



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 164

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, March 7, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2024 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Clerk of the Assembly	Dan Cable
Acting Deputy Clerk	Allison Lloyd
Table Clerk	Christopher Tyrell
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, March 7, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

I would like to begin the 2024 Spring Sitting of the Legislative Assembly by respectfully acknowledging all Yukon First Nations and also that we are meeting on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper, as the actions requested in the motions have been taken in whole or in part: Motions No. 127, 269, and 313, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin; Motion No. 485, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane; Motions No. 72, 207, 300, 410, 578, 751, and 799, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre; Motions No. 155, 190, 279, 389, 395, 536, 597, and 656, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; and Motion No. 239, which was removed by the Leader of the Third Party and on which debate was adjourned in the name of the Minister of Health and Social Services.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper, as they are now outdated: Motions No. 197 and 781, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin; Motions No. 391, 599, and 660, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge; Motion No. 582, standing in the name of the Minister of Environment; Motion No. 50, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre; Motions No. 275 and 319, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin; Motions No. 424, 450, 601, 665, 666, 825, and 849, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane; Motions No. 194 and 713, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South; Motion No. 589, standing in the name of the Minister of Tourism and Culture; Motion No. 255, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre; Motions No. 617, 663, and 758, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek North; and Motion No. 696, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party.

INTRODUCTION OF ACTING TABLE OFFICER

Speaker: Members, I am pleased to welcome to our Assembly Mr. Chris Tyrell, who serves at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as Senior Clerk, Committees. Mr. Tyrell will be providing assistance at our Table for the Spring Sitting.

Members, please join me in welcoming Mr. Tyrell to the House.

Applause

INTRODUCTION OF PAGES

Speaker: It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Legislative pages who will be serving the House during the 2024 Spring Sitting. They are: Callie Yu Schott and Aaron Gayangos from St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Secondary School; Keegan Newnham-Boyd, Annika Sebek, Gallagher D'Abramo, and Hadley Callan from F.H. Collins Secondary School; and Kai Taylor and Malo Lapierre from CSSC Mercier.

Today, we have with us Keegan Newnham-Boyd and Gallagher D'Abramo. I ask members to welcome them to the House at this time.

Applause

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Under Introduction of Visitors, the Chair is pleased to welcome Jason Pedlar, the Yukon Ombudsman and Privacy Commissioner, and from his office, Adam Fraser and Tanis Davey. In addition, we have Maxwell Harvey, the Chief Electoral Officer, and Colleen Madore, the Assistant Chief Electoral Officer, from Elections Yukon.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here for the Spring Sitting with colleagues. There are a number of visitors today. I will do my best to properly recognize visitors who are here with us today: from Da Daghay Development Corporation, great partners and leaders in our community, Ben Asquith, Tiffany Eckert-Maret, Ethan LaVallee, Andy Calahizen, Aberdeen Broeren, Dakota Eckert-Maret, Virginia Gwendolyn, John Laffra, and John LaVallee as well. Thank you for being here today.

From the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, I would like to welcome John Campbell as well as Shirley Chua-Tan.

From the Youth of Today Society, I would like to welcome Lance Burton as well as Karl Romero and Seth Brown. I would like to welcome and thank the president of the Yukon Liberal Party, Carly Rudolph, for her tireless work and for being here today. Thank you.

Last but not least, I want to welcome my two sons. Both Taylor and Callum are here today. Welcome and thank you for being here and supporting.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: I too am very pleased to be here today for the first day of the Spring Sitting and to ask my colleagues to please help me in welcoming some guests who are here today, firstly, for the tribute on International Women's Day: Amanda Buffalo, who is a member of the Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-spirit+ People; we have Veronique Maggiore from the Yukon Women's Coalition and

Charlie-Rose Pelletier from les Essentielles. I would also like to welcome my husband, Rick McLean, and he's accompanied by one of our young council members from the Tahltan Band Council from Telegraph Creek, Brian Quock. Welcome. Thank you for being here today.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I will ask my colleagues to help me welcome a number of guests who are here today, visitors to the Legislative Assembly. From the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, we have Chief Superintendent Scott Sheppard, Superintendent Lindsay Ellis, Inspector Kent Langley, Staff Sergeant Jonathan Saxby, Sergeant Greg Holmberg, Sergeant Calista MacLeod, Corporal Dave Pompayo, Constable Jessica Edwards, Staff Sergeant Eric Lane, Sergeant Brent Edwards, and Corporal Sam Anderson, as well as Lindsay McCannell and Carrie Power.

We have: from the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board, the chair, Al Lucier, and Jason Bilsky, the chief executive officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation; Ryan Soucy, the acting director from Yukon Emergency Medical Services; Dr. Alex Kmet, the president of the Yukon Medical Association; and Katrina Fillmore, the chief executive officer of the Yukon Medical Association.

From Blood Ties Four Directions, we also have visiting us Celia Pratt, Karissa Bascom, Stacey Taylor, Dakota Hagan, Susan Cornell, Jenn Smith, and Felix O'Laney.

From the Department of Health and Social Services, we have Cameron Grandy, the director of Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services; Timothy Lambert, a senior policy analyst; and Amy Cooper, manager of Integrated Intensive Services. Lastly, from the Department of Justice, we have Deputy Minister Mark Radke, Assistant Deputy Minister Ian Davis, and Christina Laing.

Thank you all for being here.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to recognize that we have the president of the Whitehorse legion, Joe Mewett, here today. I want to thank you for your tireless work for veterans.

Thank you very much.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I have for introduction this afternoon two very important members of our staff. We have Sylvia Anderson and Carla Gostick here this afternoon for us. Can you please welcome them to this House?

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: A couple more guests, Mr. Speaker. We have Mr. Tim Green from the Yukon Heritage Resources Board, and we also have my wife, the lovely Susan Walton — if we could welcome them both, please.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There are a lot of folks in the gallery today. I think we also have Doris Anderson from the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce — if we could welcome her, please.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Blood Ties Four Directions

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize and honour Blood Ties Four Directions for their remarkable dedication and service to Yukoners over the past 30 years. Their unwavering commitment and leadership have played a vital role in shaping a healthier and more inclusive Yukon for all.

Blood Ties' comprehensive approach covering education, health navigation, harm reduction, and housing support continues to have a profound impact on our community. Their efforts have created a safe space for those in need, fostering a sense of community care that uplifts vulnerable people and saves lives.

Thank you to the many individuals who are behind this organization and those who have been part of this journey over the past 30 years. Your work makes a difference every day.

The Blood Ties Four Directions outreach van has been a cornerstone of the work of this vital organization, serving as a lifeline for over two decades. For over 20 years, this mobile service has gone above and beyond to reach individuals who may otherwise be underserved and provide them with care, a friendly face, a warm drink, or some new socks.

Blood Ties' steadfast leadership was instrumental in establishing the north's first supervised consumption site. Through collaboration with community partners and mental wellness services, they have ensured that Yukoners receive crucial support and care in an environment that prioritizes education and harm reduction. The supervised consumption site saves lives.

The dedication of Blood Ties in supporting Yukoners goes beyond providing services for our youth and in communities. They have taken initiatives to promote dialogue and empowerment in diverse and inclusive spaces through their outreach and education programs. By recognizing and respecting the specific needs and cultural lives of Yukoners, they have built genuine connections and resilience within the territory. Their work in partnership with Yukon First Nations, other governments, and the non-governmental sector to help people access the services they need is truly commendable.

Blood Ties continues to be an unparalleled partner providing crucial support and resources to those impacted by the substance use health emergency. Blood Ties Four Directions' commitment and compassion over the past 30 years has been exceptional, reflecting the spirit of solidarity and care for each other that defines the Yukon. Blood Ties' legacy is characterized not only by the services they provide but also by their leadership in advocating for a safer, more inclusive community. Through their relentless efforts, the organization

continues to be a beacon of support, embodying the principles of compassion, inclusivity, and progress in their mission to uplift and protect vulnerable members of the community.

On behalf of the Government of Yukon and all Yukoners, I express our deepest gratitude to Blood Ties Four Directions for their invaluable contribution toward our collective health and well-being. Their legacy of compassion and advocacy continues to inspire us all as we work together toward a healthier and more inclusive Yukon for generations to come.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Blood Ties Four Directions for 30 years of contribution toward the health and wellness of Yukoners.

1993 saw the establishment of the AIDS Yukon Alliance, an HIV education and support organization which has undergone much growth and many changes over the past 30 years. Since 2001, it has operated under the name we know today, Blood Ties Four Directions, providing a broader range of services.

The organization continues to offer HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C support but has expanded over the years to offer a broader range of community supports, outreach, and education.

Our thanks to current and past board members and staff for your dedication to the work that you do.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, today I am honoured to stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Blood Ties Four Directions and their dedication to walking alongside Yukoners for the past 30 years. Blood Ties began in the early 1990s in response to the HIV/AIDS crisis around the world and in the Yukon. In the last 30 years, the organization has grown to include a drop-in space, housing supports like the Steve Cardiff tiny homes, and most recently opening the Yukon's first supervised consumption site.

Blood Ties partners with FASSY and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation to staff the outreach van, which is on the road every evening serving between 30 to 50 individuals. This organization has continued to challenge all of us to address and end stigma around drug use, to support each other and to work together to ensure equitable access to health and wellness.

Blood Ties, in its advocacy for people who use drugs in our community, is the reason that we have the harm-reduction supports we do today. These efforts have saved countless lives through the provision of harm-reduction supplies, access to supports, and most directly through the distribution of Naloxone and access to the supervised consumption site.

