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HANSARD

Thursday, November 2, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, November 2, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Under Introduction of Visitors, please join me in welcoming Annette King, the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate, to the gallery.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further visitors for introduction?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleagues in the House to welcome three guests who are here with us today for our Yukoner Appreciation Week tribute. Also, all will be hosting a business after hours tonight at Decora in their location in Hillcrest.

With that, I would like to recognize well-known business leader Anne Lewis, with her key team member Bonnie Dixon and key team member Olivia Thompson. Please welcome them to the House today.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I will ask my colleagues to help welcome our visitors today here for our tribute to the MADD Red Ribbon Campaign. We have Sergeant Greg Holmberg of M Division, district advisor NCO. We have Natasha Dunmall, the NCO of M Division traffic services, and we have Constable Devon Slade.

From the MADD Whitehorse chapter, we have Jacquelyn Van Marck, the president. We have Carlos Sanchez-Aguirre. We have Daniela Ruf. We have Abigail Martinson, Layla Loughry, and Cory McEachran.

Thank you all for being here.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukoner Appreciation Week

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Yukoner Appreciation Week.

Yukoner Appreciation Week is an annual event hosted by the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce that features local businesses and organizations offering customers and clients discounts, prizes, and fun activities.

This year's event will be taking place from November 2 to 4, and this is an excellent time for locals to celebrate the

Yukon's businesses while benefiting from great deals and possibly winning prizes.

The event this year in Whitehorse includes a business showcase at the Old Fire Hall featuring all sorts of Yukon businesses and a sip 'n shop event for a relaxing shopping experience. These opening events are followed by a Saturday evening local-eats event featuring some of downtown Whitehorse's finest dining.

This year's celebration also includes a new digital passport contest and three days of rotating deals and shopping incentives from participating Yukon businesses.

Yukoner Appreciation Week is often seen as a beginning of the holiday season, and it provides a great opportunity to get your gift shopping done while reconnecting with the community.

Every November, there are new businesses to discover and familiar shops with unexplored additions. It is truly an excellent time to check up on all of your favourite establishments.

I invite all Yukoners to take advantage of this occasion and to show their support for these participating businesses and to make efforts to shop local in your community. This year's Yukoner Appreciation Week events aim higher than ever to highlight our territory's business community.

It is always important to show support for our local businesses wherever you call home in the Yukon. When we support these establishments, those funds circulate through our local economy and have a far greater impact on our community vitality than dollars spent elsewhere. We have so many fantastic business owners here in the Yukon.

I am happy to see many of them participating in Yukoner Appreciation Week. Yukoners prioritize shopping local and this event is all about those businesses giving back to the community while promoting their services. So, whether you are in Whitehorse, Haines Junction, Dawson City, Watson Lake, or any other community, please get out and shop local this week.

In closing, I want to thank the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce. Thank you for the breakfast this morning — the event was well-attended and I appreciated the chance to be there with them — and, once again, for coordinating these festivities and getting all of these businesses together and for all their contributions to our communities.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Yukoner Appreciation Week. There is so much to say about all the businesses participating this year that I wish I had time to expound on them all, because they are all worthy. Kudos to the businesses that are taking part in this event to not only showcase their business but to give old customers — and entice new customers to become aware of all that our community has to offer, not to mention the possible discounts and deals.

A few weeks ago, during my Small Business Week tribute, I mentioned this week coming up in November, and here we are. November 2 to 4 — you have an opportunity to explore, sip 'n shop, dine out, and don't forget the passport contest. This

year, the contest has gone digital — two prizes. The first prize is one Air North ticket to BC or Alberta and the other is \$500 worth of gift cards from local businesses, so get out there and get entered into that draw. This morning from 7:00 to 11:00, there was a kickoff breakfast catered by Kit's Kitchen at MacBride Museum. I had the pleasure of picking up a to-go sandwich before hitting the office. It was delicious — thank you.

Having just done a tribute to the Canucks yesterday in this Chamber, I was able to buy their newly released book while at the museum, so my shopping has started. Tomorrow, Friday, November 3, there is a business showcase and the sip 'n shop event, culminating on Saturday, November 4 with the local-eats event. Get out and touch base with the participating businesses, buy local, and say thank you for opening their doors and supporting our community.

We appreciate all the sponsorship, donations, and sharing that businesses give when asked to support various charities and events. Thank you to all the sponsors, partners, and their staff for making this a special time each year, and a special thanks to the chamber for organizing and to the volunteers who give so much of their time. I, for one, hope to visit with many as I get out and about during the next few days.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Yukoner Appreciation Week and the local businesses that make our territory so vibrant. Local businesses support the Yukon. These industrious folks support events, sports teams, fundraisers, and performances. They sponsor community activities all year-round and they never stop showing up for us when we need them. They support Yukoners, and Yukoners support them.

I remember the days when flying south was a shock to your wallet and when everything was cheaper away, but that hasn't been the case for years now, as committed local business owners have worked hard to bring those costs down. Many places will price-match southern vendors and it has made the Yukon a much more affordable place to live.

The Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce has gone the extra mile to make this year's Yukoner Appreciation Week extra special, from today's breakfast at the MacBride Museum to the popular passport program that is now digital and easier than ever to access. From A to Y, from handmade jewellery to kimchi, sparkled mittens to potted plants, books to bicycles, this year's event promises to be the best local event ever. I went through the list for this year and there are a whopping 88 participating businesses registered on the Yukoner Appreciation Week app. There are draw prizes, discounts, free gifts with purchases, buy-one-get-one deals, entire stores on sale, free admissions, and even games with prizes, and you won't find better deals to finish or, in my case, maybe start your Christmas shopping.

These next days are an incredible opportunity to get out there and explore all of our local businesses. It is important to remember that local businesses enhance our community all year-round. They connect and support us socially and enhance

wealth and employment by circulating dollars many times between businesses and individuals. Local businesses create more impact by recirculating money into the Yukon economy. So, every chance you get, shop local before looking south, not just this week but all year long.

We are excited to get out there and enjoy the specials this week, and we encourage all Yukoners to do the same.

Applause

In recognition of the MADD Project Red Ribbon campaign

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize the launch of the Mothers Against Drunk Driving, also known as MADD, annual awareness campaign Project Red Ribbon, which occurs tomorrow.

MADD Whitehorse is a dedicated group whose mission is to raise awareness, to help shift our social mindset, and ultimately, to end impaired driving. The impacts of impaired driving are devastating and ripple far beyond those who are directly involved in a collision. Entire families, including my own, and entire communities are affected when we lose someone in this senseless and completely preventable manner.

I thank the Whitehorse chapter of MADD for their continued work on this extremely important issue. We are very grateful to have their active presence here in the Yukon.

As it does each year, Project Red Ribbon launches just before the always fast-approaching holiday season, and MADD Canada's Project Red Ribbon continues to be a vital campaign to raise driver and passenger awareness during this very busy time of year. While the holiday season is a time to celebrate, we must remember the impacts of the decisions that we make when we get behind the wheel and remind ourselves that it is never worth it to drive while impaired. When you drink, do not drive.

The red ribbon that we wear and tie on vehicles, keychains, briefcases, bags, or backpacks is a wonderful symbol to remind us of the commitment that we must make to drive sober. It is a commitment to each other. It is also a powerful tribute to the thousands of victims killed or injured each year in drug- and alcohol-related crashes. We must continue to stand together to remember and honour the victims and the survivors of impaired driving. We are all responsible for doing our part in keeping Yukon roads safe, and MADD's Red Ribbon campaign reminds us all that the deaths and the injuries that are a result of impairment-related crashes are not only needless but are completely preventable.

Every year, I wear my red ribbon with pride to demonstrate my commitment to safe and sober driving. I encourage everyone to wear this symbolic ribbon to make a commitment to safe and sober driving either by being a designated driver, planning ahead for a ride, or calling 911 to report impaired drivers.

It saddens me to say that the Yukon has still the third highest rate of impaired driving across Canada, making it a serious public safety concern for us all. Driving across the territory, I am always saddened to see the tributes and the roadside memorials throughout our communities. These are

tough reminders for us all and they continue to give a voice to the many who have been traumatized by impaired driving.

I would like to thank everyone who has supported and continues to support MADD Whitehorse not only for increasing public awareness through the Project Red Ribbon campaign but also for giving families, friends, victims, and survivors affected by this awful crime a public voice. I wish MADD Yukon and the Whitehorse chapter all the best and much success in this year's campaign.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the Whitehorse chapter of MADD Canada as they launch their 2023 Project Red Ribbon campaign. Every year across Canada, drivers take the pledge to remain sober behind the wheel. MADD, together with the RCMP and volunteers, distribute red ribbons for drivers to display on their vehicles as a symbol and a reminder of their duty to drive safely and responsibly, free of impairment.

We have had a long and beautiful fall season, but as winter approaches, we do need to remember that road hazards increase with the season. It is important that we do everything we can to keep our roads and highways safe for all. Holiday festivities are about to begin, and I would like to remind Yukoners to make responsible decisions for their safety and that of others. Take a cab, take turns being the designated driver, and be there for your kids in case they need a ride. Make sure that they know you are only a phone call away and to never get in a vehicle with someone who has been drinking.

Again, thank you to our Whitehorse chapter of MADD Canada, to all the volunteers and organizations taking part in this year's campaign, and to the RCMP, which helps to keep our roads safe year-round. Most importantly, thank you to all of those who take the pledge to drive sober and responsibly.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the NDP to pay tribute to Mothers Against Drunk Driving and their Red Ribbon campaign. The MADD campaign's work contributes greatly to bringing increased awareness and education for safe and sober driving. MADD also encourages all people to look out for one another and to ensure that there are plans for a safe and sober ride home.

Each year, we are able to witness the many volunteers, service providers, first responders, and First Nation leaders in numerous locations throughout Whitehorse interacting with drivers to bring more awareness to impaired driving on our roadways while also ensuring that folks are not under the influence of any substances when driving. Impaired driving impacts many across our territory. It has taken the lives of Yukoners far too soon, causing insurmountable grief for so many families and communities left behind.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving and their Red Ribbon campaign also remind us, as drivers, of the privilege we have to own a valid driver's licence and to think about the many opportunities and responsibilities we have to ensure that we are responsible drivers not only for ourselves and our families but

also for the broader community. It is through the work of MADD's many volunteers that we continue to learn about the issues of impaired driving in our territory and the ongoing work that needs to be done to prevent impaired driving.

We would like to thank the many people who volunteer with Yukon's Mothers Against Drunk Driving who have led the fight to keep our roads safe, support the victims of impaired driving, and work so hard toward no more deaths or injuries resulting from impaired driving for the time and dedication that they bring.

Thank you for all your work to keep Yukoners safe.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under Tabling Returns and Documents, the Chair has for tabling, pursuant to section 24 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, the annual report of the Child and Youth Advocate.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I have a letter dated November 2 from Opportunities Yukon.

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. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House congratulates long-time Cross Country Yukon coach Alain Masson on his upcoming induction to the Canadian Ski Hall of Fame.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to expedite appointments to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board in order to avoid loss of quorum for the board.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to condemn all forms of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to respond to the request for an increase in program funding from the board of directors of Opportunities Yukon.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Whitehorse Emergency Shelter**

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide an update on the Government of Yukon's efforts to work with community partners to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for everyone in downtown Whitehorse. Since Connective and the Council of Yukon First Nations took over operation of 405 Alexander, they have served over 100,000 meals, hosted nearly 16,000 stays, distributed 11,500 harm-reduction items, and, most importantly, averted 40 overdoses. Together, the Minister of Health and Social Services and I have been working with Connective, Council of Yukon First Nations, and other partners to implement recommendations, improve outcomes for 405 Alexander clients, and work with the community to chart the way forward to enhance health, safety, and security in Whitehorse's downtown core.

Our government committed to increasing an oversight and outreach presence in downtown Whitehorse to ensure that residents and businesses feel safe and supported. Starting yesterday, November 4, Sirius Security began patrolling the area from Black Street to Strickland Street between 3rd Avenue and 5th Avenue. Patrols will operate Sunday to Thursday from 6:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. and Friday and Saturday from 7:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. During these patrol tours, Sirius staff will observe and report on incidents and act as a visible deterrent against loitering, vandalism, and drug use.

Patrol guards will be encouraged to interact with individuals during their tours in a friendly manner but not in an enforcement capacity. In addressing any situations involving individuals, patrol guards will respond with non-violent interventions informed by the company's social safety mandate and specialized non-violent conflict resolution training. Where these interventions are not successful in defusing situations, the RCMP may be called for support where warranted.

We informed businesses in the area yesterday of this new security opportunity and I am pleased that the opposition provided our government the opportunity to speak to all Yukoners about this today in the Legislative Assembly. This will be an initial two-month pilot project with costs covered by the Government of Yukon.

This is in addition to our partnership with Council of Yukon First Nations, which is launching a mobile downtown outreach initiative. Staffed by Yukon First Nation outreach workers and operated by Council of Yukon First Nations, the mobile downtown outreach initiative will operate similar to Winnipeg's Bear Clan Patrol, meeting individuals where and when they need them. I am proud that our government was able to contribute approximately \$300,000 to fund this project through to March 31, 2024.

We are currently exploring the possibility of using the old cafeteria in the Yukon Legislative Assembly building as one of hopefully many opportunities in our community to have a warm space to access food and services. Building tenants, including both opposition parties, will be consulted on this option and we look forward to your support. Our government feels that it is important to lead by example and create opportunities within

our community to provide safe, accessible locations where people can access services with dignity.

I want to close by reminding all Yukoners that 405 Alexander provides essential life-saving services for members of our community. I am heartened to see the collaboration that is taking place between CYFN, the RCMP, Connective, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and the Government of Yukon. I want to thank all parties involved for their efforts in making our community one that is safe, supportive, and welcoming to all.

