



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 173

1<sup>st</sup> Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Monday, March 25, 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
Clerk	Christopher Tyrell
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Monday, March 25, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I have today the honour of introducing a number of people who are here for the tribute to the late Manfred Hoefs. I have quite an extensive list. My apologies if I miss anyone, but I think I have almost everyone here.

We have: Manfred's wife, Hanne Hoefs; son Ammon Hoefs and partner, Annina Altherr, and their son — Manfred's grandson — Matthias; and son Boris Hoefs and wife, Jane Bell — and briefly, just to indicate for the record, that son Calden Hoefs and wife, Amy, send their regrets from Saskatoon.

As well in the gallery, we have: Henrik and Emily Hoefs, Robert Perry, Hugh Monaghan, Charolotte O'Donnell, who is the executive director of the Laberge Renewable Resource Council, Kris Gustafson, Jennifer Staniforth, Doug Larsen, Bruce McLean, Jillian Lynn Lawson, Rob Florkiewicz, Dennis Senger, Donna Milne, Tony Grabowski, Len Mychasiw, Dave and Grace Mossop, Liz Kirkwood, Philip Merchant, Harvey Jessup, Catherine Pinard, Ron Sumanik, Kathi Egli, and last but not least, Joseph Graham — if we could welcome our visitors to the gallery.

*Applause*

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, please welcome my constituents Kene Onwudinjo and David MacMartin in the gallery today.

*Applause*

## Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Before we proceed, I just want to apologize for my vocals here today. We had a great Yukon Native Hockey Tournament over the weekend and I was a big fan and a big coach, so my voice is a little distorted. I just want to let you know in advance.

We will proceed to tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In remembrance of Manfred Hoefs

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Manfred Hoefs, who passed away in August 2023. Manfred is one of the original architects of Yukon government's wildlife management program, to which he

brought a focus of science and evidence-based management. Manfred immigrated to Canada from Germany in 1960 with a degree in geology. He completed a master's degree in botany at the University of Manitoba and a PhD in zoology at the University of British Columbia.

Like many of us, the Yukon cast its spell and drew him in. In 1972, Manfred became the first wildlife biologist to be hired by the Yukon government. He further recruited many other biologists, who collectively became the Game branch. This branch later evolved into the Fish and Wildlife branch and into what it is now, the Department of Environment.

Mr. Speaker, during his time there, Manfred was highly respected as the authority on the biology and management of Dall sheep and mountain goats. Manfred leaves a legacy of sound research and management direction from his 29-year career with the Yukon government — a period of substantial change.

Manfred strongly advocated for conservation within government to inventory sheep and goats and to map their ranges and important habitats in most Yukon ecoregions. He implemented the full-curl rule for sheep and mandatory submissions of sheep and goat horns to collect age and growth and genetic information. He coordinated with partners in establishing a healthy recovery population of wood bison in the Yukon. He created and led a habitat program to identify, map, and secure important wildlife habitats such as winter ranges, lambing, birthing areas, and other sensitive sites. He managed the use of all-terrain vehicles for hunting in the Ruby Range, the first initiative to minimize access and disturbance in one of the most densely populated sheep ranges.

Mr. Speaker, today, Yukoners see Manfred's contributions to wildlife management in the hunting regulations summary, the game management subzones that he initiated, and the conservation quotas that exist for various species.

Manfred emphasized recognition of wildlife as having value way beyond its use as game. He also served on and supported various bodies, including the Yukon Fish and Game Association and renewable resources councils.

Manfred loved gardening and hunting, painting, writing, reading, music, soccer, and hockey — passions that he shared with his family.

We are honoured to acknowledge Hanne Hoefs, Manfred's wife, and their three sons, Ammon, Boris, and Calden, along with their partners and their three grandchildren.

Dr. Manfred Hoefs passed away in Whitehorse at the age of 88.

We extend our appreciation to his family for his many contributions and his legacy.

*Applause*

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Manfred Hoefs, and I would like to acknowledge and welcome his family and friends in the gallery today.

He was a long-time Yukoner, a long-time resident of the Hot Springs Road area, and respected Yukon biologist. Manfred was an intelligent and quiet man, and when he spoke, it was worth listening. His work as the Yukon government's

first biologist played an important role in developing a better understanding of our wildlife population, and some of that foundational work is still relied on today. He left his mark on wildlife management by the territorial government in helping to shape how it does that.

Manfred was born on July 14, 1935 in Szczecin, Poland. He grew up during World War II in what was northeastern Germany and is now Poland. Most of his family survived the war, but losing his little brother was painful and it was a difficult time surviving and witnessing some of humanity's greatest evils. When food scarcity became a real threat, he took on the role of sole provider for his family at just nine years old. He hunted, fished, and snared what he could.

After the war, his family ended up in West Germany. Manfred's dream was to become a forester, but he became a coal miner there. He could not see himself stuck in that profession, however, and in 1960, at 25 years of age, he immigrated to Canada. After a six-day voyage, he landed in Québec and then took a train to Toronto. He worked there for a while at a yacht club before getting a job at a new mine operated by Inco in Thompson, Manitoba. He worked at the mine, saving money for the University of Manitoba, where he obtained a degree in biology.

Manfred went on to UBC, taking more biology courses, and finally came to the Yukon to study Dall sheep and their habitat for his PhD thesis. He worked briefly for the Canadian Wildlife Service and then became the first biologist working for the Yukon government, and he built a house on the Hot Springs Road.

In 1980, Manfred went on a world tour. At Justus Liebig University, he lectured about Dall sheep and caribou, and it was there that he met his wife, Hanne. They were married on Haeckel Hill in August 1982, and their family grew with the birth of sons Ammon, Boris, and Calden. They spent good times camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, and playing sports. Manfred had a love of soccer and shared that passion with his sons and many Yukon youth as a coach. The Hoefs family is iconic on the Yukon soccer scene and many games saw Manfred coaching a team and Hanne cheering loudly.

His home office was filled with over a thousand books, mounted trophies, a stone fireplace that he built himself, and many treasures and works of art. After retirement, Manfred continued to do contract and council work and devoted time to his many hobbies like gardening, sculpting, drawing animals, oil painting, reading, and listening to classical music.