An essential part of the work that Blood Ties does is the meaningful inclusion of people with lived and living experience. In recognition of this anniversary, I want to celebrate and thank the incredible folks who are part of LEAG, the lived experience advisory group, at Blood Ties. Their advocacy, wisdom, and knowledge are incredibly valuable to our community.

Last year, I attended an event organized by LEAG, and I learned so much from the sharing of their knowledge and experience. The work of harm reduction cannot and should not be done without voices like theirs at the table.

From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank the team at Blood Ties, past and present, for their determined efforts defending the human rights of people who use drugs and for their work advocating for a more compassionate, person-centred, and pragmatic approach to substance use.

As we continue to lose community members because of the unregulated and volatile drug supply, the importance of organizations like Blood Ties means even more. We are all too aware that the efforts of harm-reduction organizations across the country are being threatened. Governments are closing supervised consumption sites and banning the funding of harm-reduction equipment. We know that these services are life-saving and essential to so many individuals. The Yukon NDP will not let the same happen in the Yukon. We need to expand the harm-reduction supports and services, ensuring that we are all listening to experts like Blood Ties as we move forward to address this crisis.

Again, thank you to the staff, board, and those with lived and living experience, past and present, who have helped grow this vital and amazing organization.

Applause

In recognition of International Women's Day

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to International Women's Day.

At the core of tomorrow's celebration is a long history of strong women who have worked tirelessly to achieve gender equality. They have been guided by the belief that we can create a society where everyone enjoys the same rights and opportunities. Women are an incredibly diverse group, and on International Women's Day, we celebrate the achievements of all women, including transgender women and gender-diverse people. On this day and every day, we strive for equality of all women. Today we will celebrate and recognize the contributions of women to our community here in the Yukon and around the world while being mindful that there is still much work to do.

The United Nations theme for International Women's Day 2024 is "Invest in women: Accelerate progress". This theme is a reminder that gender equality is one of the most effective ways to build healthier, more prosperous, and more inclusive communities. We have a history of strong women leaders in the Yukon. Young girls and gender-diverse youth in the Yukon can look to many examples of political leadership, leaders in business, community, arts, and sports. Today in the House, we are joined by many leaders in our community who are working to achieve equality for women and gender-diverse people. Thank you for all that you do.

While we are celebrating today, I would like to take a moment to remember women, girls, and gender-diverse people who are not here with us today. Sadly, there are many. Recently, we lost an elder and a matriarch in our community

who was a pioneer in achieving the rights of women. I would like to recognize Frances Woolsey, Gus'Duteen of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Frances Woolsey led an incredibly rich life and held many roles. Today, as we mark International Women's Day, I recognize the role she played as a trailblazer for the rights of Indigenous women. She founded the Yukon Indian Women's Association in the 1970s to provide services and support for Indigenous women and their children. This organization would later become the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council.

I would like to express my condolences to the family of Frances Woolsey and all who loved her. We will honour her legacy and the example she set with our work to support women in the Yukon. I will be working with the family to find a time when Frances can be fully tributed here in the Legislative Assembly.

Today, I encourage my colleagues here in the Legislature and all Yukoners to make this International Women's Day an opportunity to reflect on how we can end discrimination for all women and non-binary people and uphold their right to self-determination.

Today and every day, let's celebrate women in their diversity. I encourage Yukoners to participate, if possible, in the many events and initiatives organized across the territory to mark this occasion.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize tomorrow, March 8, as International Women's Day. This year's theme is "Inspire Inclusion", celebrating the diversity and unique perspectives from women around the globe and, more importantly to us, from those across the Yukon. This theme reflects the collective effort to forge a more inclusive world for women.

This day is an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the many accomplished women in our communities and to empower a generation of young women and girls who have yet to realize their full potential in this great big world. Women, when inspired to be included, experience a sense of belonging, relevance, and empowerment. When we inspire other women, we women contribute to a better world. Today is not a day for any single country, group, or organization; it is a day to celebrate global activism for women's equality.

The first annual International Women's Day was recognized in 1911 during early movements for women's equal participation in society. It was officially recognized by the United Nations in 1975 with a goal of recognizing women and highlighting their social, economic, cultural, and political achievements and contributions.

We continue this important practice today in order to elevate women's achievements, their voices, and their concerns and to ensure that they have access to the tools and resources they need to thrive.

To the women and girls, I ask you to understand, seek, and value this knowledge and encourage others. To our local organizations, I ask you to forge women's economic empowerment and to recruit, retain, and develop female talent

and support women and girls in leadership, decision-making, and business.

Together, let's inspire inclusion, embrace diversity, and ensure women are included in all fields of endeavour. Let us all celebrate International Women's Day by inspiring, including, and advancing equality.

Salamat po.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to International Women's Day. It is a day to recognize the strength, resiliency, struggle, and courage of women while also firmly standing against misogyny. It is a day that also celebrates and honours the women who have come before us, the women here today, and the women yet to come.

I would like to begin by thanking the many women who helped raise me and shaped who I am today and the many women who continue to walk beside me — some of whom are here today with us — the women who taught me about the world, sitting around the firepit or over tea and out on the land, the women who taught me the skills and lessons that guide me and all the work I do and the many paths I have walked.

International Women's Day is an important reminder to everyone here that our work will always impact generations of Yukon women and girls and that the work we do in this House is meant to help and serve Yukoners. This day reminds us that women's rights are human rights and we have the important work of upholding them. All women have the right to a life free from violence. All women and their families have a right to affordable and safe housing. All women have the right to express their gender identity without fear of discrimination or harassment. All women have the right to practise their culture and religion. All women also have the right to access health care and the right to make choices and decisions for themselves.

International Women's Day is for all women from all walks of life. When we actively work toward achieving these goals and addressing systemic barriers that impact women, we will create a more inclusive, fair, and equitable society that benefits everyone.

Happy International Women's Day to all women across the territory.

Mahsi.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under Tabling Returns and Documents, the Chair has for tabling a report from the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly on the absence of members from sittings of the Legislative Assembly and its committees, dated March 7, 2024. This report is tabled pursuant to directions of the Members' Services Board.

In addition, the Chair has for tabling the final report on Hidden Valley Elementary School from the Yukon Ombudsman entitled *Left in the Dark — Report 2 — Safer Schools Action Plan Assessment*, February 2024.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have the honour to present the 12th and 13th reports of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have the honour to present the ninth and 10th reports of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges.

Speaker: Are there any further reports of committees?
Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 212: *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be now introduced and read for a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 212 agreed to

Bill No. 213: *First Appropriation Act 2024-25* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 213 agreed to

Bill No. 214: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2024-25* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 214, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2024-25*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 214, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2024-25*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 214 agreed to

Bill No. 35: *Coordinated Vaping Product Taxation Agreement Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 35, entitled *Coordinated Vaping Product Taxation Agreement Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 35, entitled *Coordinated Vaping Product Taxation Agreement Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 35 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House congratulates the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated on the signing of the *Nunavut Lands and Resources Devolution Agreement* with the Government of Canada.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House congratulates John McConnell and the Victoria Gold team as recipients of the 2024 Viola R. MacMillan Award at the PDAC conference and the 2023 AME Murray Pezzim Award at the AME Roundup conference.

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

THAT this House congratulates the 11 students who successfully completed the third offering of the Dáshāw k'e multi-credit, semester-long program at F.H. Collins Secondary School, which offers Yukon First Nation culturally centred high school education.

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

THAT this House supports the implementation of *The Yukon's Health Human Resources Strategy* to address human resource challenges in the health care workforce.

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

THAT this House thanks Yukon highways crews for their ongoing efforts to keep our roads clear and safe for travel throughout the territory.

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

THAT the *Ninth Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges*, presented to the House on March 7, 2024, be concurred in; and

THAT the amendments to the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly recommended by the committee, regarding notice of committee meetings, be adopted.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT the *Tenth Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges*, presented to the House on March 7, 2024, be concurred in; and

THAT the amendments to the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly recommended by the committee, regarding remote participation, be adopted.

Finally, I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House wishes all athletes, coaches, cultural performers, and support personnel a successful 2024 Arctic Winter Games.

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

THAT this House recognizes the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Development Corporation for their ongoing commitment to food sovereignty and security in the north with their recent acquisition of a majority stake in ColdAcre Food Systems.

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

THAT this House congratulates Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Trust and Northern Vision Development on their acquisition of the Eldorado Hotel in Dawson City, along with the branding of the Eldorado Hotel and the Midnight Sun Hotel as Coast Hotels.

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

THAT this House supports Bill C-64, the new Canadian pharmacare framework.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce legislation that would:

(a) implement air-quality standards in government-owned buildings aimed at reducing the risk of airborne illnesses, wildfire smoke, and other contaminants; and

(b) require monitoring and public reporting of air quality in government-owned buildings.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to give an update on the future of an elementary school in downtown Whitehorse and the École Whitehorse Elementary School lot.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals took office in 2016, Yukon's public finances were in a strong position. We had net financial resources of hundreds of millions of dollars, which meant that there was plenty of money in the bank. Fast-forward to today, Mr. Speaker. After three years of a Liberal-NDP government, the Yukon is in the worst fiscal situation since devolution. Just a few weeks ago, the Deputy Minister of Finance confirmed that we have the lowest net financial resources in a generation. Yukoners cannot afford to continue the spending spree that the Yukon Liberal-NDP coalition has been on for the last few years.

How low does the bank account need to get before the government starts to pay attention to the bottom line?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting tack from the Yukon Party and their government that started the trend of the financial cash reserves actually being greater than the actual revenues that we brought in. That trend started in

2013 under the Yukon Party government, and if it weren't for a pandemic, Mr. Speaker, we would be in a much better position now, but we did spend a lot of money at that time for businesses and individuals to make sure that they had the supports that they needed during a global pandemic.

