municipality is able to get to run this program? How much, for example, is the City of Whitehorse able to collect on one of those five applications that has been successful? How much is the municipality of Haines Junction able to collect to be able to run this program through their property tax system?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We will get back to the member opposite with that information.

**Ms. White:** I am under the understanding that the bigger municipalities — Watson Lake, Whitehorse, and Dawson City — are going to get \$500 a year to be able to administer this, and the smaller municipalities, I believe, will get \$250 a year. Can the minister just confirm as to whether or not those numbers are accurate?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I said to the member opposite four minutes ago, I will get back to them with the answer.

**Ms. White:** I was just thinking that, with the officials here and the Internet, maybe we could get a response today before 5:30 when we rise. I will remain optimistic.

The reason I point this out is that initially the program that the minister brought forward without discussion with the municipalities meant that the City of Whitehorse, as an example, would get \$500 over 15 years to run the program — a total of \$33.30 a year to administer the Better Buildings program, which was not a great deal for the City of Whitehorse or the Town of Watson Lake or the City of Dawson. Those three are now able to get \$500 a year — and similar for the smaller municipalities. At the time, it was much smaller amounts over the length of those loans.

I appreciate that the interest rate has changed, but it was the difference between the program going forward or not going forward. I stand quite confidently here saying that it was a good decision.

I do look forward to the minister getting back to us because, again, we are here for the next hour. I am sure, with the power of the Internet and the entire department and communication — and I know that there is some policy person deep within the throes of Community Services having a listen to me right now, so I wish them all the speed to get that answer back.

One of the other things, moving away from the capital budget, is that the minister has really dug in with his belief that the Association of Yukon Communities is responsible for consultation on things like the waste transfer facility closures at Johnsons Crossing, Braeburn, Silver City, and Keno. I just want to give the minister an opportunity to let me know and clear this up for me: Does he believe that the AYC is responsible for the consultations with those communities?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The staff at Community Services work exceptionally hard to get answers and I think that they have already provided answers quickly to members opposite this afternoon. I know that they will work on this and get the answers as quickly as possible.

The agreement that we signed with the municipalities is fairly sophisticated. I think that it is a fair deal and certainly generous for the municipalities. When the member opposite was talking about the debate and everything else, we were in a climate emergency and still are. In a climate emergency, you take action and do things and then work out the details later. It's the most priority thing — and then you do it. That's the approach that I take when we're in an emergency. When an emergency is declared, you take action and you worry about the execution of such things in due time. That's where I come from.

As the member opposite was talking about the negotiations that we had, we did ask that we negotiate the terms for the municipality as we get the program going, in tandem. That didn't happen. We paused the whole project until we got the deal in place. We lost valuable time in a climate emergency and then actually lost the interest rates as well. It's something that I regret today and will continue to regret, because I believe that it was important that we take action and try to improve people's houses, make sure that they have the work done on their houses that would save them money in a time of inflation — and there are all sorts of things that stem from that. But that's looking back and I don't want to do that.

I want to continue to go forward. We will get the information for the member opposite and answer her questions to make sure that the municipalities are whole.

Now we are going to go to AYC and the report that was drafted in 2016 by the Association of Yukon Communities, which outlined the approach that they asked government to take when it came to improving our waste management in the territory.

If you will just give me a second, because I'm just going to use the Internet this afternoon just for a minute and get to the AYC report drafted in 2016. It had a few things that it wanted

to do, actually. It outlined a number of things that had to happen. The vision was to increase user responsibility for waste management costs, community landfills with sufficient resources and complementary standards, an integrated approach with communities and YG implementing changes in unison, and a phased approach with doable steps. That's exactly what my good colleague the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes undertook and then built on with the Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste, which, again, also involved the AYC.

The whole project had its genesis with the Association of Yukon Communities, a very forward-looking organization trying to deal with the issues of waste management in the territory and improve it both for residents, for the territorial government, and for municipalities, and so we went down that road. It had some fairly specific questions and concerns.