He was a true Yukoner, a local legend in wildlife knowledge, and he will be missed by his family, friends, and neighbours. To all of Manfred's family and friends, sincere condolences from me, from my family, and from our caucus.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their kind words today as we celebrate the life of Manfred Hoefs. Early on in my time in this Assembly, I had the pleasure of meeting and getting to know Manfred and colleagues who formed the Trails Only Yukon Association. This grassroots group started in 2010 and worked hard to protect Yukon

wilderness from irresponsible and damaging off-road vehicle use. It was Manfred's love and respect for Yukon's wilderness and his lifetime of professional and personal experience that brought such power to his words and research that formed the basis of an argument that I brought to this floor in 2013.

I know that his words, his passion, his advocacy, and his expertise have helped move the needle on environmental protection in the Yukon in so many different ways. The many environmental protections and changes that he championed are a legacy that truly honour the life's work of a great man.

*Applause*

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Speaker:** Under Tabling Returns and Documents, the Chair has for tabling the 2022 annual report of the Yukon Ombudsman, the Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner, and the Yukon Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make the Shingrix vaccine available to all Yukon seniors, including those over 79 years of age, free of charge.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, our government is continuing to take steps to maintain a vibrant, supportive, and safe downtown core. We have made further progress on actions committed to in the downtown safety action plan released in December 2023. I would like to express how grateful we are for the hard work and support that we have continued to see from our partners and the community as a whole.

Earlier this month, we officially opened the community space in this very building to serve as a warm and safe gathering space for Yukoners. The space is fully operational and we have received positive feedback so far. Inside the space, Yukoners have free access to computers, Wi-Fi, snacks, hot beverages and water, as well as washroom facilities, period products, Naloxone kits, and free bus passes. We look forward to seeing how this pilot project unfolds and learning from the results as we strive to gain a deeper insight into our community's needs.

We will also extend the security patrol in the downtown area to the end of April as we explore longer term options for downtown safety measures.

With respect to the food programs led by the Council of Yukon First Nations and Safe at Home, we have heard that these programs have been well-received and are exploring

longer term options with NGO partners to support these services. We also continue with our work to implement a residential managed alcohol program, which is a key harm-reduction component of the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*. The program is scheduled to begin receiving clients later this spring.

As part of our dedication to engaging Yukoners in finding solutions, we are hosting two upcoming community conversations focused on downtown issues. First, we are hosting both the downtown business engagement as well as the downtown residents engagement at the Elks Lodge on Tuesday, March 26 from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. respectively. People are encouraged to come and provide input around downtown safety and well-being, and we are hoping that Yukoners can come to share their thoughts from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

An online discussion is also scheduled for the NGO community on Thursday, March 28 at 9:00 a.m., inviting non-profit organizations to share their insights and experiences. Invitations have gone out to NGOs and all are welcome.

We are looking forward to preparing for summer and plans are underway to address safety and well-being concerns that may arise with the change of seasons. Supports will continue to be provided throughout the summer through both Government of Yukon services and by our partner NGO service providers.

People can find information about the progress that we have made online at [yukon.ca/downtown-safety](http://yukon.ca/downtown-safety).

In the weeks and months to come, our focus will continue to be on the services that we offer and the physical safe spaces that we create together as we work to promote safer communities and ensure that vulnerable populations receive the vital services they need.

We will continue to advance solutions to move us toward a future where Whitehorse and the broader territory are safe and vibrant for everyone who calls them home.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, this is yet another ministerial statement that just repeats what has already been announced in government press releases. It's important to note that the Salvation Army operated a shelter cross the street about a block away from the current location for decades with nowhere near the level of problems that we have seen at the current shelter since government took it over. Reports done for the government confirm that serious problems for people and businesses near the shelter began with the Liberal government deciding to take over the shelter from the Salvation Army and move to a low-barrier approach that is more permissive.

More reports done for the government showed that even many of the vulnerable clients whom the shelter was supposed to serve feel unsafe and a substantial number of clients interviewed said that their substance abuse has gotten worse as a result of accessing 405 Alexander. Much of the attention that the government has finally given to this issue came as a result of Alpine Bakery announcing its temporary closure.

Can the minister tell us what discussions have occurred with Alpine Bakery, and has there been any indication that they are feeling comfortable enough to open their doors again?

Mr. Speaker, while the government was slow to act, taking years to do so, we are relieved that they have finally given in to public pressure and pressure from the Official Opposition and have taken some steps to improve community safety in the area. In particular, we have relentlessly pushed the government to increase resources for the RCMP to improve community safety in the area as well as to go after organized crime and the illegal drug trade. We are pleased that this year's budget shows the results of our work, as even the Liberals finally recognize that police resources weren't even keeping up with population growth — much less the increased pressure caused by organized crime, the illegal drug trade, and the catch-and-release bail system that the Trudeau Liberals brought in with Bill C-75.

While some small steps have been taken, more action is needed by this government. When the minister rises, perhaps she could tell us when we will finally see the new RCMP members here in Whitehorse and in rural Yukon. I would also note, Mr. Speaker, that the timing of the two meetings she announced in her statement doesn't work well for many business owners or their employees. Will the government consider scheduling a meeting at a time that actually might work for business owners and their employees, such as perhaps in the evening?

**Ms. Blake:** Mr. Speaker, when I stand today to talk about downtown safety, the first thing that comes to mind is the many individuals I know who will be out of a place to live in less than a week due to the closure of the Safe at Home housing project. As well, every spring, many Yukoners are left homeless as hotels kick out long-term residents to welcome summer tourists, and this year, with the Safe at Home project closing for renovations at the same time, this will make it an even harder hit. When I think about what makes our downtown safe, I think about the safety of these folks.

This summer and stretching back many summers, we will once again see people camping on the clay cliffs because they have nowhere else to go. We will also see campsites hidden in the woods and in greenbelts around town, which is not safe. As the downtown grows to be more of a business district, we are seeing more and more spaces around downtown become less welcoming for many people who are homeless or living at risk.