If the member opposite will take a look at our long-term plan, we will get to a revenues position being greater than an expense position very soon — within a couple of years — because of the good financial management of the Yukon Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, we have the envy of most jurisdictions. When you take a look at the budgets that are happening across Canada right now, the narrative from the Yukon Party just does not hold any water.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, last year when the Premier introduced his first budget, it forecast a net debt of a whopping \$374.8 million. As if that weren't startling enough, over the course of 2023, this government kept bleeding money. By the time that the Fall Sitting came around, the supplementary budget introduced in October showed that, in just six months, the net debt had grown to \$423.8 million; that is almost another \$50 million tacked on in net debt.

My question for the Premier is simple: Just how deep into net financial debt is he willing to go?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, this is going to be a great session to be able to talk about the amazing financial situation that we are in, in the Yukon compared to other jurisdictions in Canada. Every jurisdiction in Canada spending money for Yukoners — sorry. We are spending money for Yukoners, but everybody is spending money for Canadians. This is a really important time for Canadian unity, and the Yukon is in an amazing spot when you take and consider our finances compared to others.

When it comes to net-debt-to-GDP ratio, we're the second best in Canada, whereas the members opposite will make it seem like the sky is falling. When you take a look at the amount of money that has been borrowed in the Yukon, most of that money was borrowed by the Yukon Party. The lion's share of it was borrowed by the Yukon Party, and they borrowed it in a way that they would only put money on the interest and not the principal, making sure that the debt that they incurred was going to be continued for generations to come and other generations to come. We are solving that. We are also solving the infrastructure deficit that they left us with, and we have the envious position in Canada of being the second best net-debt-to-GDP ratio in Canada.

Mr. Dixon: According to the Public Accounts, the Yukon government's net financial assets in 2021 were over \$182 million. When the government introduced their 2023-24 budget last year, it forecast that net debt would go to well over \$520 million by the end of this Liberal-NDP coalition's term. That means that, in three short years, we have seen a more than \$700-million swing from black into the deep red. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it is so red that it is almost orange.

My question for the Premier is simple: How much more of this Liberal-NDP coalition does he think that Yukoners can afford?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First, I would like to reflect on conversations this week. I had an opportunity to sit with our banker. I had to apologize that we are not needing to borrow long term, like the Yukon Party did so many times, and heard that most jurisdictions are actually looking at long-term borrowing.

What I find funny is the comment from the Leader of the Official Opposition saying that we are bleeding money. When I look up here and see the folks who are with us today, I don't think that investing in our health care system, I don't think investing in more medical staff and our hospital, I don't think investing in the RCMP and their infrastructure and more staff, I don't think investing in more firefighters is bleeding money. That's what Yukoners have asked for; that's what we are going to do.

This budget is solid. I am proud of the work that our team has done, and it's about investing in the things that Yukoners want. That's what we are going to be doing in 2024.

Question re: Federal infrastructure funding

Mr. Hassard: As bad as the Liberal's financial mismanagement has been for our public finances, their spending habits have started to affect their ability to advance important infrastructure projects as well.

Between the Nisutlin Bay bridge — which has already seen one massive change order due to this government's mismanagement — and the job at the airport, the simple fact is that this government is running out of money. There are numerous capital projects that this government has had to cancel or delay because of the pressure the government's finances are under. In fact, we continue to hear from sources within multiple government departments that many capital projects have had to be cut or delayed for many years because the Liberal government is simply out of money. Meanwhile, the spending on the confidence and supply agreement continues to keep growing.

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us how many capital projects the government has had to cut or delay this year because of the fact that they are out of money?

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The fiscal year 2022-23 — \$504 million out the door and on budget. We did not overspend.

In 2023-24, it will be approximately \$485 million out the door on budget as well. The member opposite knows that we have the Dempster fibre project, which we hope will be operational by the end of this year.

We have ongoing projects on the national trade corridors fund for the north Klondike Highway. We have the Nisutlin Bay bridge, which curiously didn't get done under the Yukon Party government. It was a concept, but it didn't get done. It is getting done. The Member for Pelly-Nisutlin well knows that it is getting done. Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport — \$250 million of infrastructure spent on the main runway, on the apron, on lighting, on electrical upgrades, and on the parallel runway. We are getting it done; we are moving the Yukon forward.

Mr. Hassard: So, again, lots of talk but no actual answers.

So, what is worse than the government being out of money is that the federal infrastructure funding has dried up as well. The minister is being very clear that all federal infrastructure funding allocated to the Yukon has already been spent and there has been no progress to date on the new federal infrastructure fund.

However, last year, the Premier told the Legislature not to worry because Yukon would be receiving federal infrastructure funding that was unspent by other jurisdictions. Here is what the Premier said — the federal budget — quote: "... talked about how regions ... that have fully used their ICIP funding have the opportunity to again have access to funds that haven't been used across the country..."

So, the question is simple: When will Yukon get access to all of that funding that was unspent in other jurisdictions, or was the Premier just getting creative with the facts again?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Fiscal year 2015 — last year of the Yukon Party government — they got approximately \$185 million of capital spend out the door. As I said, last year — or this year, \$485 million and last year, \$504 million on budget. By my math, that is two and a half times what the Yukon Party was able to get out the door. It is pretty reasonable math, in my view.

Mr. Speaker, between fiscal 2021 to fiscal 2025-26, the recapture, or the co-funding, from the federal government is at 35 percent, 40 percent, 40 percent, 40 percent, 40 percent, and in the final year, 30 percent. Our departments have done the hard work to leverage federal infrastructure funding, and we have that funding in place until 2025-26. The core Yukon spending is between \$200 million and \$260 million, but layered upon that is the federal spending.

There is a lot of infrastructure spending that is ongoing and will be completed in the last two years and going forward in the next two years. We are moving the Yukon forward.

Mr. Hassard: Again, a whole lot of words but no actual answers for Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are facing a difficult situation. The federal government's infrastructure funding has dried up and there is no replacement in sight. It seems that the Premier's promise that we would get unspent infrastructure money from other jurisdictions was something that he just, in fact, dreamed up. Meanwhile, the Liberal government here in the Yukon continues to dwindle away our financial assets. We have less money in the bank now than ever before. Yukon communities have infrastructure priorities that need to be met. Yukon contractors are trying to make plans about their upcoming work season.

What message does the Premier think that their financial mismanagement actually sends to Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, let's set the record straight — no mismanagement of the finances — actually strong. Long-term debt — when families are sitting at the table and they have to make a decision to go out and get a long-term loan — those decisions about debt — the majority of those decisions all lie with the previous government. The majority of that long-term

borrowing — almost all of it — was done under the Yukon Party. That is a fact. Actually, the Member for Lake Laberge, who is speaking up now, has his fingerprints on most of it.

What we will continue to do is to have one of the strongest economies in this country, which we see year over year. Contractors will see very soon that there is a tremendous amount of opportunity to keep their people working and to ensure that we have the lowest unemployment rate in this country, which we had either one or two in the last half a decade.

When I think back — especially for the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin — when he announced the fibre project, he announced it but never had a plan to build it. How much would it have cost on the day he announced it?

What about the Nisutlin Bay bridge under the Yukon Party when they said they were going to build a new bridge but never built it? How much would it have cost before the pandemic? How much would it have cost 10 years ago?

What we are going to continue to do is invest in our communities; we are going to listen closely too, because today, while the cameras are on, they will say that we should watch what we are spending, and for the rest of the time, they will tell us to build and spend on a bunch of other priorities that they will come up with in the next 29 days.

Question re: Department of Education sexual orientation and gender identity policy

MLA Tredger: Yesterday, Yukoners were horrified to read a news story about homophobic and transphobic materials being given out in a Yukon school. A group of concerned parents sent a letter to media and political parties with photocopies from a textbook currently being given to students.

A direct quote from the textbook reads, quote: "... homosexual acts are disordered..." It lists examples of disordered sexuality, which includes, in its mind, homosexuality and, beside it, bestiality. Teachers telling students that their sexuality is disordered and akin to bestiality is the opposite of the safe school environment that the minister has promised. It increases the risk of self-harm and suicide for 2SLGBTQ+ students. It encourages bullying and harassment. It is cruel and violent language that causes direct harm to students.

Does the minister think it is acceptable for a publicly funded Yukon school to teach students that homosexuality is disordered and comparable to bestiality?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. It is a top priority to support healthy, active, safe, and caring learning environments in all Yukon schools. All students, staff, and parents have a right to feel safe and to be safe in Yukon public schools.

We have done a tremendous amount of work in my time in government to ensure that we are working with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. We worked closely on what was called the LGBTQ2S+ action plan, which we released in July of 2021 and which set out a number of very clear actions. To further support the community, the Department of Education updated the sexual orientation and gender identity policy, also

known as the SOGI policy, in August of 2023, which was outlined in the inclusion plan.

When we get into expectations around what is expected in schools, we expect that, consistently, Yukon laws and Department of Education policies are followed. I will continue to build on my answer as I go forward.

MLA Tredger: The minister doesn't seem to realize that saying that all students have a right to be safe is meaningless if she allows her schools to hand out materials that say homosexuality is disordered and comparable to bestiality. So far, she hasn't even commented on this material. She hasn't said if she thinks it's okay or not. She certainly hasn't made any commitments that it won't keep happening.

So, I will give the minister another chance to answer: Does the minister think it is acceptable for a publicly funded Yukon school to teach students that homosexuality is disordered and comparable to bestiality? If not, what is she doing about it?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we have very clear expectations in our schools.

The material that is being spoken about today — while Catholic schools have the right to provide religious education programs and lessons that teach Catholic values to their students, they do not have the right to provide teachings about sexual orientation or gender identity that are inconsistent with Yukon's laws and Department of Education policies.