The issue with the current system in 2016 was that we were spending tax dollars instead of having users pay for the garbage that they were producing. The plan that we are executing on addresses that. They had inconsistent staffing and tipping fees. The plan that we are moving ahead with deals with that. There was a problem with peripheral dumping where some rural landfills did not attempt to enforce tipping fees, which often led to peripheral dumping at YG-operated transfer sites where there are no fees, roadside pullouts, and even illegal dumping, for example — and then they give examples. So, we are addressing that. It says that the strategy is for communities and YG to implement staffing based on capacity and/or service requirements and tipping fees/user fees in unison to discourage peripheral dumping. We are doing that.

Then there were the liability costs: "All communities do not have the resources to shoulder the costs of closing a landfill at the end of its life, in keeping with PSAB requirements around liabilities for waste management. Further, it is..." — and then it goes on to say: "... not clear how communities and YG share responsibility for the liability of landfills. Some landfills pre-date the existence of municipal councils, and can include 'legacy waste' that is not fully known. This is a potentially huge cost to Yukon taxpayers, and the ability to divert waste and manage incoming waste is essential for lengthening the life landfills and preparing for closure." Again, we are addressing that with the plan that we are implementing right now.

So, this was a vision for a sustainable model for Yukon communities given to the government in 2016. It was provided to us in 2017 when we took office — in late 2016, early 2017. My good colleague did some amazing work, a lot of consultation, and carried it forward with his Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste, and I'm carrying the ball now. Yes, I believe in this. I believe in it for all the reasons that AYC laid out in 2016. I believe in it for the climate; I believe in it for the municipalities; I believe in it for user pay for the garbage that we're producing so we can have a trigger incentive to cut the amount of garbage that we're producing in the territory. I think this does all of those things. The Association of Yukon Communities speaks for the municipalities and some unincorporated communities, including Marsh Lake, Tagish, and several others.

**Ms. White:** Just following along on those comments, with the YESAB application that was done for the closure of the Silver City transfer facility, the contractors said that the AYC had done — when they were asked for further information, they said that AYC had done consultation on the closure. Maybe the minister can fill me in on what consultation he believes that AYC did around the closure of the Silver City transfer facility.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Better Buildings — the agreements outline a maintenance fee, which is annual. It's \$200 for smaller municipalities and \$500 for bigger municipalities. The annual fee remains until the local improvement charge is paid off. The municipalities agreed that this fee was not meant to generate revenue. Rather, it's a cost-recovery mechanism to collect the LC on taxes and rebate to the Yukon government. So, that is \$500 for bigger municipalities and \$200 for smaller municipalities. I want to thank the folks within the department who actually looked up and verified that information for me this afternoon.

As far as the consultations go, I know that AYC was involved in the initial solid-waste management. I know that AYC was involved with the Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste. I know that my good colleague the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes did enormous amounts of consultation when he was minister on this very subject. I know that, in terms of our consultation, we have had — specifically relating to the communities in question — four in-person meetings in Keno, Silver City, Braeburn, and Silver City. We have had three online meetings in Silver City, Braeburn, and Silver City. Again, we have had a final workshop in Silver City scheduled; it has been postponed at the request of residents. We will see when that happens; it should be later in November.

Yukon First Nations are not part of the required consultations, but we are engaging the Kluane First Nation. There is a public meeting on October 25 in Burwash. The Champagne and Aishihik First Nations — we are working with them to schedule a date. We are working with the Teslin Tlingit Council to schedule a date. We have had outreach on the website since mid-August.

Yukoners have been able to find information regarding household waste-disposal options on the government's public engagement site. Advertisements have been placed in the *Whitehorse Star* and in the *Yukon News*. Posters notifying residents of the meetings and the website were placed at the transfer stations in Silver City, Braeburn, and Johnsons Crossing. Johnsons Crossing Lodge and Braeburn Lodge — we have had e-mails to receive feedback from the engagement process, which is [solidwasteconsultation@yukon.ca](mailto:solidwasteconsultation@yukon.ca). We have communicated with residents and affected businesses by e-mail of the meetings.

I have met personally with residents of Silver City and I know that my colleagues have. As I said, the meetings have happened.