When I look at the downtown community action plan, I ask myself: Who is this making things safe for? If we truly want to make things safer for everyone, we must be brave and do things differently in a way that is inclusive to all folks from all walks of life. Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect and to be cared for. Without systemic change, this will not be possible.

The new plan announced in December included decentralizing some support services in the downtown, including some food services. We are grateful for programs like Sally & Sisters, the CYFN program, and the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, but the emergency shelter remains the main spot for food services.

CASA is responsible for the new managed alcohol program and the supervised consumption site, not this plan.

Access to public washrooms is still an issue for people and should be a concern for all of the public. I think of parents with young children or seniors looking for access to public washrooms and how few and far between they are. The pilot project warming centre here in this building was a response to the closure of the library for next month. Many people find the library a safe, warm, and supportive community resource. The new warming centre here also offers the same. It will also not be open on Saturdays or Sundays, and this coming weekend, it will be closed for four days. So, where can people go for a safe, welcoming, and warm place to be?

I think about how 405 Alexander is the place when there is really no other place to go for food or support. I realize that there is more to the community safety plan, including recommendations on cultural activities and rapid housing, but I am not aware of any progress made on this.

There is much pressure on NGOs and CYFN to fill in the gaps of service delivery for folks in the downtown area. I wonder how this government is investing directly with Yukon First Nations to support our own people who are struggling. I ask this because, day after day as I drive to work and live my life in Whitehorse, I can't ignore the reality that many of the folks who live at risk in Whitehorse are my own family and my own people from the community I represent.

How are First Nations supported directly and encouraged to also support our own folks living at risk here in Whitehorse? How are communities being properly supported to bring people home who want to come home to their traditional territory? This is not only to make sure that they are okay but to ensure a connection to their home community, culture, and people. The downtown safety plan is great, and we are hopeful that everything will become a reality. Right now, though, it just feels like one step forward and two steps back, especially when we consider those about to experience homelessness again.

Mahsi' cho.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, the substance use health emergency impacts us all, and the challenges in downtown Whitehorse are only one way that we are seeing its impacts in our community. I appreciate the opportunity to share progress and address concerns on our government's downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan.

We want all residents, business owners, and visitors in downtown Whitehorse and in all communities to feel safe and welcome in our community. We are working on various initiatives to enhance safety measures — some of them mentioned by members of the opposition and supported, which is great news — including an increased police presence, community outreach programs, and collaboration with local organizations.

We are continuously engaging with stakeholders and listening to concerns — those with lived experience — and implementing strategies to address concerns effectively. We support the partnerships that we have with NGOs and with CYFN. Unfortunately, there were some comments from the opposition that were not accurate with respect to the services that are available, but we are certainly supportive of those and

the outreach that we have in the community in that way. We are working with partners at the City of Whitehorse, the RCMP, CYFN, Yukon First Nations, Connective, and NGOs operating downtown to implement the downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan. Our efforts toward understanding and responding to the needs of our community are also central to the process of reconciliation.

The Council of Yukon First Nations' Moccasin mobile outreach van represents a culturally sensitive approach to assisting First Nation and Indigenous people in need. This grassroots initiative led by and staffed by First Nations and Indigenous individuals is part of our broader downtown Whitehorse community safety action plan. It is a proactive response to concerns expressed by residents and business owners, demonstrating our commitment to inclusivity and collaboration in addressing community challenges.

Through budget 2024-25, we are committing more than \$15 million to make our community safer and to enhance social services. I certainly hope that the opposition parties support that budget. We all know someone who has been impacted by the substance use health emergency.

I am thinking of the more than 100 overdoses that have been reversed at our supervised consumption site and at 405 Alexander. This is not just a number; these are lives saved, people who are still here with us, and families and friends who can still spend time with their loved ones and pursue their dreams. I am thinking of 160,000 meals served at 405 Alexander. That's 160,000 times that someone in our community did not go hungry. I am thinking of the 21,000 overnight stays at 405 Alexander. That's 21,000 times that someone in our community didn't have to sleep rough or sleep in a vehicle or put themselves in an unsafe situation.

While the Yukon Party unilaterally chose the location of 405 Alexander and later admitted that a different site should probably have been picked, our Liberal government is taking a different approach. We have prioritized understanding the needs of our community, engaging with all impacted partners, and ensuring transparent decision-making processes to get things right and to make improvements. That's why we have decentralized some services and are improving our communications about all the places where people can access services.

We are a week into using the old cafeteria in this building as a community space staffed by support workers, and we are collaborating between government, businesses, and community members, which is essential for our work to proceed.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Ministerial travel to Scotland

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, throughout last summer and fall, we saw the challenges to rural health care pile up. At one point, the *Yukon News* ran an article that stated — quote: "Nearly half of the Yukon's rural health centres have seen closures and limited services over the past few months due to staff shortages..."

It caught the eye of many rural Yukoners that during this time, rather than visit rural Yukon, the Minister of Health and Social Services took a week-long trip to Scotland. According to the minister's travel expense report, she spent almost \$13,000 to spend seven days in Edinburgh, Scotland last September.

Can the minister tell us how the Yukon health care system benefited from the minister's \$13,000 junket to Scotland?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, "junket" — the member opposite's word, not mine. The work that was done with the government of Scotland, with services and individuals there — the physicians and surgeons organization, various members of the government of Scotland who are involved in health care services, the senior educators in that country who are involved with educating health care professionals, the individuals who work tirelessly on behalf of the Scottish Government and the Scottish community for rural and remote opportunities to have health care providers and dealing with issues that are very similar to those that we deal with here in the territory — was an opportunity for us to share ideas, share best practices, and to work closely with partners in that country for the purposes of improving the services that we can provide here in the territory.

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the minister that it wasn't all that long ago that over 500 people in Watson Lake signed a petition calling on the minister to come to a community meeting about long-term care. Since then, the minister has never come to Watson Lake for a public meeting as requested by that petition.

Rather than spend time in rural Yukon, the minister decided to spend seven days in Scotland at an almost \$700-per-night hotel. We have seen the problems with rural health care pile up.