We thank the concerned parents for bringing forward their concerns, and we can confirm that the matter is being addressed at the school level. There is no place for homophobia or transphobia teachings in our public school system — period. Catholic schools in the Yukon are public schools, as we have heard stated today, and that is true. The Catholic educators are public school servants. All schools and teachers must adhere to all Yukon government laws and policies. We remain committed to ensuring that our schools are safe spaces for all students and staff. This is a commitment I make as the Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity, and it is surely a value of this Liberal government.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I am relieved to hear what I think the answer to that was, which is that it is unacceptable, because it hasn't been that clear in what the minister has previously said. But the reality is that those materials are being given out in Yukon schools. The minister has known about it for almost two weeks since the anonymous letter was sent to her and to the media. She says that actions are being taken, so I would like to hear about them. When homophobia and transphobia happen in schools, they need to be addressed. It needs to be stopped, it needs to be prevented from happening again, and the people who have been harmed need to be supported.

What actions has the minister taken in the last two weeks to make sure that these materials are removed from the school and will not be given to students again?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, I think that I have been clear about my answers today and the position of our government and my position as the Minister of Education. These matters are being addressed. I can assure the member opposite of this. I think that I have been very clear today about

our expectations when it comes to curriculum that is being taught in our schools and that they must adhere to Yukon laws and department policies. All schools must adhere to that.

Mr. Speaker, we have done a tremendous amount of work over the last many years. I have been in this role first as the Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate, now Women and Gender Equity. Even that change in title tells you the shift that we have made in our territory. We are actioning the first-ever LGBTQ2S+ action plan in the Yukon, which we worked very closely on with the community to develop.

The amendments that we made to the SOGI policy — and enacted those in August 2023 — are a direct action of that. If I can bring further information forward, I will do that.

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: Energy strategy effect on electricity rates

Ms. Clarke: Salamat, Mr. Speaker. For many Yukoners who rely on electric heat to keep their homes warm in the winter, the planned power rate increases that are currently before the Yukon Utilities Board are quite worrisome. I have heard from folks living in Whistle Bend whose power bills have been staggering. Those bills are making it a real challenge to make ends meet. Unfortunately, we know that electricity rates are only going up. According to Yukon Energy's rate application that is currently before the Utilities Board, power rates will be going up over 14 percent. That increase will come into effect at the same time as certain riders will come off, or be reduced, so that the net impact that residents will see on their power bill is an over six-percent increase. Does the Liberal government think that now is a good time to increase costs for Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The rate application before the Utilities Board today, this week — so, they are doing that good work. Of course, the Utilities Board is there to take the perspective of the ratepayer — of Yukoners. We do invest in electricity across the territory; we are modernizing our system. We are making that transition away from fossil fuels. By the way, I think the prices at the pump went up 10 cents last week. So, if someone is moving to electricity rates, is there a chance that they are going to go up under this rate hearing? Yes, there is. The rates in the Yukon are the same for all communities across the territory. The rates are the lowest, by far, in the north. The rates here in the Yukon are lower than Calgary and Alberta for electricity.

So, yes, there is an increase; it is six percent. That is what Yukon Energy has proposed. We will see what the Utilities Board says of that, but that is to invest in transitioning away from fossil fuels across the territory.

Ms. Clarke: Salamat. That is cold comfort to Yukoners. According to Yukon Energy's application before the Utilities Board, a major driver of the need to increase power rates is due to the rising cost of renting diesel generators. While the Liberals have told Yukoners that renting diesel generators was a short-term measure, we know that they actually plan to rent them for at least another decade at a cost of tens of millions of dollars.

How much more will Yukoner's power rates go up as a direct result of the Liberal government's decision to rely on rented diesel generators for dependable capacity on our power grid?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I asked the utility to tell me what percent of our energy is supplied by rental diesels. Here is the answer: one percent. One percent of our energy comes from rental diesels, but 60 percent of the questions coming from the Yukon Party are about rental diesels.

By the way, if the cost of rental diesels goes up, you should imagine what will happen with the cost of a diesel plant, which is what the Yukon Party wants to do.

We always want thermal for backup, because we need to make sure our system is reliable, but when it comes to providing the needed winter energy for Yukoners, we are growing, and we are making those transitions away from fossil fuels. That's what we're trying to make a transition toward: renewable energy. The solution is not to invest forever in a diesel plant that will supply that energy; the solution is to go for renewables.

By the way, I am told that the wind project on Haeckel Hill — Thäy T'äw, led by Chu Níikwän — is coming online in the coming weeks.

Ms. Clarke: Salamat. Whether it is rented diesel generators or spending money on energy projects that have ultimately gone nowhere, the political decisions that the Yukon Liberals have made about our energy system have real costs for Yukoners. Only some of those costs have been passed on to power bills so far, but we know that much more is coming.

For example, the new grid-scale battery alone will mean that over \$18 million gets passed on to the power bills of ratepayers. How much more will Yukoners' power bills increase because of the political decisions of this Liberal government?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It's hard for me to understand. The members opposite keep talking about what they would do. They support fossil fuels. They would move to a diesel plant. No. We think that building a battery plant is much better. It would displace four rental diesels.

Yes, there is a cost that Yukon Energy has put in, but we have also put in roughly half of the money for that through infrastructure dollars, which we have gotten through, I think, the Arctic energy fund for the battery project.

That battery project is being subsidized to keep the cost low, and it is a good solution because it will allow us to be more efficient with our energy during the day — the peaks. It will help shave those peaks. It will help make the wind energy, which is intermittent but is strongest in the winter — it will make it better over the wintertime. So, battery is a great solution.

I understand the Yukon Party doesn't think that, but when I talk to Yukoners, they think it's a great solution.

Question re: Carbon tax

Mr. Istchenko: It isn't just the rising electric prices that are causing challenges for Yukoners to make ends meet. One of the biggest drivers of Yukon's cost of living crisis is the

rising cost of fuel, and as bad as it has been, it's only going to get worse next month when the federal Liberal government increases the carbon tax yet again on April 1.

In just a few weeks, the carbon tax will represent over 17 cents per litre for gasoline and 21 cents per litre for diesel. This does not just hurt small business or those of us living in rural Yukon; it actually hurts every single Yukoner.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the Premier join the chorus of voices across the country calling on the federal Liberal government to halt the increase to the carbon tax?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, when it comes to carbon pricing in Yukon, every single dollar that's collected goes back to Yukoners.

It's interesting — this is the second year in our budget where we have a contingency fund put in place. Again, this is good fiscal management to make sure that we're putting money aside for emerging issues that happen. Mostly, it's for forest fires and floods.

This is taxpayers paying for environmental degradation, and the Yukon Party wants us to double down on fossil fuels. They want to keep on criticizing because it makes a good sound byte, that the carbon price is affecting us on an inflationary level. All these things just don't make sense.

The Yukon Party clearly wants us to continue to have the taxpayer pay for climate change calamities. They want us to continue to increase the amount of money that taxpayers pay, whereas they keep on criticizing a fund that sends a signal to industry internationally that we need to transition into a non-fossil-fuel future, which, by the way, Canada is leading the way in a lot of the technologies — in Calgary, in Edmonton — that would actually adhere to a new way of doing energy. It would be a boon for the rest of Canada, yet the Yukon Party, because it just makes a good sound byte, keeps on making it seem like the carbon price increases are affecting us on a rate in which it doesn't.

Here's a question for the members opposite: What would you do to make sure that people are responsible — that the polluter pays the carbon price? They campaigned on it, Mr. Speaker, but now they're silent on what they would do.

Mr. Istchenko: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can't say that I'm surprised to hear that. The Premier isn't willing to challenge his federal party on this issue. In fact, the Premier is the only Premier in the country who not only wants to see the tax increase but also wants to put the carbon tax back on home heating fuel. When the Trudeau government lifted the carbon tax on home heating fuel, this Premier actually opposed it and wants to see the carbon tax back on home heating fuel.

Can the Premier explain to Yukoners why he wants to see the carbon tax put back on home heating fuel?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, we have been having this debate in the Legislative Assembly since my first days as Premier and even when I was in opposition when we campaigned on that polluters should pay and we wanted to make sure that the taxpayer doesn't — we want to find the most cost-effective manner of dealing with pollution. When the international mining communities are saying that we need to do a carbon-pricing mechanism — that is the simplest way of

doing things — at that time, the Yukon Party, which was in power at that time, signed the Vancouver Declaration, which I applaud because that signed Yukon to a carbon-pricing mechanism. It was their signature, and I applaud them for doing so, because that's the first step toward the polluter paying as opposed to the taxpayer paying. That was a good move, but since then, all the Yukon Party can do is criticize the plan. They keep on criticizing the plan, knowing that the money — every single one of those dollars — is going back to Yukoners — every single dollar — yet they are saying that this is increasing all of our costs. They said that diapers were going to be so expensive that our heads were going to fall off. I remember them talking about that during the campaigns of years gone by. It's just not true.

Yukon's carbon-pricing rebate is revenue neutral. We are committed to both reducing carbon emissions in the territory and equally to returning the federal funds back to Yukoners.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, well, you know what? It was so refreshing to many northerners when the newly elected Premier of the Northwest Territories announced, shortly after being selected as Premier, that he wants to see a complete exemption for the carbon tax for his territory. We couldn't agree more, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Yukon Premier join the Northwest Territories Premier to lobby the federal government for an exemption for the territories from the Liberal carbon tax to make things affordable for Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I had a chance to meet with Premier Simpson earlier this week and we had a conversation about how we continue to make sure that we can make lives more affordable for Yukoners. What I want to say to Yukoners is: Please, when you look at this budget, take a look at some of the tools that we have put in place to ensure that we can reduce the burden that you have on you financially.