I look forward to hearing the constructive ideas and suggestions from Yukoners and from members of the opposition in response to this ministerial statement.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by emphasizing that the current situation at the shelter at 405 Alexander needs major changes, and the operating model needs to change.

Steps taken in the last few weeks are a start, but much more action is needed. Serious problems near the shelter began in 2019, when government made a political decision to take over operation and made big changes to the policies and operating model. Area residents and businesses have been experiencing negative impacts for years as a result.

Reports done for government show that the shelter is actually causing harm to many of the vulnerable clients it is supposed to be helping. Two reports released by government, by House of Wolf & Associates and Vink Consulting, show that the operation of the shelter is failing vulnerable people, as well as people and businesses near it.

Here are a few notable excerpts: Vink report: "... 38% of guests interviewed reported that their substance use has increased as a result of accessing the Shelter." "One quarter (25%) of guests interviewed believe the Shelter has had a negative impact on their health and safety crises."

The House of Wolf & Associates report notes: "... many people engage in substance use – within, and surrounding, the facility. Those attempting to reduce or control their consumption of drugs or alcohol face an uphill battle..." and "Indigenous women and girls experience increased vulnerability to gender-based violence due to specific barriers to safety..." and "While there are high rates of violence at 405 Alexander St, the gendered violence experienced by women is particularly distressing."

Lack of access to addictions treatment is also a serious, ongoing problem. Close to half of shelter clients interviewed "... indicated that they had attempted to access substance use treatment (primarily detox), but were turned away due to bed space and staffing constraints."

This government, 21 months after declaring a substance use health emergency, has done little, if anything, to increase addictions treatment. More addictions treatment options and spaces are needed. Recently, the Premier took over the shelter file from the Minister of Health and Social Services. Since then, there have been some signs that government may finally be treating this issue seriously, but as he acknowledged, it also shouldn't have taken him this long to step in.

As for specific actions, we are pleased to hear that security patrols will increase, but private security staff will likely not have the training or equipment to deal with some situations they will encounter. We urge government to also increase funding for the RCMP, including more resources to target illegal drug dealers who are harming people in communities.

With regard to the location suggested for food services, we hope the government will also be consulting with its employees and the Yukon Employees' Union about the concept and any concerns that they may have.

We are pleased to hear that government will be doing a mobile outreach pilot project with CYFN. It is clear that decentralization of some services is needed, as the reports show that the current mix of clients and services isn't working. The Premier previously told this House that everything was working well inside the shelter and today claimed that it is providing essential and life-saving services. It was notable that the Premier failed to mention that the coroner has launched an inquest into the death of four people at the shelter. We know that the families of those people are looking for answers, and that inquest may come to different conclusions than he has about how well the shelter is or is not working.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, while we are relieved to see some action being taken, much more action is still needed to help vulnerable people, including providing more access to addictions treatment, as well as to improve community safety.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I will start by telling a cautionary tale about quick fixes that do more harm than good. Shortly after the announcement of Alpine Bakery's closure, the benches in front of the emergency shelter were removed, citing concerns about disruptive gatherings. That was a month ago, and people haven't stopped gathering; they have just moved, primarily about half a block away to where there are some parking lot dividers that they can sit on, which is even closer to homes and without any proximity to the staff at the emergency shelter. This has actually made these gatherings more disruptive to the people trying to sleep in their homes and even less visible to the staff who could intervene or call for help if someone was being harmed.

Back at the shelter, clients now have nowhere to sit when they go outside. It is pretty heartbreaking to watch people with mobility issues sitting on the cement sidewalk to have a cigarette because their benches have been taken away.

With that in mind, let's turn to the current proposed solutions. We are excited to hear about CYFN's involvement in providing a culturally safe presence downtown. We have lots of questions: How will the service be different from the outreach van currently operated by Blood Ties and Kwanlin Dün First Nation? Why was a second outreach van service added rather than expanding the current one?

The Premier said that they can provide referrals to Meals on Wheels and to the RCMP. Why provide referrals to Meals instead of just providing meals, and what is a referral to the RCMP? Is it just calling them to carry out enforcement?

Next, I would like to talk about the hiring of Sirius Security Services. Here is a quote from the House of Wolf report on the

safety of the area surrounding the shelter, which was commissioned by this government — quote: "The use of traditional western security guards will be unlikely to achieve the intended goals of CYFN, Connective, and the community at large in providing accessible, visible, and culturally appropriate interventions to marginalized people."

So, why has the Premier decided to disregard this recommendation of the report that he commissioned? What will he do to mitigate these concerns? The Premier referred to Sirius Security's social safety mandate. I have read their website, and I can't find reference to that mandate. Could he share it with us? I saw that they do train their staff in non-violent conflict resolution, and I would like to know more about that. Who provides that training? How in depth is it? Does it align with the Crisis Prevention Institute of Canada's training? I would also like to know if their staff will be trained in supporting vulnerable and marginalized people. What about training in cultural competency? What about training in trauma-informed practice? If not, we are deeply concerned about the potential harm to people who have already endured lifetimes of trauma, intergenerational trauma, and marginalization.

Turning to the meal programs, we do support the efforts to decentralize shelter services through actions such as providing food at other locations. We think that this would be a great use of the cafeteria in the Legislature, assuming that trust can be built with the people who need this service to help them feel comfortable in this space. Our suggestion is that it be a blended program that offers meals for sale to those who can afford them, such as YG staff, and meals for free to people who can't afford them. This is similar to the model that used to be in place in the cafeteria at Bridges and Options for Independence. This would be a lovely way to use the space and create an integrated, welcoming community.

Finally, we have seen the news that a coroner's inquest has been called into the deaths at the shelter, as we have called for many times. We hope that this will help prevent more deaths and help to bring closure for families. Our thoughts are with the grieving families, friends, and communities who have been affected by these losses. We hope that the government will work to make sure that these families are supported during this difficult time.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Colonialism, intergenerational trauma, the substance use health emergency, the national housing shortage, and the impacts of global inflation are bigger than all of us, but again, we all have a role to play in helping our fellow citizens. We must not forget that clients of 405 Alexander are family members, friends, community members, and loved ones. I do appreciate the words of support from the Member for Lake Laberge, and I do also appreciate some of the recommendations from the Member for Whitehorse Centre. I do believe that this is an issue that should rise above partisan politics, and I appreciate today that there were some critical comments, and I think that's more than fair, but I also do think that there were some good concepts as well.

I think it's also important to be very transparent and say — look, it was heartbreaking to hear from Walter and Silvia that

their situation has been made too difficult for them to continue operating their beloved bakery and that they would be pausing operations for the next few months as they decide what to do. Again, we've heard from many, many Yukoners on this. We know that there is going to be a sense of community that will be felt — that will be lost, and this week, it is important to note what they have contributed and, hopefully, that they will be reopening in the future.

In addition to the actions that I mentioned earlier, government is working with partners to create better outcomes for everyone in our community, and these include expanding the number of locations where community outreach workers are available, shifting the hours of the supervised consumption site to be more accessible when people need the facility, and removing privacy benches along Alexander, which was encouraging gathering and making work more challenging for EMS and RCMP.

It is a complex conversation. On one hand, we want individuals who are entering that facility to use services and to feel comfortable doing so, and sometimes, where congregations were out front, that did not happen. We are very live to the fact that traditional western security would not work, from the report, and that is why that western security model is not being used directly there at the centre, and that is why we are using a non-traditional approach, which is the partnership the Member for Whitehorse Centre questioned with CYFN. So, ensuring that we have individuals who understand the community, who can support the community, working in that area but yet the businesses feeling comfortable and supported with a more traditional model away from the centre.

We are continuing to support clients in finding permanent housing by providing assistance in navigating the Yukon Housing Corporation's intake process. We are continuing to work with community partners to further decentralize services, where appropriate, and to launch a managed alcohol program for those who need it. It is also important to note that, last year, when we talked — over the years, we were up into 525 to 530 on our housing wait-list. That is now down to just a little over 300 at the same time. So, we are helping folks.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, we know that the work is not done. I appreciate that there are some positive comments and some good ideas, which we will take into consideration, and some recommendations on consultation here with the cafeteria and for giving us an opportunity to share this information with Yukoners today.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Atlin hydro expansion project

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, one of the projects that the Liberals have banked our energy future on is the Atlin hydro project. One year ago today, on November 2, 2022, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources told the Legislature that the Atlin hydro project was on track to come online in 2024. Then, earlier this year, on April 18, the minister told the Legislature that it was anticipated to be online in 2025.

So, what is the latest timeline for this project?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I know that the member opposite knows as well that there is a funding shortfall. The Atlin project has been led by the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership. There is ongoing work that they are doing in planning and preparation, but there is a funding shortfall. What needs to happen is to see that funding gap closed in order for that project to move ahead, so the timelines are dependent on when that funding gap is closed or if it is.

We have worked in support of the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership and the Taku River Tlingit First Nation in conversations with the federal government, the British Columbia government, and us in looking to close that funding gap.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, there was a funding gap last year as well, but the minister was quite definitive with the timeline, as he was earlier this year.

Speaking to the media yesterday, the minister shared that the funding gap for the Atlin hydro project is about \$60 million, which is, of course, a significant shortfall. But during one of his many trips outside of the territory this year, the Premier visited Ottawa in May and met with several federal Cabinet ministers. Following his trip, the Premier claimed that he had secured — in his words — a “strong commitment” on the Atlin hydro project. The Premier said — quote: “Atlin was one of the bigger ones that we were focused on...”

Can the Premier tell us how much of that funding gap has been filled with the so-called “strong commitment” that he secured from the federal government?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, when I talked to the media yesterday, I said that we were continuing to work on closing that funding gap. I said that it had been \$60 million, and I said that I would turn back to the Development Corporation, the Energy Corporation, and Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership to ascertain what that funding gap is. We do continue to look. I will read back through my comments here in the Assembly. I think I have always talked about that funding gap and I've talked about what kind of timeline we would need once that funding gap is closed, but I have always said that we may not have it.

I also said to the media yesterday that, with respect to Yukon Energy, I have asked them to do planning if there is an Atlin hydro project moving ahead, and I have asked them to do planning if there is not, because we cannot be sure about Atlin and whether it moves ahead. But what we are sure about is that we want to continue to invest in renewable energy projects to serve the Yukon as the territory grows.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, what I am hearing now from the minister is that the funding gap may be higher than \$60 million — possibly substantially higher — and that he is looking into it. It doesn't sound like a very strong commitment that the Premier was able to secure from the federal government. It sounds like this project is yet again in limbo and possibly in jeopardy altogether.

Yesterday in his comments to the media, the minister left the door open to the Yukon government contributing more money to this project. So far, they have committed \$50 million.

How much more in taxpayer dollars is the Yukon government willing to put into this project?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, there are a few other items that I think we should touch on. First, what was announced in last year's budget by the federal government was a new mechanism whereby shareholders in renewable energy projects would have the potential of a 15percent rebate on their investment. What we had been asking — and part of the discussion in the springtime — was: How would that mechanism work for the Taku River Tlingit and for Tlingit Homeland Energy?

Part of what has happened is that there have been direct conversations between Natural Resources Canada and the proponent on that subject and they are trying to see how that mechanism could play into the business model, and then that would give us a sense of what the capital request would be. It could be less, depending on if a partner comes in, or it could be, as the minister said, in that range. That is a key piece.

We have asked and we continue to see support. I actually had a discussion today at 12:30 with Minister Wilkinson, who is the lead on the file, on a number of subjects — of course, voicing our concern around the announcement last week, ensuring that there are good mechanisms in place for programs here, but also ensuring that Atlin stays as a priority.

Also, last Friday, I had an opportunity to meet with Minister Cullen — of course, Atlin is his riding — with the BC government and Premier Eby, focusing again on the fact that we want to see their commitment stay, and they have voiced that their financial commitment is absolutely going to stay.

Question re: Energy strategy effect on electricity rates

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources confirmed what we have been saying for years. He said — quote: “We will always, as an islanded grid, require thermal backup, which includes diesel and LNG...” — “always” being the operative word there, Mr. Speaker — and we absolutely agree. We will always need reliable, dependable backup.

My question is simple: If we will always require thermal backup, then why does it make sense to rent that backup instead of owning it?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, there is a difference between a backup and capacity top-up. So, if what we're doing around capacity is covering off short-term needs or shorter term needs, then we might not always want that diesel there. For example, once the battery system comes online, we think it will displace four diesel generators. You wouldn't want to build a plant with those four diesel generators and then build the battery plant and then be stuck with those four diesel generators not working.

There is a difference between backup — and I have said that we will always need backup here. I don't think that I have ever not said that we need backup, and the most likely backup is thermal, which is LNG and/or diesel, but when it comes to the capacity, we may need some temporary diesels. They are the quickest to get.

By the way, we are 92-percent renewable on the grid this year and that is accounting for all of the growth. The Yukon is growing super fast — we heard the new stats that are out — and we are also moving all of the energy across onto electric, and meanwhile, we continue to supply over 90-percent renewables despite that growth.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, forever is not temporary.

Earlier this year, the minister provided the figures of how much has been spent on rented diesel generators. Since the Liberals made the decision to cancel the construction of a new thermal plant in 2018, they have spent more than \$26 million on rentals, according to the minister. But this year, for the first time, Yukoners are going to get to see the results of those decisions on their power rates. According to the rate application currently before the Utilities Board, diesel rental cost increases are a major rate increase driver. In fact, YEC's application attributes more than 20 percent of the total rate increase to the rental cost increases. Yesterday, the minister incorrectly stated that this wasn't true, so I hope that he has had a chance to finally go ahead and read that GRA.