There has been plenty of consultation. The Association of Yukon Communities has been involved in this, as I have said in the House. They do represent some unincorporated communities, and I know that there is some tension with

unincorporated communities, with AYC asserting that they do not represent their interests.

**Ms. White:** I'm going to stay on the issue of transfer facilities — but I am going to go back to the Better Buildings program — but I figure we're here. Can the minister let me know which unincorporated communities the AYC represents?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The Association of Yukon Communities, of course, represents Tagish, Carcross, Mount Lorne, Marsh Lake, and Ibex local advisory councils. The Yukon government represents unincorporated Yukoners beyond that, so we have a role to play as well — my officials do. We have acted on that obligation, and I certainly have travelled the Yukon, travelled the north highway, and my colleague has as well. We have talked about this issue several times. We are continuing to work with the smaller communities that do not have a local advisory council — though, of course, communities that wish to have better representation can take that route as well. At the moment, those are the local advisory councils that AYC represents.

**Ms. White:** It's actually pretty easy to go on the Association of Yukon Communities' website to look at members. It's interesting because they list as associate members Mount Lorne, Marsh Lake, south Klondike, Tagish, and Ibex Valley. You will see that they don't list Destruction Bay, Silver City, Braeburn, Johnsons Crossing, or Keno. I was wondering how the minister thought that the AYC would consult with the communities that will be affected by the transfer station closures.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I will say that AYC has been working on the improvements to the regionalization of our landfills from the very outset. They do represent unincorporated communities through the local advisory councils. Outside of that, it's the Yukon government that represents residents in unincorporated communities that are not captured by the local advisory councils. As I have said — and my colleagues have said — we have consulted many times with all of the people affected by the closure of transfer stations that was first proposed by the AYC back in 2016, on which we have diligently worked to bring into being.

**Ms. White:** I am just seeking clarification. The minister is saying that it was not AYC that was responsible for consulting with citizens and residents in the Keno area, the Johnsons Crossing area, the Braeburn area, or the Silver City area.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We have improved the landfills in Tagish, Mount Lorne, Marsh Lake, Ibex, and Carcross. They all have better landfills today because of the work of AYC in representing unincorporated communities. Part of the plan was to make sure that the peripheral dumping was closed. This affects the smaller communities, which is under the purview of the Yukon government — and which we have done. We have talked to residents in all of those areas — both my good colleague the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes and I.

**Ms. White:** Just again for clarification, previously in the Assembly, the minister has insinuated that the Association of Yukon Communities was consulting again with the communities that I listed — so, just for clarification, does the

minister believe that AYC was responsible for doing consultations with residents of Johnsons Crossing, Keno, Silver City, and Braeburn?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I understand it, the AYC has put out a report, as I said, in 2016. The Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste put out a report in 2018. In both cases, they referenced peripheral sites, including the ones that we are talking about this afternoon. I have no doubt that they took information from those communities in the drafting of those reports. They certainly involved them.

As far as those four communities, we provide the services and we have continued to speak with them, but AYC, as an organization putting forward this report and the other one — working in tandem with that — would have funnelled any information they had from those communities into the plan itself. Currently, we have heard the Association of Yukon Communities talking about issues in Ross River, which it doesn't represent, and making those public claims. I have no doubt that they are collecting information and feeding it into the holistic approach that they have toward regionalization of our landfills.

**Ms. White:** On the YESAB site, in case anyone wants to follow along, in 2023-0060-0024, when there was a request for additional information, YESAB says: "What level of public engagement has already been conducted to prepare users for the closure of the site and if possible, please share the Community Engagement Plan ... for the Braeburn SWMF." And it says: "Response: Ongoing consultation has occurred with the community regarding closure activities for the Braeburn SWMF and will continue through as changes to the facility occur. Community Operations works closely with the Association of Yukon Communities as well as Community Affairs to ensure propose consultation and support for each community." It goes on and asks a couple more questions for clarification. I think the really interesting part is actually the response of the Association of Yukon Communities. In their letter dated July 26, 2023, they say — and I'm quoting from YESAB: "The Association of Yukon Communities (AYC) would like to provide clarification to information provided in this application that mischaracterizes our involvement and thus leaves an incorrect impression as to our role.