Again, we believe that action has to be taken. We look at the fires that we have dealt with as we prepare for this season, we look at the floods, and we do think that there is a responsibility that we have to take. We know, in our conversations with Canada bilaterally, that we have pushed looking at what happened in Atlantic Canada to ensure that we get the best deal in the country when it comes to putting in other types of infrastructure to reduce our reliance when it comes to fossil fuels.

But also, when I think about this conversation and I think about the questions today, we have to look at a clean future. It is not only because it's the right thing to do; it's not only because that is what the majority of Yukoners are telling us to do; it's not only because the children whom we represent are looking to us to actually make the right decisions; it is also about ensuring that the economic prowess that we have right now continues on, because that is what financial institutions want to see and that is what the tourism sector and also the mining sector want to see.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice to call motions respecting committee reports

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I give notice, pursuant to Standing Order 13(3), that the motion for concurrence in the *Ninth Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges*, presented to the House on March 7, 2024, shall be called as government designated business.

I also give notice, pursuant to Standing Order 13(3), that the motion for concurrence in the *Tenth Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges*, presented to the House on March 7, 2024, shall be called as government designated business.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 213: *First Appropriation Act 2024-25* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 213, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon has enjoyed three straight years of economic growth. Budget 2024-25 enhances Yukoners' lives and addresses the territory's growing needs. Our government is tackling the rising cost of living, fostering healthy communities through infrastructure, housing, and health care investments, and responding to challenges like the substance use health emergency and the climate crisis.

Our economy is thriving. We have a strong labour market with robust demand for labour contributing to higher wages and low unemployment. With the highest population across Canada's three territories, the Yukon continues to be an attractive destination for residents, students, workers, and visitors. Through budget 2024-25, we are ensuring that the benefits of our stable and growing economy are extended to all Yukoners.

In 2023, we achieved so much: paid sick leave for businesses, raising the minimum wage, and celebrating the historic completion of the Haeckel Hill wind project, which will power up to 650 homes each year with clean energy, offsetting up to 115,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. We launched the Yukon First Nation land-based healing fund in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations — a recommendation from the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*. Alongside the Yukon Hospital Corporation and our health partners, we released a health human resources strategy to attract new health professionals to Yukon hospitals and clinics.

We celebrated the 150th anniversary of the territory joining the Confederation while also acknowledging the pain and trauma that accompanied the loss of the way of life for those

who were here since time immemorial. We marked the 50th anniversary of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*.

This August, the first cohort of students will enrol at Whistle Bend Elementary School, the first new elementary school to be built in Whitehorse in more than 20 years. Over 1,700 children and their families benefit from our universal childcare program, saving over \$9,000 per year per child.

Construction of the 800-kilometre Dempster fibre project and the Nisutlin Bay bridge are well ahead of schedule, and major improvements are underway at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport.

We ratified a new collective agreement with the Yukon Employees' Union that recognizes the value of our public servants and the programs and services that they provide to support Yukoners.

We doubled the on-call wage for EMS personnel, and we work closely with municipalities and First Nation governments to support several Yukon communities as they navigate the many wildfires and floods that impact our territory.

Ongoing efforts of this government have the Yukon well-positioned for continued success, but don't take my word for it, Mr. Speaker. In October 2023, the C.D. Howe Institute reaffirmed that our government is on the right track when it comes to fiscal accountability.

In July, Standard & Poor's global ratings affirmed our strong fiscal position, issuing an AA stable credit rating and stable outlook for the territory, reflecting their expectation that the Yukon will continue to show strong economic growth for the next several years.

In March, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said that we are delivering stability for small businesses at a time when many are feeling uncertainty about the future and the economy. The University of Toronto researchers noted that our territory is further ahead than many other Canadian jurisdictions when it comes to ensuring that social supports respond to higher costs of living.

In short, the economic data is proving each and every day that we are on the right track, but now is not the time to take the foot off the pedal. Too many Yukoners are feeling the impact of the global financial pressures of inflation, the national housing crisis, and the international shortages of health care workers.

In the face of rising costs of living nationwide, we hold fast to our Yukon Liberal values by protecting struggling families with increases to minimum wage, introducing a made-in-Yukon dental insurance program, increasing the Yukon child benefit, improving our social assistance programs, and continuing the interim electrical rebate on residential electricity bills.

Budget 2024-25 even goes further: With \$484 million in capital investments and \$1.6 billion in operation and maintenance spending, we continue to deliver on the Premier's commitments to support a stable economic future that benefits all Yukoners.

Our government pledged to exercise good governance and responsible fiscal management. We continue to deliver on that commitment with a budget surplus of \$119 million and a

contingency fund of \$50 million. As in the past, we anticipate using the contingency on emerging priorities like wildfire and flood response. We have reached historic, unpredictable proportions in these areas in recent years.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is for Yukoners to make their day-to-day lives more affordable, more equitable, safer, healthier, and to create a bright future for anyone in our territory.

I will now touch on the Premier's four priorities on how budget 2024-25 delivers on these promises to Yukoners. Our Premier and our government keep working to make lives more affordable for Yukoners, to strengthen our territory's social safety net, and to invest in the middle class.

We have raised the territory's minimum wage and tied future years' increases to Whitehorse's consumer price index. We increased supports for caregivers, increased social assistance payments, and introduced new protections for renters against above-market rent increases. We have increased supportive housing options for low-income seniors and elders and worked with the private sector to construct energy efficient, affordable new homes.

In budget 2024-25, we will continue to make lives more affordable for Yukoners. Since the launch of the good energy rebate program, the Government of Yukon has issued more than 28,000 rebates for more than 36,000 energy efficient products or home upgrades. It is our goal to see this number continue to increase in the 2024-25 fiscal year.

We are continuing the interim electrical rebate, which provides Yukoners with an automatic monthly reduction on their residential bills, and continuing the dental program we introduced back in 2023, which covers up to \$1,300 per year in dental benefits for eligible Yukoners.

We are making housing more affordable — investing \$53.7 million to build and renovate homes across the housing spectrum. We are continuing to fund our nation-leading early learning and childcare program, which puts nearly \$800 per child back in the pockets of Yukon families each month.

Advancing reconciliation, especially economic reconciliation, is another priority for our Premier and our government. Reconciliation is an ongoing process and a shared responsibility of all governments and individuals in our society. It means listening to and working with First Nations to address the harms caused by a long history of inequality and discrimination. In budget 2024-25, we continue to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action and work collaboratively with Yukon First Nations toward the shared goal of reconciliation.

We continue to work together to address the crises of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit+ people. We approach this work in the spirit of reconciliation, in partnership with Yukon First Nations and Indigenous women's organizations.

In October 2023, the Yukon's *Missing Persons Act* came into force. An important part of our government's commitment to justice and to reconciliation, this legislation supports efforts to work with Yukon First Nations to build safer and healthier communities for Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit+ plus

people through coordinated and effective violence prevention, intervention, and crises response across the territory.

Through budget 2024-25, we are funding two full-time positions within the Women and Gender Equity Directorate to continue this work. We are providing funds to the Yukon Advisory Committee to continue their important work. We are offsetting costs for the annual accountability forum on MMIWG2S+ and technical gatherings for partners and contributors to this strategy. We are continuing to support the Indigenous women's equity fund. We are also increasing funding for the family information liaison unit and information service for families of missing and murdered Indigenous peoples.

Reconciliation means supporting First Nations as they revitalize the customs and ways of life established prior to the violent upheaval of contact and colonization. Following a successful pilot project last year, we are pleased to extend the Indigenous artists and cultural carriers micro-grant. This program has enabled opportunities for Indigenous artists and cultural carriers to access funding and increase the sector's contribution to Yukon's economic and social well-being.

We are also pleased to provide assistance to protect and preserve historic sites like Tr'ondëk-Klondike and also Rampart House. The Government of Yukon will be providing up to \$50,000 to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and \$60,000 to the Vuntut Gwitchin for collaborative heritage management of these two sites.

Chinook salmon, the Porcupine caribou herd, and other wildlife are tremendously important to Yukon First Nation culture and ways of knowing, doing, and being. Their traditional knowledge is rich with information about conservation, population management, and migration. Governments must do more to ensure conservation of these and other species. We owe it to our ancestors, our elders, our children, and to the next generations.

In this, the second year of the landmark *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement* with the Government of Canada, we are advancing conservation priorities in the territory. Of the more than \$20 million that will be invested from 2023 to 2026, \$7.48 million has been allocated this fiscal year for projects that increase protection of Yukon's lands, water, and species at risk, support Indigenous leadership and conservation, and support ways to compile and share conservation-related data. Alongside First Nations, industry, stakeholders, and other levels of government, the Government of Yukon developed the Yukon wetlands policy to define a common approach to wetland stewardship. This fiscal year, nearly half a million dollars will go toward the implementation of this policy.

Reconciliation means working hand-in-hand to action self-government and land claim agreements so that First Nation governments and enterprises can continue to create meaningful opportunities for their citizens. We are investing significantly to ensure that we meet our obligations under the final agreements. We are investing \$1.7 million this year to meet our obligations under the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, providing funding to support the planning of next year's Yukon North Slope conference and working collaboratively with the Vuntut

Gwitchin government to look at the changing ecology of moose and wolves within the Porcupine caribou range.

We are working alongside Yukon First Nations and transboundary Indigenous groups to develop new made-in-Yukon mineral legislation that will improve our regulatory system, respect First Nation relationships with the land, protect the environment, provide more certainty for industry, and strengthen our economy. We are investing an additional one-quarter million dollars to continue working with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in on the Dawson regional land use plan and are meeting with other Yukon First Nations to begin collaborative work on the four remaining regional land use plans. Two additional full-time Yukon government employees will join these project teams.