Will the minister now admit that the Liberal decision to rent diesel generators forever is directly causing an increase in Yukoners' power rates?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: No intention to rent diesel generators forever — we will need backup over the long term. But in terms of the capacity difference, then we may choose short term as better. What the energy utility does is look at the levelized cost of capacity, and they have been in here and acted as witnesses and have said to the members opposite that it is 20 percent more expensive to build the plant than to do the diesel gensets as rentals. But the members opposite don't want to listen to that.

When it comes to the general rate application, there are a whole bunch of things that are in there: Whitehorse interconnection project, the Riverside substation, transmission line replacement, Aishihik five-year licence renewal, demand-side management programs, independent power producer purchases of electricity — yes, there are rental diesels in there and also the infrastructure for those rental diesels. There are a whole bunch of things that are in there, including inflation, the growth of our whole energy system, and the upgrade of the system overall, so there are a lot of things in front of us.

By the way, the members opposite said yesterday that there is a 14-percent increase. What we are saying is that the bill increase for Yukoners will be six percent.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the GRA is clear that the power rate increase will be 14.11 percent.

I am glad to see that the minister has read the GRA now and can correct his incorrect statements from yesterday.

To be fair to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, though, this didn't start under his watch; it started under the Premier's. Back when the Liberals scrapped the plan for a new thermal plant, the Premier said it was good news. In reference to the plan to rent diesels, he said — quote: “We believe it's a good investment.” Well, the new Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has now told us that we will be relying on

thermal backup forever and that the \$26 million that we have spent so far is just the beginning.

My question for the Premier is: Does he still think that renting diesel generators forever is a good investment?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, this is what I can say to Yukoners. When the Yukon Energy Corporation went out and asked Yukoners what they wanted to see — did they want to see a renewable energy future or a massive diesel plant? Overwhelmingly, the people we represent in this House said: Don't build a diesel plant. First of all, you can call it political, but Yukoners said that they don't want this. Actually, I remember receiving a letter from the Member for Lake Laberge saying: Don't build this plant. So, again, we flip-flop all over.

In the 2021 election, I sat next to the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the response from that leader was: I'm going to do your entire renewable plan and I'm going to build a diesel plant.

What would that have done to the rates? That would be an interesting cost to every Yukoner right now. Luckily, we didn't have to deal with that. We are not doing an entire renewable plan and building a new diesel plant. We are using the money and funds that we have that can offset the costs to Yukoners by building renewables on Haeckel Hill, in Beaver Creek, in Destruction Bay, and throughout the Yukon — something that the members opposite could not figure out how to unlock. The ire always comes up, but they could not figure it out. They could not get IPP in place and they couldn't get renewable projects built. We did it. That's what Yukoners wanted and that's what we will do.

Question re: Health care services

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, access to a family doctor continues to be a major challenge for health care in the Yukon. As recently as today, we heard from someone who has been on the wait-list for four years now. Right now, people without a primary care provider are forced to go to the emergency department even for something as simple as a prescription renewal. Others avoid the emergency department until health problems become so severe that they require emergency treatment or admission to the hospital. When someone doesn't have access to primary care, it's a cancer diagnosis that can be missed until it's too late, it's a knee surgery that could have been avoided for another 10 years, it's diabetes that could have been prevented or better managed — it's all the things that impact Yukoners' well-being.

How many people are still on the wait-list for a family doctor or a primary care provider?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. I do have a figure here, which I will find and provide. Too many is the short answer, in my view and in the view of the officials who are working with the Yukon Medical Association and the committee with respect to dealing with the health human resources crisis, which is the greatest crisis facing the health care system in the world, frankly. Since COVID, we have been impacted by people changing their plans for a career, we have had retirements, and we have had

individuals change opportunities. However, in the Yukon, we have managed to maintain a strong, healthy physician roster.

I am extremely proud of the work that we are doing with the Yukon Medical Association. I look forward to attending their annual general meeting tomorrow. I can also indicate that we have itinerant physicians who are assigned and visit every community outside of Whitehorse. The number that I have recollected is a little over 3,500 people.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon NDP is proud to have negotiated the opening of a walk-in clinic through the confidence and supply agreement. That agreement requires this government to open the walk-in clinic by January 2024. This is a critical option for Yukoners without a family doctor. It's giving them hope that they will be able to see a doctor soon, without having to spend hours in the emergency department.

How many health professionals have confirmed that they will be participating in the walk-in clinic in January? Specifically, how many doctors, nurses, and other health professionals will be available to see walk-in patients?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the walk-in clinic that will be stood up for Yukoners to assist in their primary health care — either individuals who don't have a primary health care provider assigned to them or who need to see a medical professional outside of their normal course of attending their own doctor's office, if that's necessary — and the impact that it will have on the emergency medical services at the Whitehorse General Hospital are all aspects of a walk-in medical clinic that will be of benefit to Yukoners. We look forward to providing that as soon as possible.

I think the member opposite will know that the expression of interest for individuals to staff the Whitehorse walk-in clinic has not yet been released, so I don't have an answer to the question that she has asked here today. I can indicate that we are working with the Yukon Medical Association to design such a clinic, including with three individual physicians who are guiding the necessity for what that clinic needs to look like and how it will operate to serve Yukoners.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, the *Canadian Family Physician* journal reported that a fee-for-service payment model is a deterrent for doctors to set up their practice. Even locums — fly-in/fly-out doctors — are avoiding the Yukon because of this system. It's another barrier to ending the shortage, and this is something that is under the control of this government. Fee-for-service is complex and it takes hours of a doctor's time to fill in the paperwork. Many new doctors want to work in family medicine but don't specifically because of fee-for-service. What payment model will the walk-in clinic follow, and how is this government making sure that this model is attractive for family doctors?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to answer the last part of that question first. We are designing a walk-in clinic with the benefits and expertise of family doctors here in the territory and the Yukon Medical Association — all of whom are very mindful of the options that are available.

The necessity for the expertise and the kind of work that is provided at walk-in clinics, the patient issues that will come before them, the necessity for the need for support staff and

physical location and physical design — all of these things are incredibly important to the success of a walk-in clinic, going forward. That is why we are working with them.

The member opposite may not have heard an answer I gave yesterday during debate, which was that we are meeting monthly with the Yukon Medical Association. Our officials work very closely with them, and this is one of the items, of course, on the agenda every time, and we look forward to meeting the goals put forward by this committee and having that operation serve Yukoners.

Question re: Health care CASA commitments

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Last year, I tabled a motion calling for the creation of a refundable tax credit for fertility treatment and surrogacy expenses. At the time, the minister said that a tax credit was not a good idea but that she would ask officials to look into it.

Can the minister tell us what work has been done to create a refundable tax credit for fertility and surrogacy expenses?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much — exactly what I have said in the past here in the Legislature, with respect to the issues of providing families in the Yukon who are having difficulties with fertility medical issues the support that they need going forward is, in fact, being done. Investigations and research into what the options are across Canada — how those might apply here in the territory, how they can best serve Yukoners, whether or not a program of a tax refund or whether or not — which only really truly benefits people who make enough money in order to qualify for a tax refund, which is what my previous comments were related to, and I still support that.

The Minister of Finance and I have our officials working on this. We have met about it several times, and we look forward to providing a program that supports Yukoners — all Yukoners — who might have fertility issues and be able to support them with benefits that will financially make issues of fertility more affordable.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I would also note that the creation of a refundable tax credit was a commitment in the health care section of CASA. Another commitment in that section was to consider hemodialysis services — in particular, the commitment was to look at the NWT model.

Can the minister tell us what work has been done on this commitment?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, that is clearly a new question. I will, of course, entertain it, if I can do it that way. Whether or not that is a new question is for the Clerk and Speaker to determine.

Nonetheless, I guess it is a health question, so we are in the ballpark — maybe.

Yeah, I do have an answer. I do. I have an answer, Mr. Speaker.

The hemodialysis working group has been set up — the details of the research and the investigation with respect to what system exists in the Northwest Territories — and broader research is actually being done with respect to that, also, which

is what is being done in other small jurisdictions in Canada to provide these kinds of services to Yukoners.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, another commitment in the health care section of CASA was to make funding available to Yukoners to seek out-of-territory treatment when Government of Yukon services are at capacity. We have heard that current detox services are often at capacity and that some people have been turned away.

How much additional funding has the minister provided for out-of-territory detox treatment?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am really happy to hear all of these questions loosely related to CASA, because it's clear that the Yukon Party also made a commitment to be supportive of CASA, so they are clearly also supportive of all of these programs. I look forward to seeing their support in votes for our budget, because that is exactly how these programs are funded.

The information with respect to this program is necessary going forward. The opportunities for Yukoners to benefit with respect to not only the hemodialysis program but also the other CASA programs — we've committed to that. That work is being done.

I look forward to further questions, if necessary, on how we are doing that work. When that work is available for public announcement, we look forward to doing so — perhaps in a ministerial statement.

Question re: Watson Lake continuing care services

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the community of Watson Lake has been pushing for a new long-term continuing care facility for years. Despite this, the Liberal government has refused to respond to this request. In fact, the minister did not even come to the public meeting that was held to discuss it. Instead, in November of last year, the minister announced that they would convert existing beds in the hospital into long-term care beds. At the time, the minister said that they would open very soon; however, it has been a year now, and it seems that these beds are still not open.

Can the minister explain why, a year after making the announcement, the long-term care beds she promised in Watson Lake still aren't open?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I did look forward to us providing the care beds in Watson Lake. Mr. Speaker, as you and other members of the Yukon public may recall, that commitment was made. Then we began to do the work with respect to floating this idea with the Town of Watson Lake, and we were told that this was not what they wanted us to pursue. As a result, we are continuing to do the work that is necessary with the community for the purpose of doing that.

The other thing I should note is that we have been working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to integrate two long-term care beds — that was the original plan in Watson Lake — but we have been advised that, through community engagement, that was not an option that was of interest to the Town of Watson Lake. Feedback and concerns were brought forward, and we are continuing to do the work necessary to do so.

I look forward to answering a few more questions with respect to this, if they are on topic. I would be happy to do that. What I do note is that long-term care is a commitment here in the territory, and it is serving Yukoners very well. I will take the opportunity next time.

Ms. McLeod: Well, the question begs to be asked why the minister did not consult before she made an announcement.

In November of last year, the minister did a press release announcing that there would be 4.5 full-time-equivalent LPNs providing 24-hour support, seven days a week, at the two long-term care beds in Watson Lake. That has not happened. Neither of those beds opened.

Can the minister tell my community when the long-term continuing care services that she promised last year will be available?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I should go back, because I think it is important that Yukoners have all of the information and that sometimes — oh, regularly — they don't get that in these kinds of questions.

I was invited, on less than 24 hours' notice, to attend the public meeting that the member opposite is mentioning in Watson Lake. It is quite true that I was unavailable to do that; I look forward to doing one in the future.

The opening of two long-term care beds in Watson Lake, as was anticipated as part of the Yukon hospital and the Watson Lake hospital facility, is on hold as we seek to best understand the local needs and values that will inform planning delivery of future programming. The commitment by our government is making all communities across the Yukon support aging in place as best we can, based on the community feedback. In Watson Lake, it was presented as one of the options. Certainly, I don't think that anyone expected that it would not be the chosen path by the community. As a result, this project is still being investigated.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, of course, this has been a consistent problem with this government. They are quick to make announcements and quick to issue press releases, but then they are slow to act and actually deliver. Why would the minister announce the opening of long-term continuing care services in my community when there was no clear timeline on when those services would be available?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to sit with the citizens of Watson Lake, and what I can reflect on are some key points that they shared with me. The first was that, under the Yukon Party government, a number of individuals — seniors from the community — were actually taken on a plane and flown to Haines Junction so that they could see what the Yukon Party was building in Haines Junction and then promised — promised by my friends across the way — that they would get the same thing, which they never got. So, what is the timeline on that? I think we are about a decade out on that.

Secondly, there was no consultation and Whistle Bend was built. When there was a chance to build more in Watson Lake, while the Yukon Party was in government, that didn't get done.

So, I sat and asked those individuals, very good supporters and friends of the member opposite: Why didn't you ever have

that opportunity? Why weren't you listened to? Why, for that decade and a half, were things not delivered? Their hands were thrown up into the air.

Look, we know very clearly that there was an expectation that was built over a decade. Think about that — being brought on a plane to Haines Junction and told: This is what we will build for you. It was never built. The member opposite is not respecting the fact that we want to see those beds in place. There is another vision that the town has. We will work with the town, but we will work to deliver and not just build hopes and let them collapse, like we saw under the previous government.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. Blake): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing 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?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Chair: 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*.

Department of Community Services — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and we welcome both Matt and John back, and we will get into it.

As I was saying on October 23, there is a lot to unpack in my colleagues' opposition to our ongoing investment in rural Yukon and improvements to waste management in the territory.

These improvements are part of our efforts to deliver on the commitments in the Yukon's nation-leading *Our Clean Future* plan: to reduce society's garbage production and greenhouse gas emissions, to meet our targets laid out in the nation-leading plan, which we have, in partnership with the members opposite, set at 45 percent by 2030.

Further, I would remind the members that the landfill improvements were requested by Yukoners and Yukon municipalities. They wanted us to introduce a price on garbage to reduce the amount we produce. They sought better management of our landfills. They sought investment in our communities to ensure that their landfills are controlled and supervised and that those contracts or wages stay in the communities, making them more prosperous. They wanted unsupervised transfer stations closed in favour of supervised regional landfills. We are fortunately seeing lots of support from municipalities in delivering those long-sought and necessary improvements. I believe that it is good news.

The member opposite has publicly said that it's not good news at all. In fact, she has publicly called the initiative "dumb", a remark not lost on those who have promoted and worked to achieve these improvements for more than a decade.

At this point, it bears noting that the members opposite endorsed a climate emergency. The term "emergency" elevates a matter and makes it a priority that we must tackle right away above all other considerations. Time and again, the Third Party has been a drag on action. We wanted to get the Better Buildings program underway immediately and we were forced to pause that important work to ensure that municipalities first received an increased service fee. I was painfully disappointed that negotiating a service fee came before a decisive action to get Yukoners low-interest loans to make their homes more energy efficient.