"In response to Information Request #1: IR Response (2023-0060-0024) the proponent makes claims about the AYC that we believe are improper. Specifically, with respect to the Solid Waste Management Facilities in Stewart Crossing, Pelly Crossing, Keno, and Braeburn the Mayo Designated Office asked the proponent about engagement with the communities and users impacted by the proposed closures or changes to operations at these facilities. In response the proponent makes three separate statements indicating that they worked with the AYC to ensure proper consultation with each of these impacted communities. These are incorrect and misleading statements.

"Our Association does not represent unincorporated communities in the Yukon. We do not have the jurisdiction or the authority to speak on behalf of, or to be consulted on the behalf of the communities impacted by these Yukon Government decisions. For greater clarity, we do not represent



or speak on behalf of Stewart Crossing, Pelly Crossing, Keno, or Braeburn. We cannot be considered the organization to consult with for Yukon Government decisions that impact these communities.”

I was hoping that maybe the minister can clarify, then. If the contractors hired by the Yukon government are saying that AYC is responsible for those consultations — because the minister says in 2016 that this is what the AYC said — hopefully, he can help me to understand what their July 26, 2023 letter means, then.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The impetus for the closure of peripheral dumping sites, like the ones we are discussing, is the AYC and has been since 2016. They are the ones that came to this government in late 2016-17 after not seeing any progress previous to that. That was the impetus.

We are consulting with all of these places, as we have said we would do, and we are doing that under the confidence and supply agreement. I have outlined this afternoon all the consultations that we are doing. We want to make sure that waste management in the territory is sustainable from a cost and environmental perspective. We are pleased with the progress so far — pleased that so many municipalities have signed on to the waste plan as envisioned — and we are going to support community-focused solutions for household waste management.

We are all accountable for the garbage that we produce. Given the increased pressure to mitigate environmental risk, improve monitoring, and reduce waste management costs over the long term, it's essential that the number of waste management facilities are reduced and better managed so that we can continue investment in the remaining facilities.

The member opposite has mentioned the YESAB application that really wasn't tied to the waste transfer stations that we were talking about. It had to do with the application for landfill licence renewal — that's all landfills in the territory — which have to be renewed every 10 years. It just so happened that this renewal came up this year. It has to be done so we keep landfills open across the territory. That's what that YESAB screening is for.

The application, of course, had to include all potential activities contemplated over the 10-year period, which would be 2023 — this year — until 2033, including closures and landfilling of household waste. It was not a YESAB application for closures specifically.

**Ms. White:** I am sure the minister realizes that within a YESAB application, it includes a lot more. The scope often gets quite a bit bigger.

In the YESAB application, 2023-0060 — when it talks about the solid-waste management facilities at Braeburn, Keno, Pelly Crossing, and Stewart Crossing — particularly in relevance to the closure of the transfer station at Braeburn — I think it's important to note that, in point 5, it says: “Comments provided by the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council identified issues with the lack of consultation regarding the closure of the Braeburn site. Their comments states 'TKC was not provided with the opportunity to join in the development of a closure plan ... Our government does not support the closure of the Braeburn

Transfer Station without appropriate consultation. The YESAB process is not to be confused with government-to-government consultation.”

Can the minister let me know what government-to-government consultation happened with the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council around the closure of the Braeburn transfer facility?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I said in an earlier answer, first of all, none of these places have closed yet, with the exception of Keno, which has Hecla collecting residents' garbage and that is going down the road now. That's great. We found a solution there.

The consultation with the First Nations is continuing. I outlined in an earlier answer how some of those meetings have been scheduled and some are in the process of being scheduled. Currently, none of the sites are closed, though I have recently seen pictures of transmissions, engine blocks, old household waste and propane cans, and everything else being dumped illegally all over the Braeburn site. I have tens of thousands of dollars in cleaning up in Pelly because somebody dumped waste oil up in that site just recently — in the last three or four weeks — which is exactly the reason why we're contemplating closing this.