We saw an incredible example of the work that First Nation governments and their development corporations can achieve when we celebrated Kwanlin Dün's Chu Niikwän Limited Partnership Haeckel Hill wind project. This 4-megawatt project will help power the Yukon with clean electricity, diversifying and expanding the sources of renewable energy that our territory needs to grow.

In budget 2024-25, we are continuing to invest in First Nation proponents to develop renewable energy projects. Our government's \$7.9-million capital investment, in continuation of the Arctic energy fund, will see Yukon Development Corporation continue the important work to power our needs with renewable energy sources.

The Premier also recently announced the Winter Crossing housing project in Whitehorse's Whistle Bend neighbourhood. This 105-unit project will be the single largest affordable housing development in Yukon's history. This project expands the existing successful partnerships between the Government of Yukon and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, Da Daghay Development Corporation, and their Riverbend property.

Mr. Speaker, reconciliation means investing in community safety and health and social services supports so that First Nation citizens can have the tools to address the historic and intergenerational traumas of the residential school system as well as racial and discriminatory bias that are left like a scar on our broader society.

Our government is working with the Council of Yukon First Nations to develop and implement land-based mental health and substance use treatment initiatives as components of the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* and the downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan. We are working with the Teslin Tlingit Council and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation to create community safety officer programs through investments of more than \$700,000.

We are also increasing our investment in the Indigenous courtworker program for the Gladue report writing project. Reconciliation means that we are working in partnership following the letter, the spirit, and the intent of Yukon's modern treaties and ensuring that the dreams of those who authored *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* live on in the children of today, tomorrow, and the next seven generations.

The Yukon Forum is an important venue for collaboration and meaningful dialogue that allows ministers and chiefs to sit

face to face, side by side, to identify and take collaborative action on shared priorities that advance reconciliation and improve the lives of all Yukoners.

While there was a lengthy pause in the Yukon Forum meetings under other governments, we are proud to report that there have been 28 Yukon Forum meetings since February 2017 — most recently this past February.

Notable accomplishments include a memorandum of understanding on mining and work undergoing to co-develop new mineral legislation, the establishment of the Yukon environmental and socio-economic assessment reset oversight group, the creation of a Government of Yukon First Nations procurement policy, creating a pathway to a more representative public service through the development of the *Breaking Trail Together* plan, the establishment of the Yukon First Nation School Board, and co-authored amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*, just to name a few.

Recent meetings have included in-depth conversations about the devastating impacts of the substance use health emergency on Yukon families and communities.

On behalf of our government, I want to extend condolences to all those who have been touched by the substance use health emergency and also thank the Council of Yukon First Nations and all Yukon First Nation leadership for the bold steps that they have taken to help lead the way in responding to this ongoing crisis.

Mr. Speaker, in February 2024, the Council of Yukon First Nations launched its moccasin mobile outreach van, which reduces barriers for street-involved persons in accessing support services by meeting them when and where they need support. This mobile outreach initiative is part of an ongoing collaborative approach to enhance safety in downtown Whitehorse. We know that the substance use health emergency is directly linked to the lasting and widespread traumas caused by colonialization and the residential school system. While the substance use health emergency is not specific to First Nations, we know from the statistics collected by the Yukon chief coroner that more than half of the people who lost their lives due to overdoses in 2023 identified as First Nation.

In response to this substance use health emergency, we have developed Car 867, increased opioid treatment services and access to safer supply, expanded the methods of consumption available at the Whitehorse supervised consumption site, and extended its hours of operation as well. We have initiated a paramedic response unit in Whitehorse's downtown core and increased access to life-saving harm-reduction supplies, like Naloxone.

In 2023, alongside the Council of Yukon First Nations, our government released the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*. At that time, we announced an investment of \$1.9 million, and we are pleased to increase that amount to \$2.6 million in the 2024-25 budget.

None of this work would be possible without the work of our partners — Blood Ties Four Directions, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Connective, the RCMP, CYFN, Yukon First Nations, and federal and municipal governments — all working together to address this public health emergency. The finding

of 15 gravesites at the former location of the Chootla residential school in Carcross emphasizes the need for ongoing support and compassion of our society as a whole. Our government will continue to support the Yukon Residential Schools and Missing Children Project working group in their effort to bring light to the histories and impacts of residential schools and to help communities as we grieve. We will continue to be guided by the working group and will provide support on an as-needed basis.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's third priority is looking after people by building healthy communities. Yukoners value our public health care system and we know that they want more autonomy and more empowerment when it comes to managing their own health and well-being. This ongoing shift to a more patient-centred approach is discussed in depth in our *Putting People First* report, which provides 76 recommendations for implementing a new system, a new approach, to provide integrated, whole-person care across the health care system. Our 2023 annual *Putting People First* progress report showed that 89 percent of these recommendations are in progress or operational, and budget 2024-25 sets us up to continue to transform our health care system into one that delivers integrated health care services.

In budget 2024-25, our government is significantly increasing our health and social services system, adding \$30 million to our insured health services program and providing an additional \$15.3 million to the Yukon Hospital Corporation. In the short term, Yukoners can expect to see new health care cards, the introduction of legislation to create a health authority, increased funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and the opening of a managed alcohol program in Whitehorse — a key action under the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* and the downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan. Our government will continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to identify future funding needs and ensure that we are providing the services and supports that Yukoners need to access safe and excellent hospital care. We are investing more than \$5 million to complete the construction of a new mental wellness unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital.

Our health care system faces many challenges. We see many of the challenges reflected in the broader Canadian health care system exacerbated by the health care workforce shortages that have been seen around the world. The World Health Organization estimates a projected shortfall of 10 million health care workers globally by 2030, with countries at all levels of socio-economic development facing difficulties in educating, employing, deploying, and retaining health care professionals in the workplace.

In December 2023, the Government of Yukon, in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and territorial health partners, released *The Yukon's Health Human Resources Strategy*, which is our government's response to the challenges facing our health workforce. This strategy provides a systematic, coordinated, and informed road map toward a health and social services system that will meet Yukoners' current and future needs. It builds on recommendations from

the *Putting People First* report, which aims to improve the health, wellness, and experiences of everyone in the territory.

Initially, our government invested \$3.3 million between December 2023 and April 2025 to support the work on short-term priorities like training and education opportunities and developing supports for internationally educated health professionals to practise in the Yukon. We are now pleased to announce a new \$3.6-million foreign credential recognition program to integrate internationally educated health care workers into our health care workforce, funded by the Government of Canada.

Through budget 2024-25, we are investing \$2.8 million in addressing our health human resources shortage. Domestically and globally, we are facing unprecedented challenges related to an insufficient supply of health care workers. For communities, this can mean health facility closures and longer wait times. We know that we need to address these challenges and are working hard to attract more health care workers so that our health system can better support all Yukoners.

We are also continuing to regulate health care professionals with planned completion of psychologist regulations scheduled for later this year. Upcoming registered nurse profession regulation amendments are focused on pathways to licensure and expansion of the prescribing powers of nurse practitioners so that they can better meet patient needs and reduce wait times across the territory. Drafting of these new regulations is in the final stages.

The Department of Health and Social Services is already conducting a needs assessment to plan for the next phase of capital development of our hospital system. This could lead to expansion of our hospital system to include more hospital beds, an expanded operation room, or new facilities as needed. The work is ongoing and we look forward to hearing more from the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services.

We look forward to soon hosting the federal health minister to sign the Working Together health agreement and the Aging with Dignity agreement.

Aussi, notre gouvernement améliore l'accès aux services et à l'information en français. Cela comprend l'amélioration de l'accès aux services de santé en français et l'augmentation des communications d'urgence bilingues en cas de catastrophe naturelle. Le coût est de \$7,8 millions.

We are working to build healthy communities. It would be a mistake to overlook the dangers that gender-based violence and racial intolerance create for many Yukoners on a day-to-day basis.

Many Yukoners face various forms of discrimination, including gender-based violence, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, anti-Indigenous racism, transphobia, homophobia, stereotyping, stigmatism, and also violence. These threats not only endanger the unity of our social fabric, but they also hinder efforts to create an inclusive Yukon for all. Most importantly, they jeopardize the well-being and safety of individuals. We must recognize the intricate ways in which these forms of discrimination intersect and compound, exacerbating the challenges faced by marginalized individuals in our territory.

The Government of Yukon will sign a bilateral agreement with Canada which includes \$4.1 million in funding for initiatives to address gender-based violence in the Yukon. We are providing over \$2 million in additional funding to more than 10 non-governmental organizations to address gender-based violence in our territory. We are committed to working with organizations in the NGO sector to ensure that no one is left behind.

Here in the Yukon, we are making further investments in our efforts to make the Yukon a place where everyone is free to live their lives as their true selves. We are implementing the LGBTQ2S+ inclusion action plan, which was developed in partnership with the queer community and includes multiple actions for government to increase inclusion in programs and services.

We will continue to fund the work of Queer Yukon by supplying the organization with consistent funding from the last year, and we have allocated an ongoing investment of \$255,000 for the Yukon Human Rights Commission to support their mandate to review complaints of human rights violations in the territory.

We are also increasing the RCMP's budget by \$4.8 million. A nearly \$1-million incremental increase will fund policing cost increases and support the most critical operational needs of the Yukon's RCMP M Division by funding eight and a half new positions for specialized units, general duty, and support staff.