I felt worse when inflation started to rise and action to help Yukoners heat their homes more cheaply had been delayed by so long for such a reason. I felt worse when interest rates rose and a great deal turned less so, hurting all Yukoners but low-income folks most of all.

Now we want to improve landfills, better managing them to, among other things, reduce the production of greenhouse gases such as methane. The NDP are intent on stopping our investment in rural Yukon's landfills to continue an untenable management practice of having unsupervised sites across the Yukon where waste oils, construction waste, old gas and diesel engines, transmissions, and expired propane canisters can be unconscionably dumped without challenge — where people can dump garbage and avoid tipping fees, consciously subverting the polluter-pay principle. How do you square that with our climate emergency?

I understand that a change of a decades-old waste practice is difficult. I know that changing behaviour is hard, that it comes with a cost, that such change can be inconvenient and hard to reckon with, and that people subjected to that change will bristle and don't want it. I get it, but in a climate emergency, we're asking all members of society to contribute to part of the solution. Do I take this action lightly? No, absolutely not. First of all, if we are making people pay for a

service like garbage disposal, we can't have places where it's free. That undermines the whole system; it just doesn't work.

Second — and perhaps more importantly — we have declared that climate emergency, and that makes cutting pollution for the sake of the climate more important than anything else — more important, certainly, than retaining a few unsupervised sites. At such times, everyone must make efforts to address the issue at hand, which is protecting our environment and taking action against climate change. These are goals laid out in our nation-leading plan to deal with the emergency — in this case, *Our Clean Future*. If you don't prioritize this, can you call it an emergency? I don't think you can.

Make no mistake, Madam Chair — we are seeking, through investments in rural Yukon, improved landfill management to reduce pollution and garbage and to help curb greenhouse gas emissions. This is one small measure toward helping us reach the target of a 45-percent reduction by 2030. As I have noted, in the confidence and supply agreement, the NDP insisted on a 45-percent target, and as difficult as that target is, we agreed, and we know that, to hit that target, we have to take extraordinary steps. Every smidge of progress matters, and this is one of those tiny steps.

Ms. White: It appears that the minister has more notes in his speech, and if he would like to finish it, I am happy to allow him to go on and then I'll ask my questions when he is done.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for that. Now that we are taking steps to meet the target requested, the NDP appear to be working against efforts to get there.

When we left off, the member opposite had just read remarks from a letter critical of me into the record. I get it. That's fine, but the member did not read the whole letter.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King, on a point of order.

Ms. White: As a point of order, that was misrepresenting — I'm not sure, but Standing Order 19 — I did actually read the entire letter into the record.

Chair: The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I am sure that the Minister of Community Services will explain what he means about not reading the entire letter. I think you just have to give him the chance to do that.

Chair's ruling

Chair: I believe this is a dispute between members.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Madam Chair.

There were a number of reasons for the letter — five of them that we could count.

The first one was that the closure of unsupervised sites poses an undue hardship on residents and businesses. Well, first of all, businesses should not be using the sites; they are for

residents. Businesses should be contracting commercial garbage collection and building that service into the cost of their businesses, as most Yukon businesses already do.

Some businesses are using them, which is fundamentally unfair to businesses that are properly paying for garbage-disposal services. As for residents, we are committed to working with them — and have been all along — to make the transition easier. We have a commitment to do so under the confidence and supply agreement. I take that commitment that we made seriously, which is why we are holding a workshop with residents in a couple of weeks on this very issue to come up with workable solutions to make the transition to this new model easier for residents.

Ultimately, the goal will be that residents in places across the territory will bring their garbage to communities where they already buy groceries or buy gas or get other services and will get rid of their garbage at a regional landfill station that is served with a supervisor and is properly controlled in those regions. This, again, is what was asked for by municipalities.

Second is that the greenhouse gas emissions will be increased. No, we don't believe that this is correct. Residents living around the transfer stations already have to commute for gas and groceries where regional landfills will be located.

Third — the letter raised the issue of harmful wildlife interactions. Techniques to store garbage in rural Yukon are well-established among residents in areas where there are no unsupervised transfer stations. Community Services is working with residents of affected communities to find ways to limit this possible problem.

Fourth — will trash be increased in places it shouldn't be? Already, waste oils and other harmful garbage are being dumped where it shouldn't at the unsupervised transfer stations. Even in as late as October, we have evidence of a lot of garbage being dumped at places like Braeburn and Pelly Crossing, which is actually going to become a regional landfill that will be supervised and well-managed. But we are seeing, in the unsupervised state, waste oils being dumped there. We have seen transmissions, fuel tanks, and garbage from commercial operations being dumped there where nobody can see where it is happening or see who is doing it. This is the exact problem that we are trying to solve.

Trash is already increasing in places that it shouldn't be — at the transfer stations. In other areas where we have regional landfills in place, we haven't seen an increase in illegal dumping. There are always going to be scofflaws — but a whole ton of this? We are not seeing it. We have also increased fines to deal with those who would actually sully our pristine territory.

The fifth issue that was addressed in the letter is that fire danger will increase as residents burn garbage. There is no evidence to suggest this in other areas of the territory.

For now, I will end my comments there and go on to other questions, but I wanted to address those issues here today.

Ms. White: In the minister's last two statements, he didn't actually respond to the one thing that he committed to on the last day, on October 23. Just before he moved to report progress, he said — and I quote: "As far as the hundred-odd

signatures, I will have more to say about that at a future time." So, I was wondering if the minister could tell me what he was going to say about the 119 folks who signed the letter that I did read in its entirety into the record?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Once again, Madam Chair, I will have more to say on that at a future time.

Ms. White: Can the minister elaborate on when — at a future time — he would like to talk about the 119 people who signed that letter?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Not at this time, Madam Chair.

Ms. White: Well, I guess I look forward to when the minister would like to talk about the 119 folks who did sign that letter about this closure of the Silver City transfer station.

The interesting thing is that there were actually lots of different sentiments at the meeting in Silver City that I attended, and I wanted to know if the minister had any feedback from some of the suggestions or some of the comments that folks made.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Right now, as I have said earlier this afternoon, we are in the process of holding a workshop with residents of Silver City. It was scheduled previously, but at residents' request, we actually delayed it. We are going to have experts there to work with the residents. That is a process that is going on. I look forward to hearing what comes out of that meeting — the workshop that we have with residents. I am not going to get in the way of that meeting and anticipate what suggestions or solutions may be proposed at that meeting.

Ms. White: I appreciate that the minister is not going to get in the way of the next meeting, but there were certainly some challenges with comments he made in the media prior to the last one.

One of the things that residents said that I think is really important — the minister continues to say that folks who access those rural transfer stations don't want to pay, which is actually untrue. They have said multiple times that they are happy to pay, but they don't think that it makes sense to have to pay every time they go. They have suggested things like putting it on their property taxes. Does the minister have any thoughts on that?

I have correspondence — I am sure that the minister has seen it — from folks in Johnsons Crossing saying that they have no problem paying. I have information from others who say that it is not an issue of paying, it is an issue of access. Does the minister have any thoughts about that? So, it is not an issue of free; it is an issue of proximity.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said earlier in my remarks this afternoon, the whole principle behind this is a polluter-pay principle, so you pay for the garbage you have. So, when you come to a landfill, you are actually hit with not even the full cost but a portion of the cost of the garbage you produce. I think that is an important principle as part of this project. It is certainly important to the municipalities that were part of the backbone of designing it. So, that is really the principle under which this program will go ahead.

As for the comments from previous meetings, there will be a "what we heard" document put together. It hasn't come together yet, and I haven't seen it, but once I see that, I will

certainly have a lot more idea about what was said at those meetings from the residents, and we will have more to say on that.

Ms. White: I guess the reason why I am asking if the minister was aware of comments that were made at these meetings is that it seems unfair to say that people in rural Yukon who access transfer stations aren't willing to pay for their trash when they have said very clearly at those meetings that they are willing to pay for their trash. Does the minister think it's fair, as a reflection, to say that this is why people are upset that their transfer stations are closing?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: To begin with, as I said, this is a transition. This is a new model. It's a new way of doing business. It's a model based on standards and on controls that will help improve — help our management of all the garbage — the tremendous piles of garbage that we create as a society in this territory. So, as part of that, there is a user-pay model. I cannot say that I have explicitly said that everybody in rural Yukon is averse to paying for it. I don't think that is the case. I think there is generally a shift here, though, to a different model that will be, in some cases, less convenient for people living in some rural Yukon areas.

The operating standards that we are working under promote consistency across the solid-waste facilities, in terms of services offered to the public, as well as consistency in the operation and maintenance of solid-waste facilities. Regional agreements require the implementation of best practices at each regional facility. Those practices include controlled access, like gates, and operating hours that are consistent, attendants, and fees for waste disposal and removal of organics from the waste stream, which is key to us controlling the amount of greenhouse gases coming from our landfills. These practices reduce environmental risk. They extend the life of our landfills, which are very expensive to both commission and decommission, and they reduce the costs associated with liabilities — the insurance, the cost that municipalities incur in running these things and will have to book going forward.

The user-pay systems assign waste costs to individuals creating the waste — be it a business, a not-for-profit, or an individual. These systems include stewardship programs, such as the beverage container regulation and the designated material regulation, the implementation of tipping fees, and implementation of an extended producer responsibility. This is all part of the whole system that we are creating here through this shift in investment and improvement to our regional waste landfills.

So, the reality is that communities — very small communities — just do not have the base needed to support a regional landfill; they don't have the critical mass, and the places where the regional landfills are going are communities that can support these initiatives. If we continue to retain an area within 50 or 60 kilometres of a regional landfill where you can do it for free, people will drive that distance to get around the fee. That is just human nature. We have seen it in around Whitehorse; we see it other places, and that is why municipalities have asked for this, because they really do not want to see any unsupervised, uncontrolled waste going to their

regional landfill, where oils or PCB-laced materials or whatever they are cost municipalities an awful lot to send down to Alberta to dispose of. Municipalities do not want to incur that cost from people who are not even residents. It is an un-needed cost, and it is one of the reasons why this system was proposed by the Association of Yukon Communities.

Ms. White: I have pointed out that people have said — and I have attended, at this point in time, approximately nine or so hours of consultation meetings on transfer stations — electronically, in-person, and others — and at every one of those meetings, people have said that they are willing to pay. So, that is the first thing. The second thing that they have said is: Put up a gate; go ahead and put up a gate. And they have said: Make sure that there is a gate and that only residents who are supposed to have access to the facility have access to the facility. So, give us a key, and we'll get there.

The response has been: That is not fair to Whitehorse. So, can the minister help me understand how, in these transfer stations that are not off the highway, that are not visible, that are being used by community members — can the minister help me understand why, if there was a gate, having keys with community members would not be fair to Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: What I will say this afternoon is that this is a live conversation with residents in these areas. We have a workshop at Silver City in a couple of weeks. I'm not going to predict any of the solutions that may come from these meetings, but my officials are working, as directed by me, under the confidence and supply agreement, to continue working with and talking to communities. They are doing that, and I await to see what the results of these talks are.

Ms. White: Although I appreciate that answer from the minister, he continues to say that people in rural Yukon have said that they aren't interested in paying — which is untrue. I've pointed that out — they have said that. They have suggested gates. The minister can't tell me why that's unfair for Whitehorse. The other thing that's quite interesting is that they said that they would be very happy to separate — so much so that, in Silver City, they have asked for recycling experts as well as a composting expert to go out.

So, now we know, in rural Yukon, that rural Yukoners are willing to separate their waste. They are willing to pay for the privilege of disposing their waste. They have said that they agree to gates. They have even gone as far as saying that they would volunteer, if it was required, to keep the transfer station open so that they could unlock the gate on certain days. Does the minister see any movement there, that there is a possibility of working with communities to keep these facilities or similar facilities and similar services available for rural Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I have said this afternoon, this is a live conversation, and I'm not going to get ahead of it.

Ms. White: Then to confirm that, if this is a live conversation, does that mean that the minister won't do media interviews on this prior to those meetings in rural Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Far be it for me to predict what the media is going to ask me and when.

Ms. White: Well, I am hopeful so that it is easier for the officials when they go out.

So, the minister was just talking about Better Buildings, which I think is interesting, so I'm just going to go back a little bit in time. In order for the program to work, do municipalities have to sign on to be part of the Better Buildings program?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, as a matter of fact, municipalities have signed on and would have had to sign on for the Better Buildings program. The unincorporated Yukoners — those who are not in communities — could have had the benefit of this program immediately, as soon as the program was built, but we had to delay that to deal with municipalities, which was the decision that we took. As I said, I found it painful.

Ms. White: What I found painful during that time was the fact that the minister actually hadn't gone out to have conversations with municipalities or municipal mayors and councils. The reason I say this is that I believe that amounts are now — and the minister confirmed this for me on October 23 when we were here — is that now Whitehorse, Watson Lake, and Dawson City are able, when they put this program out, to get \$500 a year to administer the program. Smaller municipalities get \$200 a year to administer the program.

Can the minister remind me what the initial number was that he brought forward? What was he proposing that municipalities be able to collect in order to run that program?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yeah, I mean — we are where we are, but the member opposite is taken in the Wayback Machine, so we will do that. What happened in this House — in this Chamber — was that we had a piece of legislation that we had brought forward and were looking to pass to get the authority to build the program and deal with municipalities. We were asked to hit pause to get the deal in with municipalities in an uncertain time before we had the legislation passed, which paused the entire project. We weren't able to build the project until we had the legislative authority to do so, and that was delayed for several months — a whole season — that could have been used to build the project and bring the municipalities online. That is the delay I am talking about; that is what happened.