So, can the minister tell us how her \$13,000 trip to Scotland helped the health care system in rural Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, as I noted earlier, the focus, I think, here on the question coming from the member opposite is the services that we can provide and do provide for rural and remote health care here in the territory. It so happens that a lot of the work being done in Scotland and in the rural and remote areas of Scotland dovetails with the kinds of work that we are doing here in the territory. We have a decidedly common number of issues. What I can indicate is that we discussed mental wellness and substance use services; we discussed rural and remote health care opportunities; we discussed improving services in rural and remote communities not only here in the territory but in the country of Scotland.

We work tirelessly with the communities here in the territory to make sure that we are responding to their needs. As many Yukoners might know, we set up the hub system in the territory, involving Pelly Crossing, Faro, Ross River, Carmacks, and others, with respect to services in our health communities.

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, shortly after the minister returned from her junket to Scotland, her government announced that the Ross River health care centre would be closed for almost a month. They joined Beaver Creek, Teslin,

Pelly Crossing, and other communities that all experienced reductions in service at their health centres last year.

In response to that, chiefs, community leaders, and the Association of Yukon Communities all raised concerns. Instead of travelling to any of these rural communities for meetings, the minister decided to spend seven days in Scotland in an almost \$700-a-night hotel. The total cost of the trip was almost \$13,000.

How does the minister justify taking this trip while rural communities in Yukon were experiencing prolonged reductions in service?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I think the facts on the opposite side as part of this question are not entirely accurate. What I think is incredibly important is that the Department of Health and Social Services and our government recognize the importance of community-based services in the territory. We have set up the hub system for focusing on mental health services across the territory. We have appreciated the intense work being done by our community health care members. We also appreciate that those community health care workers need time off, that burnout is a real thing, and that we must support them at every turn. We have done so by increasing bonuses for individuals who work across the territory in those positions and by supporting them with appropriate time off.

I can also indicate that approximately two weeks ago, I met with the Watson Lake town council and we talked about many of these same issues that are being brought up, including rural health care services, some justice issues, as well as long-term care in Watson Lake. I certainly appreciated the opportunity to do that. What I can tell you about that is that those conversations will continue because they are essential to providing the services.

#### **Question re: Perinatal and postpartum mental health services**

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, recently, a group of Yukoners formed a new group called Postpartum Support Yukon, which was aimed at increasing awareness of the importance of perinatal mental health services, support, and information.

On February 3 of this year, CBC reported that this group conducted a survey in which one-third of women said that they were never asked about their mental health during or after pregnancy.

Can the minister tell us what is currently in place for perinatal health support, and what steps is the government taking to improve the services?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I think that it is important to remind Yukoners that the services of the Department of Health and Social Services — the mental wellness unit at the department — are available to all Yukoners who may need those services. I certainly am well aware of the issues that can arise during or after pregnancy. One of the focuses of the work that is being done by the Yukon midwifery program, in fact, is focused on making sure that these kinds of health care issues — are made aware in the community and that services are provided at the Yukon midwifery program.

The Yukon midwifery program resumed full services and began intake of new clients back in early February 2024, and I am very pleased to say that the services provided there are available to all Yukoners. They are available to pregnant people and they are free.

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, according to the group Postpartum Support Yukon, they estimate that an average of 91 Yukon mothers experience perinatal or postpartum mood and anxiety disorder each year. The group is calling on the territorial government to create a public health campaign on the issue.

Can the minister tell us what her response is to this group's call for a public health campaign?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I think it is always important that the Yukon have public health campaigns with respect to the care that is available. One of our primary concerns and issues is making sure that Yukoners are aware of the services that are available through perhaps something like the midwifery clinic here in Whitehorse that, of course, opened its doors back in July 2022.

It is also incredibly important that other mental health services that are available to Yukoners — that they are made aware of those. There are public health campaigns to make sure that people know the places and the opportunities for them to reach out for care, and that will continue.

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, perinatal or postpartum mood and anxiety disorders can be a challenge for any mother, but it's particularly a concern in rural Yukon where mothers can experience an increased level of isolation and remoteness.

Can the minister tell us what supports are in place for perinatal health in Yukon's rural communities and what steps have been taken to ensure that the supports in rural Yukon are sufficient?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I think I spoke earlier with respect to services that are available in the communities. There are mental health services available, depending on the community. I can certainly provide members opposite with a list of those individuals and the services that are provided in each community. Of course, we encourage individuals to go to their health centre to reach out for help there to the experts who are nurses who provide the services in communities across this territory tirelessly to support their individual communities.

There are mental wellness workers who travel to each of those communities and provide those services. There are opportunities to reach out to the Canadian Mental Health Association; there is rapid-access counselling available here in Whitehorse which can be ascertained and accessed by individuals across the territory. We encourage individuals to please take the opportunity to reach out and speak to someone who is in your circle of friends who might be able to help you, and reach out if you are having trouble yourself. Mental health issues are health issues, and we support that and our government has supported that. We have increased from something like one or two health care providers for mental health services to many, many across the territory.

### Question re: Affordable housing

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, in the latest point-in-time count findings, 197 people experienced homelessness on the night of April 18, 2023. This report is a glimpse into the lived realities of the people experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse. With the news that the Safe at Home housing project will be closing on April 1 for renovations, the current residents are wondering where they will be living one week from today. Last week, the Premier said that this government is looking for summer housing for those folks who have been evicted, but unless the Premier has several dozen supportive housing living units up his sleeve, there is a real concern about where these individuals will be living starting on April 1.

What real and concrete options is this government offering to those residents who will be facing homelessness next week?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question.

First of all, we have been monitoring the transition of individuals from the current Safe at Home building into a number of different options. Part of what we wanted to see done was a transition from the current structure — when construction began at 408 Alexander. Part of the challenge is that there need to be some renovations done to that building. The last information I had is that there were 10 individuals in the current structure that we are looking to find spots for. My sense was that we were working with NGOs — in my last briefing — and that we were looking at current spots within Yukon Housing's portfolio of homes that could provide the appropriate housing. In some cases, I was told that individuals were making a decision to go back to home communities; they were more comfortable with that than staying in Whitehorse during the summer.