I was just alerted to a story in the *Yukon News*. In May 2019, they applaud the upcoming changes to waste management. “Municipalities are welcoming announced changes in how landfills and waste transfer stations will operate throughout the territory.” The AYC said in 2019: “‘It's something all the municipalities (have been) working towards,’ Association of Yukon Communities (AYC) president Tara Wheeler said in an interview May 13.”

Then — “Under the changes, tipping fees would be in place at all landfills and waste transfer stations, with fines for illegal dumping to rise to a maximum of \$10,000 from the current \$100.”

It's all there. If anybody wants to look it up, it's online. It is a good story and this is a good story for Yukoners and municipalities.

**Ms. White:** I don't know that I would say that this is a good news story at all.

Before I go — and I don't actually have an opportunity to say this to the public servants who were out at the Silver City waste transfer facility meeting that I attended in person with my colleague the Member for Kluane, who was also there, but there was a group of individuals who went out to represent the Department of Community Services and they did a great job in a really hard situation.

I want to commend them, because the truth of the matter is that those individuals who travelled out for that meeting in Silver City actually went out just after another news article had been published in which the minister was quoted as saying that they were going to be closed. A lot of the feelings around that meeting in Silver City were just like: Well, it's not consultation if you told us what the outcome is. It is not consultation.

So, I was curious if the minister has been paying attention to the comments and the feelings coming out of that area and if he is aware of or read through the 44 comments on the YESAB

page or, for example, if he read the letter that was sent to the Premier on the issue of the Silver City closure.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Yes, I have. This changing landscape — we bring more control to a relatively uncontrolled service and it is hard for residents for sure. We implement these changes to improve the lot of the whole territory, but in doing so, there are people who are certainly affected. I have heard from those people; I have met with them; I have talked to them on the phone; I have read their letters and read their comments.

I understand, but it is financially impossible to put the type of controls for a community, say, of 10 people or less that are needed to secure a site so that travellers from the highway or nearby communities don't decide to dump their propane tanks, their engine blocks, their construction waste, and their waste oils and other deleterious substances out of sight of prying eyes in an area that they consider to be a dump. We heard this from AYC in 2016 and 2018 and in 2019 when Tara Wheeler talked to the *Yukon News*. They are looking for these changes because these changes make sense for municipalities. So far, the municipalities are signing on to the plan and accepting the controls that we are putting in place in our landfills so that we will have landfills in rural Yukon, in Watson Lake, in Teslin, in Whitehorse, in Carmacks, in Dawson, in Faro, in Mayo, and between Burwash and Destruction Bay. We'll all have controlled landfills that citizens, when they go to pick up their groceries or go to get gas, can actually drop off and pay a small fee — about 20 percent of the cost of handling that garbage — and have it disposed of. That will allow us to do all the things that the AYC asked us to do back then — to have controls to make sure that our landfills are managed and have as long a life as humanly possible — and we can separate out the compost to help reduce greenhouse gas production. All of those things are part of the plan, and yes, it is going to require an adjustment for some citizens and that is very difficult, which is why the good folks at Community Services are working so hard.

I appreciate the member opposite — because that was a very tough meeting for those civil servants to go into. There is a lot of emotion there. They were there for several hours dealing with that and didn't actually get to the substantive meat of their presentation — the proposals that they had for folks out that way.

So, we are now doing that and getting through that, and we are working with them on solutions that may help residents — not necessarily businesses but residents in that area — who are looking for ways to handle the garbage that they produce in these sorts of remote communities.

**Ms. White:** I am not going to find the article that was circulating the night of that meeting, but let's say that the minister didn't make it any easier for his officials at that meeting, based on the article that was released that day. I will try to find it, because maybe it's good to remind the minister.

One of the challenges that the folks around the Silver City area are finding is that the minister's understanding of the situation is very different from their understanding. I tabled this letter in the House. It is from the community of Silver City and it's regarding the proposed closure of the Silver City transfer station. I am going to read a pretty solid excerpt from this and

then just confirm with the minister as to whether or not this was his understanding of the situation. Maybe we will go over the number of people who signed the letter, and then I would like to get into some of the YESAB comments.