I am — I was disheartened at that delay because it really did deprive people — it pushed our program back and, in the end, we have seen higher inflation and higher interest rates, and that would have saved some Yukoners quite a bit of money had we been able to implement this program faster during a climate emergency. That is what I am saying, Madam Chair.

Ms. White: What I found disheartening in that entire process was the lack of the minister's ability to work with municipalities to find a path forward. The unfortunate truth is that telling a municipality that you are going to collect \$500 for 15 years of running a program, which works out to \$33 and some change a year —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. White: Per year.

It was not initially per year.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is speaking off mic.

I have asked for clarification. Actually, I will sit down and maybe the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources can let the

Minister of Community Services know what the initial program amount was going to be per year for municipalities.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It sounds like we were both disappointed.

The bottom line, Madam Chair, is that we had the delay; the costs are what the costs are; the uptake on the program is what the uptake is. The reality is that we have a number of municipalities that have come on board the program. I was able to work with municipalities and we got them on the program. They are getting paid the stipend that they asked for. We are going to review that stipend after three years to make sure that it is meeting the needs and is actually doing what it is intended to do. All in all, the program is launched; we have municipalities on there; I have had support from municipalities; we got letters of support for the work that we did.

That is where we are at today. As I have said a couple of times, my regret is that it was delayed so long.

Ms. White: I am happy to go to the Wayback Machine, because I think it's important.

My regret would have been, at the time, having to vote against a piece of legislation that I do support because of the minister's unwillingness to work with others. It's okay. We got it through and now municipalities have signed on, which I think is important.

I am going to ask for more information around the Better Buildings program. Can the minister let me know how many applications to date have been made?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Since the program launched on October 25, the Energy branch has received 55 applications from clients wishing to participate.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

Out of those 55 applications, how many have been approved so far?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have 49 projects approved, but work has not yet started. We have two completed and five in progress.

Ms. White: Can the minister let me know what the total dollar value is of those successful applications?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The total committed finances for the Better Buildings program is \$292,000, and we paid out \$111,000.

Ms. White: Out of the applications that have been submitted but not approved, what is the expected dollar value of those applications?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We don't have that number now and we won't have it for a while. We have 49 projects approved where the value of the work has not yet been determined. They are up to \$50,000 per project per individual, so that gives you an idea, but we have no idea what work the applicants are going to do or how much they are going to pay for that work and how much it is going to cost them until they actually get the contractor hired and all those bills start to come in.

Ms. White: Have any applications been rejected, and if so, why?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: All applications forwarded to Property Assessment Taxation from Energy, Mines and Resources have been approved on our end. I have no insight

into EMR. You might want to talk to them when they are up on their feet next.

Ms. White: As this is an incredibly important program for the minister, I just thought that I would ask both departments. Luckily enough, they are both up on the floor today.

As I was actually perusing — one could say the Wayback Machine — there is an interesting article with the Yukon Ombudsman calling waste transfer station consultations “an unfairness”. So, when the minister asserts that it has been fair across the territory, it turns out that, in a March 4 reply from the Ombudsman to a complainant about the closure of waste transfer stations, the Office of the Ombudsman wrote that the four communities of Keno City, Destruction Bay, Silver City, and Johnsons Crossing did not have — and I’m quoting: “... ‘an avenue available to present their views’ to a government committee that was looking at waste management, and that it was an ‘unfairness.’” It’s interesting. I hadn’t planned on going there, but I think it’s worth it.

Now, including the fact that, in March 2022, the Ombudsman said that those communities hadn’t been consulted, can the minister remind me again how AYC was the consultation body for unincorporated rural Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the member opposite summarizing a news story from 18 months ago. I was quoted in that story as well. I said that I had heard from residents. I had heard from residents because I had met with them — including the sole individual who had talked to the Ombudsman. I was trying to ascertain whether the Ombudsman had issued any official findings. I will look into that matter and, if it’s relevant, at some point, comment on it in the future. At this time, I don’t have that information at my fingertips, nor whether the Ombudsman actually reached out to the Department of Community Services to see what sort of consultations had been done with residents.

I do know that my colleague has been up and down to many of these communities on several different occasions with several different officials from the Department of Community Services who were working on this file with the Association of Yukon Communities. I don’t think that was ever reflected in the comments by the Ombudsman, but I haven’t been able to ascertain whether they actually asked us for any feedback before issuing that statement to wherever it went.

Ms. White: Just because the minister opened the door about his quotes in that news article — I am happy to read them out. The minister said — and I quote: “‘I have been to those communities many times,’ he said. ‘I have heard the concerns. I have heard what people are worried about and concerned about, and I have committed to working with them.’” I don’t know if those communities feel that way right now, but I appreciate that this is what the minister said.

He also went on to say: “‘And so we are creating landfills that are controlled with gates and scales and have power that are protected from bears, and from people just dumping their waste with no oversight,’ he said. ‘We’re improving community waste management and protecting the environment. And municipalities asked us to do this.’”

It’s interesting because I spent a fair amount of time looking at garbage, it turns out. I spent the first four years of my job talking about bathrooms and the last many more — eight — talking about waste. The interesting thing with the transfer facilities is that they do have electric fences around them and cattle guards. It’s interesting because I had a conversation with a conservation officer in Haines Junction who had worked his entire career out in that area and was the one who actually set up that initial transfer station. He said that, prior to having the electric fences and the cattle guards, they had regular human-bear conflicts that had to be resolved, unfortunately, with euthanizing bears, and he said that actually, once the transfer stations happened, it really cut those numbers down.

So, it’s interesting that one of the things that the minister is talking about — electric fences — is actually one of the things that those transfer stations have now. I know that the folks in Johnsons Crossing have sent letters with suggestions, including looking at the Toad River facility. Has the minister had a chance to compare what they do out in Toad River to what could be done here in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for her thoughts, and I will note that managed waste options for individuals in, for example, Silver City are one of the things that we’ll discuss at the workshop coming forward, which is part of the consultations and the work that the Department of Community Services and I have done in the 18 months since the article that she is referring to.

Ms. White: I actually quoted the minister from the article, and then I moved on, and I asked specifically about Toad River and the folks in Johnsons Crossing, who have suggested that as something to look at. Has the minister looked into the facility at Toad River?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: No, I have not.

Ms. White: Has the minister looked elsewhere in small, rural communities or unincorporated communities in Canada for solutions to the problem we’re facing?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Marsh Lake, Tagish, Mount Lorne, Deep Creek, Pelly Crossing — there are lots of unincorporated communities, all of which have managed waste facilities and are represented by the Association of Yukon Communities. I will say that the work that was done earlier by my colleague did look at best practices, and as a matter of fact, that is what I referenced earlier this afternoon when I was talking about operating standards — best practices across the country. So, yes, we have looked at those things. That is what we are doing here in the territory: bringing best practices that are seen across the country here to the territory.

This is a difficult transition; I understand that. That is why we are working with residents, one-on-one with the good folks at Community Services, trying to bring about the necessary changes that will protect our environment, cut our greenhouse gas initiatives, and make sure that the climate emergency is front and centre in our efforts on this file.

Ms. White: Can the minister help me understand how one truck picking up waste at a transfer station and driving it

to, like, the proper facility is more greenhouse gas emissions than everyone who would have to drive themselves to dispose of their waste?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: My good colleague just reminded me that Pelly, which I included in the list, is not an Association of Yukon Communities-represented municipality or community, so I will correct the record this afternoon and ask the House to please accept my apologies for that.

As far as the question about how three people driving their garbage to a managed waste-management facility is better than one truck, well, that one truck won't be going, and the people who are taking their garbage to that municipality — if they all drive their garbage there specifically to do a garbage run, I guess that there is a cost to that. If they work their garbage delivery in with the other time they spend in that community getting groceries, seeing a doctor, or doing other services, then that is actually a savings. There is a lot that goes into this, but generally, we are asking people to take their own garbage in the most efficient way to a regional landfill that is managed, has supervision, and is run in a way that sorts the garbage into its proper component parts — garbage, organics, and recycling. That in itself helps the planet, both in preventing deleterious substances from coming in without any scrutiny whatsoever, but also, the better management of our organics in the landfill helps to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. That is one of the ways that we are hoping this helps dramatically in our efforts to meet our targets.

Ms. White: I actually am just looking for a bit more clarification from the minister. I think that there are a lot of assumptions that people will drive into town every week. I have friends who live in Beaver Creek, and they come into Whitehorse only once a month because it is so far. So, I think that the assumption that people in rural Yukon come to Whitehorse regularly is maybe not representative of everyone.

So, again, I'm just trying to figure out — as an example, right now, how often does the contractor — just, again, as an example — how often does the contractor, per month, pick up the waste at the transfer facility at Silver City?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: One point of clarification: Beaver Creek and Old Crow are part of phase 3 of the regionalization plan that we are looking at, and so, we will be looking for solutions in both of those communities. They are special cases, which is why they are part of the third phase of this project. Right now, we are in phase 2, and there is a regional landfill between Destruction Bay and Burwash that is managed — a managed landfill — and would be the closest landfill to Beaver Creek, but as I said, there is a plan to deal with Beaver Creek and Old Crow in phase 3.

As far as Silver City, how often the truck goes to Silver City, we are looking into that, but I will say that it varies, because the volume of garbage being left at Silver City during eight months of the year is almost non-existent, and yet we are still paying for that. The truck is still going out there to pick up bins that are empty. So, that is really what it is: This truck is going and coming back empty, which isn't a good use of resources either, and it is costing us to do that. So, that is another wrinkle in this whole discussion.

There are people in Mary Lake and Rock Creek, people along the highway or elsewhere in the Yukon, without transfer stations, so they do not have the same service that some people — the three to 13 people at Silver City — do. As I said, in the wintertime — most of the time in the wintertime — those bins are empty but still a place where people could go and toss whatever it is that they wanted to in those bins, without any supervision.

Ms. White: Earlier, the minister said that he didn't want to talk about the 119 people who signed the letter for Silver City, but he just talked about 13 people in Silver City. So, does the minister want to talk about the 119 people who signed the Silver City letter now?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: No.

Ms. White: It seems unfair for the folks who signed that letter — the 119 of them, actually — that the minister wouldn't want to speak about this now when he has just said that there are only 13 people in Silver City. I guess I am just going to ask the minister to reconsider: Would he consider speaking about the 119 people who signed that letter now?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: No.

Ms. White: That is really too bad. It seems to me that if eight months of the year those bins are empty and government is still sending out a contractor to look, that is actually a government problem and not a Silver City problem. Has the minister ever thought to speak to someone in Silver City to, for example, let the department know when the bins needed to be emptied? For example, they could say that, next week, we should probably have them picked up, because they are nearly full. Has the department or has the minister ever reached out to folks in these communities to help with the management of those transfer facilities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, actually, I have reached out to residents of Silver City — people who live there. I did have a nice conversation with one of the residents there just recently, as a matter of fact, and they thanked me for calling. I had a good conversation about this very issue. They informed me that they take their garbage into Whitehorse; I said: That is great; thank you for that information. The truck going to Silver City goes every two weeks, just to finish off the answer I was asked to give a couple of questions ago.

Ms. White: Does the truck go specifically to Silver City, or is it going somewhere else and passing Silver City at the same time?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That is a great question, and I appreciate the member bringing it forward. The reason why we're doing the regionalization is that currently all that garbage is trucked to Whitehorse. It has been an incredible expense. We want to make sure that they go to the regional landfills in the district in which the transfer stations exist, which would save some of the trucking costs and some of the costs of transport, but currently, it all comes into Whitehorse, which is one of the things we are trying to solve with this regionalization initiative that municipalities have been backing for almost seven years.

Ms. White: In theory, couldn't the waste from Silver City get taken to Haines Junction, to their actual waste management facility?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That's exactly the plan, Madam Chair — exactly the plan.

Ms. White: I think that the minister misunderstood my point. I was asking if the transfer facility, as it stands — if the bins, as they stand, could be picked up and taken to Haines Junction.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, yeah, the whole point is to not have a truck going from Silver City to anywhere. There won't be any truck at all, so that is a savings right away.

Residents, some of whom already do this, bring their waste to Whitehorse, but other residents could choose to go to Burwash or to Silver City. They would do that most of the time, I would assume, as part of their run to those communities to get whatever services they wanted to get. I'm sure that's how people in Rock Creek and other communities do it already.

As far as Haines Junction goes, Haines Junction is a community that we are talking with about the regionalization plans. We still don't have a signed agreement with Haines Junction. We are having talks with that community. Soon, I will be meeting with them. We are scheduling that right now. I know that the department is meeting with that community as well.

One of the things that was driving this whole thing by the Association of Yukon Communities back in 2016 is that municipalities did not want to take unsorted, unsupervised, X-factor refuse from places in far-flung Yukon communities without knowing what was going in. As I said in my opening remarks, communities were receiving industrial waste and things that were unknown to them, which increases their liability, which increases their costs. Communities, such as Dawson City, had to spend tens of thousands of dollars shipping waste that had come from outside their borders to their facility — yeah, one of these unsupervised facilities to their waste management facility — and they didn't want to take on that — and they had to ship it down south to Alberta, to Swan Hills, to dispose of, because it was noxious, and they wanted to end that practice.

So, they came to us, and said: You have to help us. We have to do better. And that's what we are trying to do, which is what this whole plan is about — doing better by our citizens, addressing the climate change emergency that we have declared, and doing it in a way that helps us improve the territory and protect the Yukon's environment as we invest in and improve our community landfills in our bigger communities.

Ms. White: The minister just compared someone in Mary Lake not having access to a transfer station and having to drive their garbage into town. Can the minister just remind me how far away Mary Lake is from the Whitehorse waste facility?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I think better examples are Rock Creek or Henderson Corner.