I will come back with current information. It was about a week ago that I got that update, but it is certainly something that we have been monitoring very closely. We want to make sure that those individuals do have a spot in the interim before we see the construction done. If the new work that is there is applicable, hopefully they will have an opportunity to transition back when the construction is complete.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, that is good news for 10 but not such great news for the other 16.

Hotels have been used for years as a band-aid solution to the housing crisis over the winter months, all paid for by government, but we know that hotels are not a reliable form of housing. Many rooms have no access to a kitchen or food storage, forcing people to rely on the emergency shelter or the food bank. Individuals living in hotels do not have the protections of the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, and many of the living conditions are unsafe and unsanitary.

We hear from residents about rampant bedbugs, doors with no locks, and other concerns. Just before the tourist season begins, usually around April 1, hotels will evict all of these winter residents. Most will have nowhere to go. It's a revolving door — on your own in the summer and living in a hotel in the winter — with no end in sight.

So, what message does this government have for people facing eviction this tourist season that doesn't include: You're on your own?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, the first message that I would hope that the member opposite would pass on is that the budget we have in front of us is the largest commitment that we have ever made in Yukon history to people who are dealing with vulnerable situations. That is the first thing — that there is an opportunity where there is support and hope on the horizon. Over the next 24 months, we are going to see an incredible investment in the units that are coming to be.

On top of the work that is already being done, when I think about vulnerable folks in our community, I think about a few different things. First, I think about the fact that we are in a situation where we are working with the Council of Yukon First Nations on a very specific project which is being built in Whistle Bend and which I think is going to be very helpful to many folks in our community.

I think that the work on Safe at Home is also an incredibly important investment. I see the work that we are going to do with Da Daghay over the next 24 months. Da Daghay Development Corporation is adding more than 100 units. I think that is extremely important. We are working with 408 Alexander with the Safe at Home Society as well. In the short run, we are going to have an opportunity to be able build units.

So, yes, there are 297 people on our waiting list. There were 510. We have reduced it dramatically, and this particular budget is going to make very significant changes for people —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

**Ms. White:** So, it's cold comfort for those facing eviction from the hotel regarding the Premier's budget for this year.

I remember the tent city outside these very doors in 2011 when people experiencing homelessness demanded action. Unfortunately, not much has changed. Every summer, we see people camping around the city, including on the Whitehorse clay cliffs or in the woods and greenbelts around town. We all know that the clay cliffs are highly unstable and we know about the fire risks. It's unacceptable that this government has allowed the situation to continue for so long and to become so severe that people are still putting themselves in danger just to have somewhere to sleep for the night.

Many of the people who will be camping this summer have been waiting on housing lists for years, and many will require supports to maintain their housing. Until this government adds truly supportive housing to their current approach to addressing this crisis, people will continue to experience homelessness.

So, what is this government's long-term plan to address the lack of supportive housing in the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First, the preamble to that question is simply not accurate. If you look at what was happening in 2011 and what's happening now, if you look at the action that is being put in place and the partnerships that are in place, there has been significant change when it comes to supportive housing.

Do I think that we need more supportive housing? Absolutely. Do I think that the Yukon government should be the sole provider of that? No, I don't. I think that it can be done in a more efficient and appropriate way with partners. I think that there is work being done right now with a number of organizations that have taken a leadership role, and we have been able to help de-risk their projects.

I don't have the exact number of individuals right now who are moving from hotels into a challenging situation this summer. I know that some individuals will make decisions about a more independent way of living throughout the summer. People whom I worked with in a number of NGOs previous to being in politics have been precariously housed but may go back to communities or other options for the summer, but I think we have to continue to ensure that we have supportive housing.

We need to make sure that the organizations that have provided leadership in our community have the right resources. That is the work that we have continued to do. We, again, need to have significant supply, and that is what we are investing in and have been investing in over the last number of years.

#### **Question re: Yukon University collective agreement funding**

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, back in 2022, unionized workers at Yukon University negotiated a new collective agreement. In that agreement, there was a letter of understanding between the workers and their employer. The letter stated that whatever raise the Yukon government workers would eventually negotiate, university workers would receive the same, provided that the Department of Education funds them accordingly.

When Yukon government employees settled on a 10.5-percent increase over three years, university workers were expecting to be provided the same. Instead, they were disappointed to learn that the Yukon government had chosen not to fund the wage increases contained in their collective agreement. This leaves them far short of what was promised in the letter of understanding.

So, why does the minister think that university workers are worth less than what they were promised?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I want to just start off by saying how proud we are that we now have a university in the Yukon. This was certainly a huge commitment that we made in 2016 and we followed through. The Government of Yukon is very proud of the work that Yukon University has done to become the only university north of 60.

In the 2023-24 budget, the Yukon government provided more than \$33.5 million to the university to support core strategic initiatives. This includes \$1.089 million for the collective bargaining increases that the department is seeking approval for in the supplementary budget. So, I am hoping that folks in the Legislative Assembly will vote yes for that increase that we are providing. It is anticipated that the 2024-25 funding to the university will be more than \$34 million. I am happy also that we are supporting the Polaris building that will be in our budget for 2024-25.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, although the minister talks a good game about the importance of the university, we are just not seeing that backed up. University workers are set to be bargaining for a new contract again this summer, as the current agreement expires in June. The raises that were promised in the letter of understanding aren't trivial. For some workers, it is a difference of thousands of dollars per year, and I use the word "promised" deliberately. Workers accepted a lower wage increase knowing that they would get better raises through the letter of understanding in their agreement.

Now those raises have been slashed because the minister didn't budget for them. Every member in this Chamber, including the Premier, got a 5.5-percent raise this year, so it's disappointing to see her shortchange the university workers like this.

Will the minister commit to working with Yukon University to fully fund their collective agreement?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to supporting the Yukon University. Again, we are very proud to have a university in the Yukon and we are supportive, of course, of their strategic plan that they put in place. We have a very strong board of governors in place that is putting tremendous effort into supporting the university.