The letter reads as follows: “We, the residents of Silver City and the surrounding area, are writing to you today in the hope that you may find time to personally consider our situation here and move towards a reconsideration of your government's ill advised determination to shut down our deeply needed transfer station, and thereby avoid doing grievous damage to our community.

“It's painful to recount, but the Minister of Community Services has stubbornly and consistently refused to engage with us on this issue. At the one meeting he attended, in Destruction Bay, he opened the meeting by announcing that he was NOT there to discuss that issue, so vital to us all, but was there merely as part of ‘a previous planned tour of the communities’. It was a very well attended gathering and everyone who was there can testify to the fact that he responded to our concerns in an arrogant and condescending manner with a demeanor wholly inappropriate for a public servant. Sad to say, he was dismissive and disrespectful towards the assembled community members.

“Your desk, as the saying goes, is ‘where the buck stops’, and bears the ultimate responsibility for the impact of government decisions on the people of the Yukon. Thus, it is directly to you that we now appeal.

“We have heard a lot of nebulous justifications wrapped around phrases such as ‘global warming concerns’ and ‘modernization’, issues which carry no rational, direct bearing on our predicament here. For a decision that will do no less than devastate our community, we deserve to be provided with some concrete and practical reasoning. What we have not heard is even one good, intelligible reason for the govt. to harm us in this way. If you are aware of such a reason, please convey it to us.

“We are a growing community, with new residents coming in and new businesses taking shape. Year by year, tourism is constantly on the increase. Please tell us ... How can our government aggressively promote tourism on the one hand, while, on the other hand, dismantling the infrastructure which rural residents desperately need in order to cope with expanding tourism??

“It should be self evident that the Govt. of Yukon should not be in the business of pulling the rug out from under such places and thus strangling fledgeling communities in their infancy. Astonishingly, this policy is redolent of a callous disdain towards rural residents. Is our govt. simply unaware of what is like outside of the city limits of Whitehorse? To us, it comes as outright hostility towards our way of life.

“Government handouts we've received begin by saying that the closing of rural transfer stations will ‘save taxpayers money and reduce emissions’. Both assertions are demonstrably untrue. It is inarguable that requiring our residents to drive hundreds of km. several times a week will both greatly increase overall emissions and incur thousands of dollars in additional expenses for taxpayers here.

“At this time we will not go into listing all the reasons why this policy is a disastrously counterproductive mistake. Suffice it to say, the reasons are there, and they are good, sensible reasons. They have been communicated over and over, to government representatives and in the media. Constantly having to reiterate our case is tiresome; we would rather be focussing our attentions elsewhere. The thing is; We love this community and will not give up defending its viability.

“Of course, government is not expected to be infallible. Mistakes are made. However, one hallmark of good government is that when mistakes are made they can be recognized, retracted and reworked, in order to better serve the public interest.”

So, Deputy Chair, this letter was directed to the Premier, and the Member for Kluane and I were cc'd on it. It was directed to the Premier. The interesting thing, I think, for the minister's point, is the number of signatures. This letter has 119 signatures from surrounding residents on it, which is quite a few more residents than the government insists use that transfer facility. I guess I am just looking for the minister's thoughts on this letter and the 119 people who signed it.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** There is an awful lot to unpack there. I applaud the member opposite for reading the letter that I received into the record. We look forward to the next community meeting and any recommendations that come from the workshop that we're having with experts up in the Silver City area.

We know and, as I said, I know very well how the households in the area do not want the proposed change. My officials are going to go up as part of a workshop and listen to residents and hopefully come out with some constructive solutions like we did in Keno.

As far as the hundred-odd signatures, I will have more to say about that at a future time.

But seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

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

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

### Chair's report

**MLA Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

### The following document was filed October 23, 2023:

35-1-157

Supporting the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and calling for leadership on territorial housing policy, letter re (dated October 20, 2023) from Allison Camenzuli, Chair, Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, and Ben Pereira, Chair, Housing, Lodging and Lot Development Committee, Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Premier (Dixon)