Ms. White: Well, to be fair, the minister did say Mary Lake to Whitehorse, and so I just wanted to find that out, because he did say that Silver City could take their garbage to Burwash or to Haines Junction, so I just wanted to know if he knew the distances. So, Mary Lake to Whitehorse, or maybe

Silver City to Burwash, or Silver City to Haines Junction — what kind of distances are we talking?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I believe the member opposite is using her phone. I think Google Maps will certainly give her those numbers.

Ms. White: The minister is right; I am using Google Maps, but I am just trying to confirm what he has suggested. Could he just let me know how many kilometres it is between Mary Lake and Whitehorse's facility and how many kilometres between Silver City and Burwash or Silver City and Haines Junction? I'm sure he has an electronic device as well.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Unfortunately, my device, as she calls it, is out of juice. It's currently charging, so I don't have any power right now, but I will say that the goal that the department and the plan encourages is that we have a regional facility that everybody can use. It's controlled and helps bring the territory from an uncontrolled, decades-old approach to waste management to a modern one that's in place across the country and has a regional landfill that is controlled and well-operated and offers a range of services and staffing that helps the community, that everybody in the territory has one such facility within about 60 kilometres of their place of residence.

Ms. White: I missed it before, but was the minister talking about, as an example, Rock Creek and Dawson City, as far as distances to travel — that was something to consider? I just can't remember if he said Rock Creek.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I did say Rock Creek and Henderson Corner. There are lots of communities we could draw on. As I said, the overarching goal is to have a controlled, well-run, supervised, managed, efficient, greenhouse gas-reducing, reduction-of-garbage incentivizing, community-building landfill within 60 kilometres of Yukon residents. That is the goal.

Ms. White: Interestingly enough, Rock Creek and Dawson are just 17 kilometres, and Mary Lake and the dump are just — probably 1,920 kilometres — but Silver City and Burwash is 69 kilometres, and Haines Junction and Silver City is 61 kilometres. Johnsons Crossing — you know, 50 kilometres outside of Teslin; 127 kilometres away from Whitehorse.

The reason why I bring this up is, you know, comparing folks who live in Mary Lake — I mean, in Mary Lake, you have access to things like the Canada Games Centre; you have access to everything in Whitehorse, which is a really great way to manoeuvre into the comprehensive municipal grant review that was done by AYC. The reason why I am bringing that up now is because I have had enough for now of talking about transfer stations with the minister, but I am not saying that I won't come back to it. So, I will leave it for now.

Mary Lake, as an example outside of the City of Whitehorse, has a different property tax from someone who is within the City of Whitehorse, but they access the services in the City of Whitehorse — so, as an example, the Canada Games Centre. One thing that AYC has said — and I am sure that the minister is quite aware of it — is that municipalities need additional funding. The minister came — or not the minister necessarily, but the government came out recently with a press

release announcing the \$24.5 million, I think it was, for next year's municipal grant amount. The interesting thing with that announcement is that it is about six months before the spring budget. Maybe the minister can share with us why that announcement was made now and what calculations are used for that — what is the formula for that amount to the municipal grant?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Regardless of distance, the point is that not everyone in the Yukon is served by a transfer station only minutes away. People do manage their waste and arrange to take it where they travel. That is the new system that we're working toward with our municipal partners. It was important to our municipal partners that they were not receiving unknown waste — waste that was dropped off without any oversight. They didn't want to take on that liability and that responsibility. They wanted it controlled and to be able to see what was coming through their gates. That is the process we are doing. We are trying to make the change as easy as possible for folks, which is why we're working on it.

As far as the comprehensive municipal grant goes, the member is right: We have just increased the comprehensive municipal grant as per the formula that has been in place for a while. When we came into office in late December 2016 and then in 2017, the comprehensive municipal grant had been static and had not increased for many years. We changed the formula in 2018.

It was first created in 1991 as Yukon government's unconditional block funding to municipalities. Prior to the new formula that was implemented in 2013, the formula was comprised of four parts: the base grant, adjustment for local cost of providing services, assessment of equalization adjustment, and the size of the municipality. A working group started in 2012 to develop a set of guiding principles and establish a new formula to calculate it. In 2017, another comprehensive municipal grant working group was re-established to review the formula.

Amendments were made to some factors within the 2012 comprehensive municipal grant formula. There are some principles that I think deserve to be noted before going through: adequacy — that it reflects the attributes and cost of services in each individual municipality and is flexible and responsive when factors change; certainty — that facilitates municipal sustainability and future planning through a stable, predictable funding model that is equitable and treats similar municipalities similarly; minimal bias — the comprehensive municipal grant should support us in making decisions that are in the best long-term interest of a community; that it should be transparent, simple to understand, administer, and verify; and that there is accountability — that funds are paid, spent, and accounted for in a consistent manner with financial standards.

There are several parts, but part A, the base amount — and then there is population, the number of dwellings, the spatial price index, the consumer price index, the asset maintenance amount, the property tax adjustment rate, property tax room — and then, in part B, there is a reduction adjustment, which factors the core funding amount if the new grant is lower than the previous year. In part C, there is a transitional amount,

which ensures that a municipality's grant will never dip below their 2017 grant payment. So, we have built a lot of factors in this with the work that my predecessor did on the comprehensive municipal grant. Right now, we are working with the Association of Yukon Communities on how adequate the current funding model is for municipalities. That work is ongoing with the Association of Yukon Communities.

Ms. White: Has the minister responded yet to AYC and their comprehensive municipal grant review analysis?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The comprehensive municipal grant committee continues to meet with AYC and my officials. We have not yet responded formally to the submission that was made by the Association of Yukon Communities.

Ms. White: Has the minister had a chance to look at the document that AYC I think honestly felt a little bit of pressure to get done? They have indicated that there is a shortfall in funding for municipalities, so has the minister had a chance to go over the comprehensive municipal grant review analysis supplied by AYC?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, I have read every single page.

Ms. White: I am glad that the minister has read every single page, which makes it more helpful.

In this document, they talk about short- and long-term suggestions. I am just going to quote: "Some changes to consider for the CMG formula for the short-term financial support to municipalities include: 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."

Can the minister tell me his thoughts around that suggestion — so, increase the per person per property or dwelling value to reflect more updated values?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the member's interest in this. We are currently negotiating and working with the Association of Yukon Communities on their submission. I am not going to do so on the floor of the House this afternoon.

Ms. White: If negotiation is ongoing, why did the government put out a press release on October 24 announcing that \$24.5 million of funding will be transferred for April 1, 2024?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The statement that we put out was based on the 2023 grants. The municipalities need that information so they can do their planning for the upcoming year. It is a typical release — like I made last year as well. It's the same thing. It's based on the existing comprehensive municipal grant that is in place now. I was very heartened to see municipal leaders happy, generally, and making statements of acceptance for the amount that's coming out in this 2023 comprehensive municipal grant under the old formula that my good colleague struck back in 2017-18.

Ms. White: I guess there is one thing, which is that you can have a conversation in private with municipalities and indicate what money you were going to transfer and continue negotiations, or you could make a public announcement with a date in the future and tell me that you're going to continue negotiations around it. Can the minister help me understand

what the next steps are when it comes to reviewing the comprehensive municipal grant?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I think that there is a gross misunderstanding by the member opposite. We have a comprehensive municipal grant in place. I just stated in the opening remarks the principles under which that grant structure was established by my good colleague. I have gone through the current escalators that we built into it as a government to make sure that municipalities didn't languish without getting an increase for several years like they did in the past.

What we have been working on during my tenure here was improving and working on assessing whether the existing comprehensive municipal grant that the municipalities have been working under since 2017-18 is up to snuff. We have been going back and forth and had a committee with AYC and the Government of Yukon for that entire time. We funded a study with the Association of Yukon Communities that we gave several thousands of dollars to, to help it come together. We contributed to that report and that report has been delivered to us. My officials have been assessing that report and working now with the Association of Yukon Communities on the content of that report as we seek to improve the comprehensive municipal grant going forward.

The money that we announced recently was based on the old municipal grant, which is currently going on. It has been established and the principles were there.

So, I'm not presaging any negotiations with the Association of Yukon Communities or with municipalities across the territory. That negotiation continues to make sure that we assess whether or not the existing grant meets the needs of municipalities. They have some suggestions that they have given to me. As I recall, it is about 22 pages long. We are assessing that at the departmental level and we will continue to work with our partners to make sure that they have the money they need to operate and serve their citizens.

Ms. White: It is interesting because — as the minister likes to say — going way back, I can find other examples of press releases from the Government of Yukon talking about funding for municipalities and it is often done in conjunction with the president of the AYC, but not this time.

I guess the question I have is — the AYC has thought that there is such a need to review the current formula that the members of the Association of Yukon Communities — it is important to note that, just before anything else — made the decision that, because they had such concerns, nothing was moving with the review of the comprehensive municipal grant — of which members of the opposition were sent the analysis.

One of the concerns again is that municipalities have said that they don't have adequate funding to do what they need to do, and they have made suggestions. I just asked the minister about a suggestion — about increasing the per person or per property or dwelling value to reflect more updated values. The last time this was done was in 2012. It's 2023; I imagine some things have changed. Another suggestion that they had was to 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.

Again, I am just asking the minister — these are suggestions for short term. Has the minister looked at them, and what are his thoughts on them?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, we have an agreement with municipalities. The agreement is carrying forward. Every year, it goes up because of the progressive changes that my good colleague in Community Affairs made with municipalities back in the day in 2017 — not 2012. I just want to make sure the record is clear on that. The new escalators and new arrangement were struck in 2017-18; it's in place. We have committed to review it. We are currently reviewing it. We have a submission from the Association of Yukon Communities. I'm all in favour of transparency. I am glad that the members opposite were handed them by the president of the Association of Yukon Communities. Sure, if that's what the association wants to do, that's totally fine by me. I'm not a hoarder of information, like my good colleagues across the way.

I will say that I have sent letters to all the mayors, accompanying the increase for this year, that say: "We have received the resulting study and have assigned staff from the Department to continue working closely with the identified representatives from the Association of Yukon Communities to further understand the advice of the consultant and to recommend changes to the grant formula that could be considered for the 2025 budget cycle.

"I have directed the department to participate fully, and act with urgency, in this collaborative and positive effort. I know that together we can ensure sustainable, local services in your municipality.

"Sincerely..."

So, I am working with municipalities on this issue as we speak. We are trying to shoot for the 2025 budget cycle. Until we reach the finality of our collaboration, as we review the comprehensive municipal grant, they will continue to get money from the Yukon government, and it will increase every year based on the escalators that my good colleague put in place with the Department of Community Services in 2017-18.

Ms. White: One of the things that this minister and others have talked about is the importance of budgeting and how the process starts long before the budget, obviously, is tabled in the spring. So, knowing that municipalities right now are talking about the struggle to adequately cover what they are responsible for, when can municipalities expect further movement on changes to the municipal grant?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said a minute and a half ago, for the potential changes to the comprehensive municipal grant in the budget cycle, 2025 is what we are shooting for. This year, though, we have seen an enormous increase — more than 10 percent — in the comprehensive municipal grants to municipalities. I don't think that they were expecting that under the existing formula, which has to be accounted for in our review.

This year, they saw an increase of more than 10 percent to their comprehensive municipal grant. A lot of the comments that I have heard from municipal leaders — they are appreciative of the increase that they are seeing this year. This is going to go some way to addressing the shortage of money

that they have had in this time of inflation. I am under no illusion that it is going to go all the way. I have seen the report; I am doing it. I am not negotiating new terms for the Association of Yukon Communities on the floor of this House.

Ms. White: I don't think that asking questions about the future is a wrong thing, so I am going to continue on. So, within that analysis, there is a significant difference between the \$24.5 million that was announced for April of next year in the document from the AYC — the calculation with their suggested changes would bring that amount up to \$31,497,173, so that is a significant change. The reason why I ask again is that municipalities are facing climate change occurrences in ways that were unanticipated.

So, I think that, maybe to help with the conversation — and I am working at getting the letter in so that I can table it and the minister can see it, or I can give him a copy — in a September 29 letter from AYC — and I am going to read the letter. It says, regarding the comprehensive municipal grant and future sustainability: “I am writing you today concerning the sustainability of Yukon communities. Yukon municipalities find themselves in a situation where the governance framework and revenue system afforded to us are no longer allowing for keeping up with the modern challenges, and current expectations facing our local governments.

“Antiquated revenue and funding sources are stretched thin for the funding of frontline services, roads, bridges, parks, public buildings, water treatment, waste collection, seasonal maintenance, as well as municipal planning and administration to provide unexhaustive examples on the list - ultimately, it equates to essentially everything we deliver as local governments.

“The comprehensive Municipal Grant (CMG) is unconditional block funding provided to municipalities by the Government of Yukon since 1991. The Association of Yukon Communities initiated work in September of 2022 to review and modernize the CMG, as well as the relationship with the Yukon Government, to ensure our communities are adequately supported. The analysis and our report on CMG modernization was completed in July of 2023, and was presented to the Government of Yukon. I have attached a copy of the report and its findings for your review. This details many of the challenges currently faced by municipalities in addition to containing recommendations on how to address them.

“Financial and long-term sustainability are the most pressing issues currently facing our communities. This could, if not addressed, result in service reductions, a lack of infrastructure maintenance, and property tax increases. Resultantly, the Association of Yukon Communities is requesting your support and expressed advocacy in making this issue a proper priority of the Government of Yukon.”

I appreciate that I just read a lengthy document into the record, but I have for tabling the letter that is addressed to me and which, if the minister wants, I am sure we could pass over. The reason that I am bringing this up right now is because AYC, as the advocacy body for municipalities in the Yukon, has said that they are facing a funding shortfall. Again, the number that

they suggest with those short-term changes brings it up to \$31.5 million over the \$24.5 million.

Again, I ask the minister — he has indicated that there is going to be work on this in 2025, but is there a way to accelerate that process — to have those conversations sooner?

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for another two minutes.