The funding that I've already stated — we are providing \$33.5 million this year and we are debating before the House right now the supplementary budget of over \$1 million. We are anticipating a higher funding level for the 2024-25 budget.

Again, I'm very happy that we have within our five-year capital plan support for the Polaris building of \$13 million, Mr. Speaker. The deputy minister meets on a regular basis with Dr. Lesley Brown, the president and vice-chancellor of the university, to ensure that we are in line with our strategic initiatives.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, Yukon University is an essential institution to the Yukon, with campuses in nearly every community. It offers vital opportunities for education and training for Yukoners. The minister has had trouble filling positions in her own department — jobs that offer a much higher rate of pay. If the university can't offer competitive wages, we will see more and more staff vacancies there and it will hurt the workers that they do have by leading to burnout, and that, in turn, will hurt students.

With an increasingly competitive labour market and rising costs of living, it is not hard to see the effects of denying adequate cost-of-living increases, so will the minister amend her department's budget to ensure that Yukon University workers get what was promised to them?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, again, I will highlight the good work that is being done with the university and that we are providing the funding that is required for the university to meet the needs of Yukon students and give an option for Yukoners to be educated in the territory. That is a huge accomplishment for the Yukon.

We continue to work very closely with the university and we are providing additional dollars for the collective bargaining agreement. I think that, when we look at the budget that is before the House, you will see our commitment to Yukon

University. We know that there is much more work to be done and we continue to be committed to doing that good work.

The core funding, as I have already stated, is \$33.5 million. We have also increased allocations for strategic initiatives such as the SOVA program in Dawson and other strategic initiatives that we continue to work together on.

#### **Question re: Medical travel accommodations**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, a year ago this week, the Legislative Assembly unanimously passed a motion spearheaded by the NDP calling for the creation of a health lodge in Whitehorse for rural residents who are attending medical appointments. However, we do not see this project either in the budget or in the five-year capital plan.

Can the minister tell us how much money is budgeted this year to advance this project?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I certainly am pleased to rise to be able to speak about the importance of a health authority. The transformation of the Yukon's health system, including the health infrastructure that can and may be necessary going forward, is contemplated in the legislation that is before this House as the first step in constructing a health authority as recommended by *Putting People First*, as recommended by Yukoners who spoke about the deficiencies in the health system and also spoke about the support for many of the areas of the health system that are positive. But we all know that change is necessary.

We have brought before this Legislative Assembly the *Health Authority Act* for the purposes of making those changes and stepping forward. What I can indicate as well is that support for that health authority going forward will be critical for Yukoners, to benefit Yukoners. The transformation of our health care system is absolutely essential — that we design a health system for Yukoners based on what the needs of Yukoners are, and we are doing that work.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** When we debated the motion last spring, the government insisted that they had been working on this file since the comprehensive health review was completed in 2019; however, since then, we have not seen any sign of progress.

When can Yukoners expect a health lodge for rural residents to be opened?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's critically important that Yukoners understand our focus on supporting medical travel, the changes that occurred as a result of *Putting People First*, and the doubling of the medical travel subsidy for Yukoners who find it necessary to travel. On occasion, individuals have to travel from communities into Whitehorse for services and/or from the Yukon Territory to communities outside the territory — perhaps to Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, et cetera.

Recommendation 2.6 in the *Putting People First* report is to create residences as an accommodation option for medical travellers who require that. While we conduct longer term work related to establishing those residences in Whitehorse and other locations, we are exploring alternatives and short-term resolutions, including arranging for a particular location for

individuals to be able to stay for the short term for services that they need.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Last year during debate on the motion about this issue, the Premier said they would not start developing an operating model for this Whitehorse health lodge on the floor of the Legislature but that they would start work to develop a model very soon.

Since it has been a year now, can the government update us on what work has been done to develop the operating model for this Whitehorse health lodge for rural Yukoners?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, in August 2023, we surveyed Yukoners who had travelled in the previous 18 months for medical services to ask about their accommodations. We received more than 1,800 responses to the survey. Results indicated that 27 percent of those who travelled to Whitehorse stayed with friends or family. In Vancouver, 12 percent stayed with friends or family.

In the fall of 2023, we completed a request for information to explore opportunities to contract hotels in Whitehorse and Vancouver for Yukon travellers who need medical services. The results from the survey and the requests for information will inform how to better support Yukoners who travel for medical services.

I am not sure if the individual member across the way is suggesting that we build a new location for a medical residence. Some jurisdictions have gone that route. We are more critically focused on making sure that individuals have places to stay in a timely fashion in a way that does not necessarily require a full build; although, in future, we are reviewing, of course, the health infrastructure. As I have said, part of *Putting People First* is a review focused on making sure that the transformation of our health care system is key and that all elements are addressed.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### **Bill No. 212: *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24* — continued**

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

#### **Executive Council Office**

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

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Madam Chair, I am pleased to address the Executive Council Office's supplementary estimates for 2023-24. First, I will quickly touch on the role of the department. The Executive Council Office provides guidance and leadership across the Government of Yukon and supports the Cabinet Office. Through its day-to-day activities, the department supports the Cabinet's decision-making process by ensuring that government policy and planning are coordinated and effective.

Through strategic corporate leadership, the department builds respectful, enduring relationships with other governments across Canada and internationally. The Executive Council Office takes a lead role in promoting the effective and timely communication of information to the public.

Here is a brief overview that I will provide of the items in the supplementary budget. It is a budget increase of \$1.5 million. Before I get into the detail, I will just thank the officials for being here today: the Deputy Minister of the Executive Council Office, Justin Ferbey, is here, and thank you for being here with us today; and Exilda Driscoll, who has been the fearless leader on finance in the Executive Council Office, thank you for preparing materials for the opposition briefings as well as for us and working on our budget this year.

The first item that I am going to touch on is the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. In November of last year, the Yukon Legislative Assembly enabled the creation of a Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. We are committed to working on electoral reform to ensure that Yukoners have the best electoral system in place and are properly represented by this Assembly. The Citizens' Assembly will provide their recommendations before the end of October. An additional \$240,000 was allocated to the 2023-24 budget to support this work.