An ongoing investment of just over \$1 million will add six additional First Nation and Inuit policing program members to better support Yukon First Nation communities and Yukon First Nation community safety officer programs. An additional \$800,000 increase will go to the guns and gangs violence action fund, which works to stop gun crime and gang violence before it starts. We will spend over \$3 million in capital funding for major upgrades to the RCMP detachment in Old Crow and maintain other physical assets in the RCMP's portfolio.

We are also increasing funding of the drug treatment court funding program. This is another action that we are taking to implement the actions outlined in the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*. In February, the Minister of Health and Social Services provided an update on the downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan, and I am pleased that we are continuing to advance the priorities outlined in this plan with over \$15 million in investment, which will make communities across the territory safer, including Whitehorse.

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are a tough bunch. A little bit metal, one would say. You would have to be to survive the land since time immemorial, to make it through the gold rush and colonization, or to have the fearlessness to leave your home country, province, or territory and emigrate to Canada's far north. Every winter, Yukoners prove to the rest of the world just how strong they are mentally and physically. We survive long, dark, cold winters and increasingly hot summers. With this change in our climate comes the need for greater investment in emergency management, because as our climate changes, we see the seasons we have relied on change. What was once a distinct winter season now sees floods and fire

seasons encroaching, with floods and fires starting earlier in the spring and extending further into the fall. We see warmer winters with less snow interrupted by intense cold spikes and longer, hotter, drier summers or heavier snowfall followed by sharp, abrupt, rising temperatures.

Yukoners have a personal responsibility to be prepared for emergencies with the 72-hour kit ready to go, containing enough food, water, medications, and other necessary items for each member of your family. Other personal responsibilities, like having flood and home insurance, fireproofing properties, and being familiar with your family and community emergency plans, have been the difference between life and death when calamity strikes.

The Government of Yukon will be there for Yukoners alongside municipalities, First Nation governments, and the federal government to ensure that communities are prepared. We are allocating an additional \$1.8 million for Yukon First Nation initial attack firefighter crew services and budgeting \$1.1 million for the Fire Marshal's Office to operate community halls, administer programs, and offer honoraria and travel costs for volunteers.

Nearly \$1 million in additional funds will be invested in acknowledgement that the Yukon is more vulnerable to climate change impacts than other Canadian jurisdictions. We have entered a three-year funding agreement with the Government of Canada to support climate adaptation projects in the Yukon. This funding will support planning and preparation for wildland fires, improving climate resiliency for Yukon government buildings, building assets, and assessing slope hazards in the Klondike region.

In January, following a resolution passed by the Association of Yukon Communities about a shortage of Emergency Medical Services — EMS — personnel, our government doubled on-call honoraria for EMS community responders. We want to commend those hard-working volunteers for the services that they provide to their neighbours and to their communities. As a result of this action, we are already seeing the addition of new EMS responders in many of our communities.

Through *Our Clean Future*, the Government of Yukon is investing over \$1 million to support flood planning and forecasting in at-risk communities and to assess climate risk and resilience.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's final priority is to invest in our future so that Yukon remains a place that so many people choose to call home. The authors of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* aptly said — and I quote: "You cannot talk to us about the 'bright new tomorrow' when so many of our people are cold, hungry and unemployed..." This sentiment lives on today and is reflected in budget 2024-25 through broad investments to increase access to housing, protecting the environment for the long term, to improving the lives and livelihoods of our people, including the owners and operators of small and medium businesses that are the backbone of our territory's economy, and most importantly, to enhance the territory's education system for our youth. The most obvious way that we can invest in our future is to invest in our youth

and in their education. If we can distill the responsibility of government down to one key priority, it is to create an environment where future generations can thrive. As a former teacher, this is an issue that is very close to my heart.

We are adding additional school-based staff to support student learning and well-being with an unprecedented investment in educational staff, including new full-time wellness counsellors, educational assistants, and learning assistance teachers. We continue to invest in the Youth Directorate, supporting local organizations that empower young Yukoners, teaching them the confidence and leadership skills that they need to grow into the next generation of community leaders. BYTE — Empowering Youth Society — the Heart of Riverdale, and the Youth of Today Society will each receive \$80,000 to hire additional staff and to increase programming.

To support BGC Yukon as it shifts to seven-day-per-week programming, we are investing \$182,000 in their operations, and we are supporting an increased youth program at the Association franco-yukonnaise. We are investing \$20.1 million to build and upgrade schools in Whitehorse, Burwash Landing, and Ross River. Our government is proud to continue to support initiatives at Yukon University, to welcome the first intake of students at the new Whistle Bend elementary school this fall, and we are continuing to work with parents and community leaders in Whitehorse and Burwash Landing as new schools are being built in these communities.

As the level of government that deals most directly with Yukoners in our communities, I cannot overstate the importance of municipalities. They are responsible for local emergency management, snow removal, developing and following the official community plans, waste management, and the maintenance of parks and green spaces, as well as good governance practices like the responsible use of taxpayer funds and bylaw enforcement. Rural communities continue to do big things with a very small tax base. We recognize that with smaller tax bases, municipality governments cannot go it alone. The Government of Yukon provides municipalities with contributions through the comprehensive municipal grant. Budget 2024-25 includes an increase of \$2.3 million, for a total of \$24.5 million, to be distributed to Yukon municipalities this fiscal year.

We continue to study resolutions passed by the Association of Yukon Communities at their most recent annual general meeting. They asked us to further fund municipalities by increasing the comprehensive municipal grant, raise property taxes on Yukoners living outside of municipal boundaries, and undertake a joint review of the *Municipal Act*. We will continue to engage with municipalities bilaterally and through the Association of Yukon Communities on these and other emerging issues of importance to that organization.

We are continuing the economic development fund, which supports projects and initiatives that encourage economic growth and diversification that will ultimately provide long-term, sustainable economic benefits to Yukoners and Yukon communities. The community development fund will also continue to support events and initiatives that provide long-

term, sustainable economic and social benefits to communities across the Yukon.

Our electricity grid is a critical component of our territory's infrastructure. Our government is focused on modernization — modernizing and expanding our grid to enhance its resilience and meet the growing electricity demands of Yukon residents and businesses while meeting the renewable energy and greenhouse gas emission reduction targets outlined in *Our Clean Future*.

The Yukon Development Corporation, with \$5.6 million through the Investing in Canada infrastructure fund, is working in partnership with Yukon Energy on the grid-scale battery energy storage solution. Yukon Energy Corporation has entered into a 25-year lease agreement with Da Dan Developments, a subsidiary of Kwanlin Dün First Nation's Chu Niikwän limited partnership, to secure the necessary land for the battery project. Site preparation activities are underway by businesses owned by Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, while access road construction is being handled by Kwanlin Dün First Nation-owned enterprises. With completion currently scheduled for the end of this year, this battery will stand as the largest of its kind in the north and one of Canada's largest.

We are continuing to support the British Columbia grid connection project, which is critical to ensure that the Yukon will have sufficient renewable energy over the long term. With \$2.5 million invested in the innovative renewable energy initiative, our government is supporting independent power producers to develop new energy-generating projects.

Investing in our collective future means making sure that local entrepreneurs have the support and opportunities that they need to grow their businesses, pursue their passions, and plan for their future. In 2023, our government launched a new paid sick leave program, providing workers and self-employed Yukoners with up to 40 hours of paid sick leave each year at no cost to their employers. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Canada's largest non-profit organization and advocacy group championing the needs of small businesses, applauded this program as well as other measures implemented by our government to assist small businesses, such as the elimination of the small business tax. Given the positive feedback that we have received from local businesses on our paid sick leave program, we will extend this program through March 2025.

We are continuing to invest in the sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership. Launched in April 2023, this program is an initiative in the Yukon's agricultural industry to support our farmers and increase the capacity for local food production. So far, the program has approved over \$1 million in funding for over 50 local projects, including the development of farm business plans, agricultural research initiatives, the purchase of equipment, and helping farmers mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Mr. Speaker, with retail sales up 7.8 percent in 2023, the Yukon had the strongest growth in the country and was well above the national rate of 2.1 percent. The New Spark tourism micro-grant will address the needs of our local tourism sector, as it continues to rebound from the pandemic and adapt to new

operational realities. This programming will grant successful applicants up to \$5,000 to improve visitor experiences or services and is aimed at supporting the development of new and emerging entrepreneurs. The first intake for this program will be June 15, 2024.

We will continue to offer a suite of funding programs to support the territory's creative professionals, as we further implement the creative and cultural industries strategy. This includes supports for media and film productions as well as for performing artists, cultural carriers, and media artists as they grow their skills, entertain us, and challenge the way of thinking about the world we live in.

Investing in our collective future means investing in environmental sustainability, and we are doing this by directing more than \$55 million worth of funding toward the implementation of *Our Clean Future*. We are doing this because we know that climate change is real. Our government declared a climate emergency in 2019 and followed that with the launch of *Our Clean Future* to lay out our plan to address the situation that we find ourselves in. We saw the catastrophic flooding in my community of Dawson City last year and in the Southern Lakes area in 2021, which necessitated assistance from the Canadian Forces to help with the largest flood response effort in the Yukon's history. The Government of Yukon is working to make government buildings more resilient to climate change and reducing our carbon footprint. A \$19.3-million investment in the green infrastructure program and building development program will make our buildings more environmentally sustainable and energy efficient while also reducing the burden on taxpayers in the long term.

Infrastructure investments are critical for our territory's economic, social, and cultural well-being. Modern infrastructure enhances our safety, our security, and social inclusion and drives our economic development by facilitating trade, tourism, and business activities. With investments in our roads, airports, highways, bridges, and other critical infrastructure, we are ensuring that Yukoners have links to the outside world and across the territory.