Recess

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. White: Madam Chair, I was under the impression, actually, that the minister was going to answer the last question I had. I can't even remember what I was talking about, but hopefully he can.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I believe the member opposite was asking about the comprehensive municipal grant just before we broke and the difficulties that municipalities have expressed financially. I have conducted community tours throughout the territory with municipal leaders. I talk to municipal leaders on a regular basis. I have heard their concerns with their funding pressures and what that means.

The comprehensive municipal grant is a grant that covers some of their expenses. Municipalities have the ability to raise their own revenue and have other revenue sources beyond the Yukon government. There is also infrastructure money, and we have seen the federal government make historic investments in all of our communities over the last seven years, which is also part and parcel of the equation. I think that all of our municipalities are better for that incredible investment in our facilities and infrastructure across the territory — be it sewer and water, highways, or recreation facilities. It has just been extraordinary. We are all certainly better off for that, but I have heard municipalities' concerns about money.

I have received the report. We have, based on the arrangement that was part of the last negotiation with the Association of Yukon Communities, managed to increase their municipal funding this year by more than 10 percent. In terms of the negotiations we have been doing, we have had a review working group with the association since 2020, during the

pandemic. That group has met 17 times to discuss the current comprehensive municipal grant as part of our review. That work is ongoing.

As we have talked about this afternoon, we just received a new report that the AYC commissioned. We helped fund that report. We are assessing and working with the Association of Yukon Communities to improve the comprehensive municipal grant as part of our review. That work is ongoing. Those meetings are going to continue at the table. I am not going to negotiate on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, but we are hoping to have some sort of work completed by 2025. That's the goal.

Ms. White: A question asked recently — honestly, Madam Chair, I thought I wasn't going to go back to garbage. I did say that I might go back, so here we are.

For a question that was asked by my colleague about the gasifier in Old Crow, the minister indicated that Old Crow — and I can't remember what other community — were on the list for work for regional landfills. Can the minister give us a bit more of a timeline? Knowing that there was the real thought that the incinerator would be up and running this summer — there is a *Yukon News* article that indicates that it was hopefully going to be repaired in the summer, and now we are in November — can the minister just give me an update on what is going on with the gasifier in Old Crow?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question on the gasifier because, at the time of the question, I had some confusion on that subject initially and then did not have the information for the member opposite to answer the question. I asked for information and an update on the gasifier, and I hope this helps my good colleague in Vuntut Gwitchin and the Leader of the Third Party.

The household waste gasifier in Old Crow was commissioned in 2012 and operated until 2017. It has not been functioning since 2017 and it is unfortunate that the unit has been idle for so long. The problem was that several small explosions occurred inside the gasifier from 2012 to 2017, the last of which caused significant damage to the burner and the control system. We suspect that various types of explosive waste, such as propane canisters and aerosol cans, may have led to the damage within the gasifier.

We are pleased to provide an update to the community. Our staff in the Department of Community Services and contractors completed the first phase of repairs to the gasifier in October 2023. These repairs and upgrades included replacing the burners, upgrading and replacing the control systems, repairing the burn chamber liners, repairing the hydraulic system, completing building upgrades, and performing fuel system repairs. We have just issued a contract for design improvement to complete phase 2 of the necessary upgrades that will reduce the likelihood of future blowback events like the ones that caused damage to the burners and control systems in 2017. The work will be completed in the spring of 2024 and the gasifier will be recommissioned at that time.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that update. It is a concern. Having visited Old Crow at different times, I have been told that it is like a dump decoration. It looks quite

different from the landscape, so it is definitely something that you notice. There has been a lot of construction in that community and with that comes construction waste, and, of course, none of that is being burned in a way that does not release pollutants.

In Question Period earlier this week, the minister had indicated that Old Crow — and I can't remember what other community — but there were plans for the landfill. I am just trying to look for more information about what he was referring to during Question Period this week.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, as part of our solid-waste management regionalization and transfer station plan that we have been talking about a lot this afternoon, we are into phase 2, which includes introducing gate staff and tipping fees at YG sites at Destruction Bay, Champagne, Pelly Crossing and all municipal sites outside of Whitehorse, as well as all of the other work that we are doing.

Phase 3 includes implementing gate staff and tipping fees at the Yukon government-run Beaver Creek and Old Crow solid-waste facilities, but we still have to have conversations with those communities. We haven't started that, but that is the anticipated phase 3 of the regionalization plan. Those last two communities are the most far-flung parts of our waste-management system, so we have carved them off and they will be the last that we do.

Ms. White: I do hope that, when there is involvement and engagement with the community, it is not done through AYC. I don't think that would be very effective for Old Crow.

One of the commitments in the confidence and supply agreement was reform to the land lottery system through a public engagement, so I am just looking for an update on that. When will the engagement begin? Will reforms be ready for the spring of 2024?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am not going to talk on behalf of my good colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I will leave it for his conversation, which may not happen this afternoon but will come soon.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that reminder. At this point in time, I have been a critic for most areas and multiple ministers and sometimes can't keep them straight.

Recently in the media, we have heard about the theft of fire prevention equipment. Can the minister give us any more details on what equipment was stolen, if it has been found, and what the next steps are or what will be done to make sure that equipment like this is safe in the future?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have a gated and controlled compound that some individuals managed to breach, and they made off with a trailer, a fuel tank, and some quads. We have given descriptions of the individuals to the RCMP, who have started an investigation. I have not heard back from the RCMP on this matter. We have taken additional security precautions in the aftermath of the thefts. It's a serious matter, but the RCMP are involved.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that update. I know that, for example, wildfire equipment was being stolen in British Columbia from on-site where, for example, there were pumps and things set up on bridges, and that is one of the things

that I never hope to see here and I hope that this is not an indication of things to come.

The citizens in Dawson who were affected by the flooding in the Klondike Valley this summer have been asking when there is going to be a comprehensive review of the Yukon government's response to flooding. Initially, I was told that it was going to start soon. I'm hoping that I can get an update on where this process is at and, if it's started, who has been involved and who has been invited and, if it hasn't, when we can expect that to start.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are in the final stages of hiring a contractor. That should be done very soon and then they will be notifying folks in the Klondike and conducting that review on behalf of the Department of Community Services.

Ms. White: Has it been communicated to those who are affected that there are still steps or that there is still time to wait? I know that for those who were hit the hardest, there has been a feeling of a lack of communication, so has that been communicated to all those affected by the flooding that there are still steps to go — so hiring a contractor to start that process?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Stantec has been awarded the contract. I have just heard back from department officials. They are in the process of contacting individuals in the Klondike now that they have the contract. We are in the process of putting together a news release and maybe a ministerial statement on this issue.

Ms. White: I don't think necessarily that ministerial statements will reach those individuals who are in the Klondike Valley and still waiting to hear back from government about that comprehensive review, so I guess I'm urging people within the department to reach out and let those folks know that a process is underway and to maybe give them an indication of time. I am pretty confident that the people whom I talked to are not getting information from ministerial responses.

Another commitment from this government with the confidence and supply agreement is a review of the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. Can I get an update on where we are at with this and expected timelines for the public consultation?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We launched our review of the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* in June 2023. It's underway. The stakeholder and First Nation government engagement will continue throughout the fall, and public engagement will begin early in the new year. Our aim is to be in a position to table updated residential tenancy legislation in the spring of 2025. Independent contractors are working with our team to design and lead the engagement process.

One-on-one interviews in a group session, representing voices of landlords and tenants, has already taken place. A solutions lab is underway with representation from landlords and tenants groups, and we look forward to hearing the recommendations that come from this process. All of this work will help inform policy considerations and is designed for the public engagement. Seven solution lab workshops have taken place between the end of September and mid-October. This work will end in mid-November.

The goal is to ensure that the rights of tenants and landlords are balanced and that Yukon benefits from a healthy rental market. In the meantime, the residential tenancies office continues to provide information on the current act and timely and fair dispute resolution. The office's enhanced public outreach materials, as well as its technological interface, are to better serve Yukoners.

Ms. White: I caught some of that. I would just encourage the minister to maybe take eight minutes at a time to read stuff off. That would have been one that I would have appreciated in six of those minutes — would have been good — but I will read the Hansard transcript.

Just before I sit down, I again want to thank the folks who are doing the consultations in rural communities around the landfills. Dave, Riel, and Damien and that team — I saw them in action in person in Silver City and participated online for a number of those meetings. They are going into a tough situation trying to find solutions. I wish them luck with that. I know they just had a meeting in Burwash that sounded challenging, but I hope that the next one in Silver City — that we can work toward solutions.

I thank the officials for their time, and I guess the minister and I can get back into this in the spring.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the opportunity to add some questions. I will jump right in and start by asking a few points of clarification from the previous day when we discussed this in questions from my colleague the Member for Watson Lake. She had asked about phase 4 water and sewer in Haines Junction, so I would just like to confirm the status of that project. When will it be tendered? What is the budgeted cost? I believe that this was a project that was the subject of a letter from the mayor to the minister last year.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition, was asking for clarification on a question that was asked the last time we met. I wanted just to ask a point of clarification: Is the member opposite asking about phase 4 sewer and water in Haines Junction?

Mr. Dixon: Yes, that is correct.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thanks for that clarification.

So, as I said, back on October 23, the \$100,000 contract had not yet been tendered, so it has not been tendered yet. I will say that the Infrastructure Development branch built the septic receiving station as part of the 2019 upgrades completed by our contractor. When it was first used, it was found that there were odor issues downstream. Haines Junction shut down the septic receiving station in response. Our branch installed odor filters under each of the manholes on the route from the septic receiving station to the lift station. The filters have decreased the odors but there are still some issues to manage. Infrastructure Development branch has explored options to address the remaining deficiency work on the septic receiving station during the summer of 2023. The bid for the work has been received, and the Infrastructure Development branch will continue to work with Haines Junction to investigate options for the septic receiving station.

That is what I have from the department.

Mr. Dixon: I would just appreciate some clarification. My understanding of phase 4 of Haines Junction's water and sewer was that it was a multi-million-dollar project, not a \$100,000 project. So, I don't know the exact budget, but my sense from the community was that it was in the millions of dollars, not a \$100,000 project. I wonder if the minister is talking about a different project.

Last year, the Mayor of Haines Junction wrote to the minister about phase 3 and phase 4, and I know that the minister has provided answers about phase 3 previously, but I just want some clarification about phase 4 water and sewer in Haines Junction and whether or not it has already been tendered and what the total budget is.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will say to the member opposite that phase 4 has not yet — phase 4 of this project in Haines Junction has not yet been budgeted.

I have written to the mayor about this. I am meeting with the mayor and council in the coming weeks to discuss matters of importance to their municipality. We are looking for more infrastructure money to deliver on some of these projects in municipalities, getting a sense of what their priorities are and where they sit in terms of the next tranche of federal money coming from Ottawa. We don't have that announcement yet, but Haines Junction's phase 4 project will more than likely be part of that process.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I appreciate the minister's answer.

Just to be clear, I believe that I heard him say that there has been no budget established yet, and I assume that means that, therefore, there is no timeline currently. I just want to clarify that.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That is correct.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the minister for that answer.

The other question is that I just want to confirm, based on my colleague from Watson Lake's questions last week, I believe, which was about the number of lots released since the spring of 2021 — the minister indicated that, in that time frame, there had been 214 released plus four, which were the four in Logan. Can he just confirm that this is the total amount — there were 214, so 218 total residential lots released since the spring of 2021?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The number I have is 240 lots between 2021-22 and 2022-23. That includes the four Whitehorse infill lots on Finch Drive.

Mr. Dixon: I just asked for some clarification because I think that I may have misheard. Hansard said, last week, that the minister said 214, and I thought I heard 240, but maybe I'll ask him to speak just very clearly on this one.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much for the clarification. It was 240 — two four zero — is the number, and that's 106 in 2021-22 and 134 in 2022-23.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that; I appreciate the minister being clear about that. I'll move back to the federal infrastructure funding that the minister just mentioned. He mentioned the fact that we haven't seen an announcement from the federal government about the next tranche of federal infrastructure funding. The question I had was about the

engagement that Yukon has had with Canada about that. Has Yukon ever looked at or lobbied the Government of Canada for O&M funding to be included as a feature of new federal infrastructure funding?

I ask because I know that a lot of municipalities have expressed concern about their ability to sustain pieces of infrastructure following construction, and so, I would just like to ask whether or not the Yukon government has considered that, and if so, have they conveyed that suggestion to the Government of Canada for them to consider in the development of their next program?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have been to many, many meetings this summer with housing and infrastructure ministers and a full range of federal meetings at which I lobby and talk about our life in the north and what pressures we face. I have good relationships — we have formed good partnerships with both our colleagues in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. We have collaborated on meetings with federal officials as a group as well.

The issue of operations funding for the infrastructure projects at Ottawa has — the record investment they have made on infrastructure in the territory has not been a subject broached at any of these meetings by any ministers of provincial or territorial governments at these meetings. It is an interesting idea. I know that Ottawa does provide, in addition to the historic investments infrastructure, the former gas tax funding and all sorts of other supports to the territory. But actually, building operation and maintenance costs into their funding arrangements has not been breached.

We do a lifetime assessment of our infrastructure projects when they come in, so they do have that information, and we do work with municipalities to tailor the projects that they put forward to the size of the community, as best we can, to make sure that municipalities consider the operations costs going forward when they build these infrastructure projects.

Mr. Dixon: I would like to move to a few questions specifically about Whistle Bend and the Whistle Bend neighbourhood. I will start on green streets. We know, obviously, of course, the history there. There were multiple property owners along the green streets who had concerns with the path there. The path was laid, and then I believe that it was torn up last year, or sections of it were torn up.