In the Aboriginal Relations branch, reconciliation is, of course, an ongoing process and a shared responsibility of all governments and individuals in our society. Our government is deeply committed to advancing reconciliation through collaboration and partnership with Indigenous governments. We are listening to and working with First Nations to address the harms caused by a long history of inequality and discrimination.

We continue to work with the Government of Canada and Yukon First Nations to implement the final and self-government agreements. We are also exploring new approaches

to reconciliation with Yukon First Nations without final agreements to advance self-government and renew our intergovernmental relationships. Aboriginal Relations received an additional \$845,000 to support consultation, engagement, and negotiation with First Nation governments. We look forward to continued government-to-government collaboration with First Nation governments.

The Yukon Water Board, which we also have supportive responsibility for in the Executive Council Office — the Yukon Water Board is an independent body established under the *Waters Act* and enabled in the First Nation final agreements. The Yukon Water Board issues water licences for various activities for the use of water and the deposit of waste to water. This work is vital for the health of waterways across the territory and balances conservation, development, and use of water for all Yukoners and Canadians. The board is supported by the Yukon Water Board Secretariat. In 2023-24, the Water Board received additional funding of \$350,000 to support legal proceedings and to secure technical expertise.

The next item is the Arctic Security Advisory Council. In January 2024, our government announced the establishment of the Arctic Security Advisory Council. The council will ensure that the Yukon's context and needs are considered in federal decision-making about Arctic security. After all, a secure north is essential for the security and sovereignty of Canada as a whole. \$110,000 was earmarked to support the work of the council. The council will provide independent, expert advice to the territorial government on future risks and opportunities for the Yukon. I look forward to the council's advice on how to build a stronger and more secure north.

Concerning the Alberta and Northwest Territories wildfire donations, as you are aware, the summer of 2023 was one of the worst wildfire years on record. Here in the Yukon, we saw the evacuation of Old Crow and Mayo, while neighbours in the Northwest Territories dealt with the evacuation of Yellowknife as well as communities like Hay River. Similarly, Alberta had close to 30,000 people displaced in May. The Government of Yukon donated \$25,000 each to Alberta and the Northwest Territories to support relief, recovery, and resiliency efforts. It is vital that we support our neighbours in emergency response efforts, especially as we know that the effects of climate change will make events like this more frequent and more intense.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this overview of items contributing to the Executive Council Office's 2023-24 supplementary estimates. These additional budget items will help make sure Yukoners are engaged in their electoral system, that the Yukon's waters are effectively managed, and that we contribute to a safe and secure Arctic.

I am happy to take questions today from members of the opposition.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for his opening comments and will take this opportunity to welcome the officials as well as thank them for the briefings that they provided with respect to the supplementary estimates for the Executive Council Office.

I am going to jump right into questions. I only have a handful of questions here, but the first one is with respect to

some contracts that are on the contract registry under the Executive Council Office. The first one is for David Morrison, former chief of staff for the Yukon Liberal Party. The description is "advisory services to support Yukon government energy priorities" and the value was \$45,000. It was a direct award, obviously, under that direct award threshold. I am curious if the Premier can tell us exactly what resulted from this contract. Is there a report on the advisory services that the former Liberal chief of staff provided to Executive Council Office? Just for reference, the start date — this was done in the 2023-24 fiscal year. May 31, 2023 was the end date of the contract. That's why I am asking during the supplementary estimates.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will just make sure that we can provide appropriate information on it. What I do know is that the key of the work was a focus on interaction with BC Hydro, with a focus on the relationship and work to support the grid connection that we are working on between the Yukon and British Columbia.

I will come back to the House with a couple of key pieces of information. I will work with officials to get you a number of exactly how much of that was paid out. I will also look at what product was produced and bring that back. I will try to make sure I do that before the end of the session. I will ask officials to endeavour to get that information for me. I apologize that I don't have all of the key points that were asked for today, but I am happy to come back with that for the members opposite.

**Mr. Kent:** So, just for the Premier's reference, that contract number is C00070065.

The second of three contracts that I wanted to ask about when we searched the contract registry was contract number C00072029 to Jasmina Randhawa for \$32,000 — again, another former chief of staff with the Yukon Liberal government. This is again under Executive Council Office and again a direct award contract. The description is for "services to support education and health care priorities". I am just kind of curious as to why this was done under Executive Council Office instead of Education and Health and Social Services and what, if any, products came from the work by the former Yukon Liberal Party chief of staff on this contract.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will do the same. I think that in both instances — the focus of the work in both cases around education — it was working directly to support the work of the deputy minister and the minister over this last year. I think there could even be continued work, so I will just make sure in the mains — or there might be existing work that is continuing on.

I believe that the work — again, I will endeavour to get you the exact detail — was also supporting the health authority transition work. Again, it is important to note that the individual who is named here was the chief of staff but previous to that was assistant deputy minister, Executive Council Office, a senior role within the Public Service Commission and regarded as an extremely talented individual known to be very strongly non-partisan and to be excellent at the work they do. I think that there has been good support there by a very talented individual on this work, but I will just make sure that I confer — and I

think that because it was just broadly also supporting the ministers, that is where it seemed most appropriate to be — sitting inside the Executive Council Office budget for us, because, of course, the expenditures that come out of Cabinet, as the members opposite are aware, are all held within the Executive Council Office budget.

**Mr. Kent:** I am not questioning the credentials of the former Yukon Liberal Party chief of staff; it is just curious as to what the product was from this \$32,000 contract that was direct-awarded for services to support education and health care priorities.

The final contract that I wanted to ask about expires at the end of this month; it is a 2023-24 contract. It is for \$49,900, and that was direct-awarded to the former Chief of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations — not that this is the concern here — but the project manager who is listed on the contract registry is the current chief of staff of the Yukon Liberal Cabinet and caucus offices. This contract number is C00069951, and the description is for “consultation on Yukon First Nations engagement”. So, I’m just curious about what product has been received from this individual over the last year for just shy of \$50,000, which is the value of the contract, and also, I’m curious why the project manager is the current chief of staff of the government.