Major projects include finalizing the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement, ongoing updates to the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, and the continued construction of the Dempster fibre project, which is scheduled for completion this year. These three projects alone account for capital investments of \$136.1 million this fiscal year. In addition to the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement, we will continue construction on the Big Creek bridge replacement, with \$5 million allocated to this important part of our transportation network in this fiscal year.

Road safety is a major priority for this government. We are working to make our roads and our bridges safer for drivers, pedestrians, and active transportation users. Budget 2024-25 allocates approximately \$5.6 million to road safety improvements and \$2.5 million to bridge assessments and to help maintain our roads and bridges to make them safer for all those who use them. We are continuing to work to rehabilitate and construct the north Klondike Highway, allocating \$17 million in capital expenses to this vital link for industry, tourists, and Yukoners. These upgrades will increase safety,

improve driving conditions, and better connect our resources to markets. Here in Whitehorse, we have set aside \$4.3 million for improvements to the Robert Service Way, Hamilton Boulevard, and the Alaska Highway intersections.

It is important to recognize that infrastructure is not limited to highways, roads, and bridges. This budget also invests in our cultural and sport infrastructure, with \$550,000 in capital investment in building maintenance at the Yukon Arts Centre and the awarding of a \$31-million contract for construction of the new Polarettes gymnastics and climbing facility in Whistle Bend, scheduled for completion in spring 2025.

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are active and accustomed to living healthy lifestyles. Access to a wide range of sport and recreation facilities is one of the draws of life in our territory, whether it be for the extensive network of trails, the gyms, arenas, or pools. As our population grows and the appeal of hosting events increases, we must look to review the existing recreation facilities. Work is underway to support an upgraded inventory and conditions investment of sport and recreation infrastructure assets owned by various levels of governments, First Nation organizations, and communities. This information will help the Department of Community Services develop sport and recreation opportunities for Yukoners and determine sport infrastructure needs for the future.

Because we know sports are so important for Yukoners, we have committed up to \$4 million over the next two years to host the Arctic Winter Games alongside partners in the City of Whitehorse. We have also agreed to provide an additional \$350,000 of in-kind supports, and we are working with the city to secure additional federal funding as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is a budget for the Yukon. We are investing in municipal infrastructure across the territory. I doubt there is a community from Watson Lake up to Old Crow where residents and visitors will not see construction underway, whether it be new infrastructure or upgrades to public buildings.

In Whitehorse, residents will see the replacement of the Ryder apartment complex, providing new housing, major upgrades, and construction at the airport and hospital, public transit upgrades, road safety, and road infrastructure upgrades, lot development, new and upgraded support for recreation facilities, and the continued work to build electricity storage infrastructure.

There are road upgrades underway in Pelly Crossing, a lagoon and solar farm project in Beaver Creek, and a public works, fire hall, and EMS building under construction in Carmacks.

In Old Crow, work continues on the 10-unit, multi-use housing complex, a new public works facility, and the replacement of the health and wellness centre.

Destruction Bay will see money start to flow to that community for improvements to their grader station.

In Dawson City, a working group made up of leadership from the Yukon government, the City of Dawson, and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in is finalizing plans for the location of a sewage lagoon within the Callison subdivision. Lower Dome regulatory work and detail design is underway to meet new

Dredge Pond II master planning spring targets set by Dawson City council, with construction tender targets anticipated later this year. The Government of Yukon has also identified up to \$65.6 million for the construction of a new Dawson recreation centre, and site preparation on the lower Dome Road will begin soon, pending heritage and servicing work — all government plans to reduce up to four more infill lots in the community this summer.

The good people of Haines Junction can look forward to underground and road upgrades, water well replacements, and a biomass district heating system, as well as new lots in the Willow Acres subdivision.

Dawson City, Burwash Landing, Carcross, Whitehorse, and Ross River will see construction of new schools or upgrades to existing educational facilities.

In Keno, fire hall water service is being upgraded. Teslin is benefiting from energy retrofits on buildings and the economic benefits resulting from the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement project.

In beautiful Mount Lorne, funding is projected into the next three years for a water treatment plant. In Faro, year 2 of construction is underway on a project to replace critical community infrastructure. We expect this project, which encompasses water, sewer, and road upgrades, will be finished this fall. I am pleased to be able to say that the Faro public works and fire hall building is now completed and was designed to exceed minimum energy efficiency standards by 25 percent.

Thanks to the ongoing investment, we believe that the work to replace the reservoirs in Mayo will begin this spring and will be completed this fall.

In Watson Lake, a \$10.3-million contract was awarded in July of 2023 for a number of infrastructure projects, including pedestrian crossing, street light upgrades, sewer and water main replacements, and also road upgrades. We anticipate work on these projects will also be completed this fall. That community can also look forward to a tenplex Housing First project, lot development on Frances Avenue, and also a new lift station.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier continues to work with Ross River to address their state of emergency and housing shortage. We are proud to have supported the mobile triplex that was provided to the community through funding through the Yukon Housing Corporation.

We are also investing in parks and campgrounds, providing over \$5.3 million to build new infrastructure that will enhance visitor experiences at Yukon parks and campgrounds. This year's capital funding is aimed at supporting more year-round recreational opportunities, more accessible wilderness experiences, replacing dock and boat launch systems to enhance safety, piloting a reservation service, and adding more campsites at existing campgrounds.

The ongoing work to look at the future infrastructure needs in our territory across the board will continue this year.

Finally, investing in our collective future means ensuring that all Yukoners have a place to call home. That is why our government is continuing to invest in housing across the spectrum so that Yukoners can afford to rent or own the type of

home that is right for them in whatever stage of life they find themselves.

The Yukon Housing Corporation works innovatively and collaboratively with Yukon government departments, NGOs, First Nations, and individual Yukoners to deliver housing initiatives and programs that address the needs of Yukon residents and contribute to healthy, sustainable, and inclusive communities. This includes more than \$24.5 million through the northern carve-out, which will support new capital projects across the territory, including a 34-unit Korbo community housing project in Dawson City, a 10-unit Housing First building in Watson Lake, a six-unit community housing building in Teslin, and 45 units of community housing in Whitehorse at the former Ryder Apartments site. We are providing the Safe at Home Society with \$6 million to renovate the former High Country Inn, which will provide 67 units of permanent, supportive housing by spring 2026.

Almost a third of all police-reported violence in Canada occurs between intimate partners, and for too long, a lack of stable, affordable housing has been a barrier for women escaping dangerous situations at home. For people fleeing gender-based violence, knowing that you can leave without severe economic consequences can be the difference between staying and going — between life and death.

Through a new investment stream of the Canada-Yukon housing benefit, we will be providing over \$2 million annually for the next four years to support women and their children fleeing gender-based violence. This funding can be used to pay for the high upfront costs of moving, like damage deposits, paying the first two months of rent, and covering moving fees, as well as providing an 18-month rental subsidy.

We are also providing \$1.24 million in rental subsidies to help Yukon renters meet the needs in the private rental market. As of January, 168 Yukon households are taking advantage of this rental benefit. We are also investing another \$4.8 million of the housing initiative fund to support the development of more affordable rental units and rental housing options for Yukoners. Of the approximately 800 housing development lots through the housing initiative fund, close to 700 of these units are designated as affordable, meaning that Yukoners living in these homes can expect to pay below median market rent for the next 20 years. Our government is on track to meet our commitment to release 1,000 new housing lots with this mandate, with more than 800 new lots released since 2016.

In partnership with the City of Whitehorse, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, we are conducting feasibility and design work on new developments here in our territorial capital. We are looking forward to making this a busy summer for Yukon contractors, suppliers, and labourers.

Mr. Speaker, like all financial documents, this budget is a picture of a moment in time, but the work does not stop here. This government continues to work with our partners on projects and initiatives and will continue to meet the evolving needs of Yukoners and of our territory.

With respect to Minto mine, we continue to work to ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes of previous governments when faced with mining abandonment and remediation. While

\$21.5 million in funding is included in this budget, nearly all of this is recoverable from the bond held in security. We are doing everything we can to ensure that Yukoners are not left to foot the bill for corporate greed and irresponsibility by bad actors. We continue to work closely with the Selkirk First Nation on all aspects of this work and remain focus on remediating the site. Expenditures associated with Minto mine do not represent a growth in government spending; they are effectively a flow-through of funds from a security bond intended to take care of the site.

While we continue to work to secure tidewater access to the port of Skagway for the Yukon's mining industry, the funding to support this project has been reprofiled into future years so that it is available when the project is ready to go.

In the year ahead, our government's focus is clear: We are improving the lives of all Yukoners; we are tackling the rising cost of living; we are investing in health care, education, and infrastructure; and we are addressing pressing issues like the climate crisis and the substance use health emergency.

Mr. Speaker, with a booming economy, higher wages, and low unemployment, our territory remains a sought-after place to work, to live, and to visit. Through partnerships and cooperation, we are ensuring that everyone benefits from this growth.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Motion to adjourn debate

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, as the Official Opposition Finance critic, it is my pleasure to move that debate be now adjourned.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge that debate be now adjourned.

Motion to adjourn debate on second reading of Bill No. 213 agreed to

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 3:10 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled March 7, 2024:

35-1-142

Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sittings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees (March 7, 2024) (Speaker Harper)

35-1-143

Left in the Dark — Report 2 — Safer Schools Action Plan Assessment — Yukon Ombudsman (February 2024) (Speaker Harper)

35-1-144

Twelfth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees (January 10, 2024) (Clarke, N.)

35-1-145

Thirteenth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees (February 7, 2024) (Clarke, N.)

35-1-146

Ninth Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges — Notice of Committee Meetings (March 7, 2024) (Mostyn)

35-1-147

Tenth Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges — Remote Participation (March 7, 2024) (Mostyn)