Can the minister give us an update on where things are at with the green streets? Has construction or deconstruction, whichever way we look at it, been completed now, and if so, what is the total amount of money that has been spent on those green streets, in particular, the trails or the green streets themselves over the past two years?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Deputy Chair, green streets are an innovative concept in Whistle Bend where neighbours gather, play, and connect to a multi-use trail system free from vehicle traffic. Last year, construction on the green streets was paused to hear from residents who were concerned about some design features, including the widening of the pavement from three metres to six metres to allow for emergency vehicle access. We worked with the City of Whitehorse to engage residents and understand their ideas about the final design of the streets.

The city has approved a design that incorporates resident feedback, allows for emergency vehicle winter access, and adheres to the original intent of the green street concept. The Land Development branch has added the additional fire hydrants, paving, and other requirements to the updated plan. Final landscaping is underway, and landscaping will wrap up early in 2024 — or in 2024 — I expect that it will be done as soon as we possibly can.

The City of Whitehorse is the lead agency on the planning process and any green street guidelines or zoning. The Government of Yukon leads the construction of the Whistle Bend neighbourhood. We adhere to the city's design plan and engineering standards at all times. So, the city is the designer and provides the engineering standards; we execute on what they ask us to do, and we have done that and worked with the neighbours on this project.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that information. The minister indicated that the work would be complete early next year. Can he tell us the budget for the contract that is currently out that will be complete next year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I apologize to the member opposite; we are working to get those numbers. I haven't got them right here, but we are working on it.

Mr. Dixon: Deputy Chair, I look forward to hearing back from the minister.

An issue that was brought to my attention at a public barbecue in Whistle Bend related to what seems to be subsurface water on Keno Street. Apparently, there is — or could be — a leak in the water infrastructure along that street. It is causing some issues for a number of property owners. They are given to understand that the infrastructure itself has been signed off by the City of Whitehorse. I would like to ask the minister if he's aware of these concerns. Has he engaged with the City of Whitehorse to address the concerns that have been raised by property owners on Keno Street? What is the status of efforts to mitigate the concerns that have been raised by property owners along that street?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, this is a live file, for sure. I have been in touch with residents in the neighbourhood. I have also written a letter to the member opposite's good colleague on this very matter. The latest update is that — the member is absolutely right — we contracted to have the work done. When the work was completed, the City of Whitehorse signed off on the work that was done by the contractor. I have subsequently learned that there were deficiencies with the work that had been approved by the City of Whitehorse. The City of Whitehorse has now undertaken testing to find the source of the problems with the underground infrastructure. They failed to find anything in the initial discussion. They have now widened the search for potential leaks in the system that may be causing these difficulties. They are the ones conducting that work.

I have been in touch with, as I said, residents on this matter and I will continue to do so as we get more updates. At this stage, they haven't found the source of the underground leaks within the system that was built in that region.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that information from the minister.

Just as a point of clarification, once the contract is completed by the contractor who is working for the Yukon government, the city signs off on that work. At that point, they take possession and ownership of that infrastructure; is that correct?

I believe I heard the minister say that this did occur, so is this infrastructure now solely the responsibility of the City of Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That's my understanding. Once the sign-off is done, it becomes the city's infrastructure. The information that I just received from my deputy is that the mains are not an issue. It looks like it's a hookup between the line and a residence somewhere, so they are looking at that now. That work is ongoing. Because we have had outreach from residents in the area, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Community Services will be meeting with those residents to hear those concerns.

Mr. Dixon: I will move on to the Heiland property. This is obviously a large chunk of private land in Whistle Bend. It has been discussed for some time as a possible future development. I understand that it is currently for sale. Has the Yukon government ever looked at or entered into negotiations to purchase that land? If so, what is the nature and status of those discussions? I will leave it there for now.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the member bringing forward the issue of the Heiland property. We do want to increase density wherever we can, so that's important. I am sure that the member can understand that the Land Development branch is actually working to get an estimate of the density that the lot can sustain, so we're going to try to find out how many properties and how much development can be put on that lot and what the cost of development will be. We have also met with the landowner so that he understands the cost of the lot and the development cost estimates, so that work is ongoing. We want to keep lots as inexpensive as possible, and adding the cost of purchasing the lot will necessarily have to be factored into the cost of the lots that we sell in the future — were it to go ahead.

There is a lot to deal with here — with buying land from private developers and working that through. That has been communicated to the lot owner and we are continuing work with the landowner. We understand, certainly, the potential that this lot offers to us and to the whole development within Whistle Bend, and we are working with the owner to see if we can advance that, but we're not there yet.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that information from the minister. Another issue that I have heard raised in the community relates to traffic. Ultimately, traffic is naturally a city responsibility, but there have been some questions around whether or not there needs to be a third access to Whistle Bend. That's something that would, I think, be of a scale that the City of Whitehorse would need to discuss with the Government of Yukon. Has the minister had any overtures or initiatives brought forward to him to look at solving traffic issues in Whistle Bend vis-à-vis a third access to the community?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am aware of the issue, of course. I have heard some of the public comments and concerns raised

at city council about this matter, so I am aware of it. The traffic in and out of Whistle Bend is really a municipal responsibility. The city's transportation study has been delayed until early 2024. They are looking at solutions to this. We will, of course, work with the municipality when they come to us officially with some suggestions on how they might deal with this, and we will work with our partners, as we do in the collegial relationship that we have, to help them on traffic solutions to Whistle Bend in the future.

Mr. Dixon: Just to be clear, then: When it comes to the Whistle Bend development as a whole, the design is done by the City of Whitehorse; is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The city does the official community plan, of course. When they have a development such as Whistle Bend, they do the master planning and give us all of the criteria. Community Services actually does the detailed plan work for the City of Whitehorse and we then submit those detailed plans to the City of Whitehorse, which then vets them and signs off on the detailed plan that is developed to the city's design plan and engineering standards. They sign off on it, and once they have signed off on it, we proceed with the actual work needed. We contract the work to get the land developed to the city's design standards and exacting specifications.

Mr. Dixon: I just wanted to quickly return to the Keno Street issue. The minister said that the city had signed off on that project. Obviously, it was conducted originally by YG through a contractor, but my understanding is that there were some deficiencies. Is that correct? If so, does YG have any outstanding deficiencies that it needs to ensure are corrected before the project is considered complete?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, there are always deficiencies on projects that are completed. We work with the contractor to deal with any deficiencies that are identified. There is a warranty period after which the contractor is responsible for those deficiencies. The city takes on operations with a construction completion certificate. After that, there may still be deficiencies. Again, we will work with the contractor and the city to make sure that those are dealt with. Eventually, the city will sign a final acceptance certificate with us on that.

Then we get into where the deficiencies are. Are they in hookups? Are they in the main system? Or are they in hookups to the actual residences themselves? That's the important part.

The source of the leak, I have been told, was found today. It is a recirculating line into one home. It was just found today. I will get a full report in the coming days, but it looks like the source of that leak has been found, so that is good news for everybody. We hope we can deal with it now that we have found the source of that leak.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the information from the minister. It sounds like there is some late-breaking info, so we look forward to hearing more information as soon as it's available and we look forward to sharing that with the constituents who have raised concerns about that.

I would like to move on to the Land Management branch of Community Services. In particular, as the minister knows, we have ATIPP'd the briefing notes that he has provided so, for ease of reference, I will direct the minister to the joint briefing

note between EMR and CS. It's LD-01, for the purposes of his note. It's from the spring of this year, obviously, but I think it's still up to date.

It lists a number of projects. It says that LDB — Land Development branch — has a range of land development work underway in Whitehorse, including — and then it lists a number of bullets.

I would like to ask about some of these projects, because they are of interest to constituents. One of them is a Hemlock Street extension. It says that planning is underway, YESA, detailed design work and tender in fall 2023/early 2024 — can the minister describe what that project consists of and if it is still on the timeline that's referenced in this briefing note, which is admittedly a few months out of date?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Deputy Chair, this is the extension on Hemlock Street. The note is up to date. They are still hoping to tender later this winter or into early 2024. There has been a zoning complaint on that, and it is currently in a city process, so that's one of the things that's at play right now, and I don't know where that's at. It is within the city system. There was a zoning complaint on that development, but we're still hopeful, at this stage, to get it tendered in the coming months.

Mr. Dixon: Just so that I am clear, what is it exactly that they're tendering? Is it the construction of the road or an extension of underground water services? What is it that is going to be tendered that the minister is referring to?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are going to look into getting more information, but what I can tell is that the plan is for a mixed-lot development of 30-plus units on the Hemlock Street extension, so that's really what we're talking about. There is that zoning complaint. Sorry, it's my aged eyes. It's not a zoning complaint, Deputy Chair, so my apologies to the members opposite. It is zoning compliant. I am so used to seeing it; there's a transposition error there in my mind, I guess.

So, the zoning is compliant. With council support, the Land Development branch will lead the planning, YESA, and hopes to tender in the coming months — so, it is for a mixed-lot development of 30-plus units in the Hemlock Street area. And it was not a complaint; that is totally on me; I apologize for that confusion.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's clarification about the complaint versus compliance. If I understand that correctly, the minister is suggesting that the zoning for that area is compliant with the intentions that the Yukon government has for this land. My understanding — I am fairly familiar with the area. It is right beside Porter Creek high school, just a bit behind the greenbelt, behind the parking lot for that school.

Is the intention to connect Hemlock to Hickory, or is the intention for it to extend Hemlock into the greenbelt?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Deputy Chair. Those are very good questions. I have my team right now looking for the answers, so I will get more clarification and report back to the member opposite.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate any information that the minister can provide. Can I get him to repeat the number of lots that it is intended to create in this area?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The information note I have here suggests 30 plus — around 30 lots of mixed-lot type, so it is about 30 units.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's clarification. I look forward to any other information that he can provide about that project.

I will move on to the next one on the list, which I cited earlier — well, not the next one on the list, but the next one that I would like to ask about is called the Whistle Bend south bench. It says that they are working with the city on approval to harvest granular material for 2024 area projects. Can the minister provide some clarification about that? If I read it correctly, they are looking at harvesting gravel from the south side of the entrance to Whistle Bend. Can he provide some clarification about that?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are in discussions with the City of Whitehorse. This is in earlier stages of development, but that is exactly the plan. As the members opposite know, we are looking for new sources of gravel. There is gravel to be had in that area. We have started talks with the City of Whitehorse to harvest or to get that gravel, bring down the bench a little bit, and actually open up new areas of development in the City of Whitehorse for that, but these are still — we are working with the City of Whitehorse on this to understand the potential of this Whistle Bend lower bench area.

Mr. Dixon: So, just so that I am understanding, the intention would be to remove enough gravel from the south side of the road to flatten it in order to allow for lots to be developed; is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The objective is lot development for the City of Whitehorse for the growth of the city. Gravel is an ancillary benefit that may come through the work to develop more lots.

Mr. Dixon: Just so that I am clear, we are talking about the area that is on the south side of Whistle Bend Way as you are entering Whistle Bend, the right side? The intention would be to make that area into lots after removing the gravel? If that is correct, how many lots are we talking about? How big of a development would we be thinking about there?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: At this point, we are still — this is still being developed. We don't have an estimate for the number of lots. We are still working with the City of Whitehorse. It is very early stages for this, so we don't have numbers for the member opposite and probably won't have any for a while. I don't think we will even be anywhere near this until 2024, minimum.

Mr. Dixon: I'll move on to another quick one, on a different subject matter, though. Can the minister give us an update on Ross River's pool? The note from the spring indicated that it was intended to come into service in the spring/summer aquatic season of 2023. I don't believe it did, but I would appreciate it if the minister could update us on Ross River's pool.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: There's no way to sugar-coat this. I mean, we expected to open the Ross River pool this summer following completion of critical repairs to the pool systems. However, just as we were preparing to open the facility, new

areas of concerns were identified, so the pool could not be opened this year because of the structural problems that we identified as we were about to open it. The pool is now being assessed and we're not sure if it's viable to reopen, so we're working with the community — the Ross River Recreation Society — to identify alternative options to support recreation in the community — bus tours to Faro and that type of thing. But as far as that facility that was built, I believe, back in 1999 when so many of these facilities were built, this was not good news for anybody — certainly, not for me either — but the facility cannot be reopened at this time.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the update and I share the minister's disappointment and look forward to hearing more as time progresses on that project. Another one quickly — bouncing to a different community, Mayo, with regards to the reservoirs there. It was something that we discussed a number of times.

I noted that there were plans to have a tender for construction of the new reservoirs to replace the failed tanks. It was meant to be issued this year. Can the minister tell us if a tender was, indeed, issued? Have bids been received, and has the tender closed? If so, what is the budget for that project, and what is the timeline?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: To bring members up to speed, problems have been identified with the Mayo reservoir. It was built in 2018. The Government of Yukon has begun legal action against the project contractor. Community Services is working closely with the Village of Mayo. I met with the Village of Mayo this summer and heard their concerns about this. This is really an issue for Mayo, and I totally understand the community's concerns with this. We are working with the community to make sure that they have a water supply while the new systems are being built.

A tender for construction of the new reservoirs to replace the failed tanks will be issued in the coming months. It's en route to getting done; we are just working on finishing that contract. We hope to have a contract soon, and we have the old water system up and running. It's not ideal, but that's where we're at, and we're going to contract a new system. I wish I wasn't in this situation.

Deputy Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair (MLA Tredger): It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse West that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

May the House have a report from the Deputy Chair of Committee of 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: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled November 2, 2023:

35-1-126

Building Blocks to Children's Rights: 2022/2023 Annual Report — Yukon Child & Youth Advocate Office (Speaker Harper)

The following documents were filed November 2, 2023:

35-1-160

Urgent increases to program funding, letter re (dated November 2, 2023) from Cynthia Rudell-Lyslo, Executive Director, and Tim Brady, Board Chair, Opportunities Yukon/Career Industries to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Premier (White)

35-1-161

Comprehensive municipal grant and future sustainability, letter re (dated September 29, 2023) from Ted Laking, President, Association of Yukon Communities, to Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (White)