I should note that the other two contracts — the project that I referenced here today — the project manager was within the Executive Council Office, but this one jumped out at us because the project manager is the current chief of staff.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think the easiest way to describe this would be that the now Member for Porter Creek North played a role in the last mandate of the Yukon Party government and a very important advisory role in Cabinet. At that time, the then-chief of staff would have had an opportunity to provide support. So, in the same role — it was a parallel process where the former Chief of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations was inside of Cabinet, reported to the chief of staff, and played a key role in providing advice on a number of bilateral relationships — very similar to the experience, of course, that the members opposite would have had in their last mandate in government.

So, it’s exactly the same now — it’s important to note that this individual, previous to the end of the calendar year, received a very strong opportunity inside of our community — I will leave it to them to talk about the job that they have taken on — but really, most of that work was done in the spring and summer of the 2023 calendar year, and I think there was a bit of work done in December for two or three days in the bilateral work that was done with chiefs in Ottawa, and that was really the end of the work.

So, the contract, as noted by the member opposite, was for \$50,000; very little of that was used. The total paid out over the entirety of the contract was \$14,273 — and accompanied me on a couple of different trips, primarily all to Yukon communities.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that from the minister as well as the update on how much of that contract was expended.

I did want to move to some different topics. Right now with respect to the YESAA process, there is a project before YESAB that was submitted in July 2022 and it is still in the project proposal evaluation stage, which I guess would be a pre-adequacy portion that the YESA board added to their process a number of years ago. I know that the Premier, in his former role as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, had some concerns with the addition of that process.

Again, we are coming on two years in this pre-adequacy stage, so has the Premier been given any assurances that this initial two-year period will help to expedite the actual assessment of this project, or does he still have concerns with respect to this stage that was added on by YESAB a number of years ago?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Just for clarity and to put on the record, can I get the exact project — maybe I can get the member opposite today, for Hansard, to define exactly which project that is the application for and then I can speak to this.

**Mr. Kent:** It is the Eagle Gold extension project.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, I have had an opportunity to speak with the organization. I think that part of the work that they have been doing — as I remember, I think there was some intervention from the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation concerning the process that is underway now. I think it’s probably best if I go back and take a look at my notes from the dialogue I had with the chief operating officer and the CEO of Victoria Gold, because I think there has been some work that they have been doing directly with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to ensure that all the information has been shared between the First Nation government and the organization.

I think, from my recollection, they had a very positive conversation and meeting. They had an opportunity to provide some updated information, I think, to the First Nation. My sense would be, for the member opposite, that they are an incredibly strong corporate citizen. The member opposite I believe provided some accolades to their organization earlier this year because of the notoriety they received at both the AME Roundup conference this year — winning the Murray Pezim award, I think — and then later on at PDAC being noted in front of the entire Canadian mining industry because of their strong work around innovation and financing.

Of course, there is a number of things that we speak about here and about their good work — their work to support Yukon children. I know that the member opposite had a key role in the early building of that foundation. In this particular case, my hope is that we can always make sure that we can alleviate any overburden when it comes to red tape. That is the goal. It is a larger conversation that we are having with the federal government around amendments to the YESAA legislation. I want to commend all the folks at the Executive Council Office and Aboriginal Relations in their work. A number of years ago, we passed a motion here in the House unanimously around making sure that we had amendments, and it has been an ongoing piece of work making sure that the language that is being supported in totality by the Yukon is going to be something that will work at the federal level but, more

importantly, that we work very respectfully with First Nation governments to get to that particular place.

I think that it is important to note that we are waiting to see the response from the federal government. We want to see those amendments being made. So, I think that, in the short run, that would be a great example of an existing project. I am a little out of my depth in the technical scope here, but I would say that when you have an existing project and you want to see an expansion, what kind of rigour do you have to go through? I think that if you can have that dialogue with those community leaders — both the municipality and the First Nation — you have a chance to pass on your information and show that you are going to use the best possible approach to secure your environmental values but at the same time continue to provide this economic driver; it is a good thing.

Just in closing, we are waiting to get a response from the federal government on making sure that we can get those amendments in place. I had a number of mining leaders who travelled — one of them being, of course, the CEO of Victoria Gold — to Vancouver in early January. We had a chance to have those mining leaders sit down with the federal minister — something that was a very unique opportunity — and for them to speak not just about the importance of a grid connection and how that would be really the future of mining in the Yukon and how important that was, but also, we touched on the fact that the YESAA amendments need to move forward and that is going to be extremely important.

We voiced as well to the federal government — they have a new committee that has been struck. The former Minister of Natural Resources Canada, Seamus O'Regan, is now the chair of that group and there are a number of other ministers. That goal is just, if you look at regulatory red tape reduction — at that point, there was a conversation in front of mining leaders about being able to potentially test drive even a pilot project in the Yukon with the reduction of red tape. That is something that our team will follow up on. We have had the discussion — I did meet with the Minister of Natural Resources Canada, Jonathan Wilkinson, at the PDAC conference this year. I know the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — I was in contact with him last week. We will continue to look at that.

In closing, yes, I get concerned if we are going through a series of processes that are not going to improve the end product, and I think that making sure that we get the amendments made at the federal level and that we support good contributors here in the Yukon like Victoria Gold are very important.

**Mr. Kent:** Certainly, I agree with the Premier. Victoria Gold is a very strong corporate citizen, and they have shown that right from when they first acquired the asset here in the Yukon right through construction and into production. I certainly agree with the Premier that they are a tremendous addition to the corporate community here. I couldn't be more proud of the work they have done. I guess the concern that I was trying to flag is that we are almost two years into this pre-submission period — or this pre-adequacy period — and I am not sure if that two years' time that will be spent will come off of the overall assessment or what the assessment process

looks like from determining adequacy or if that is still required through the assessment itself advancing toward a decision document.

My concerns are for the broader environmental assessment process and the timelines associated with that process here in the Yukon. We will follow up with the minister.

I am curious, though — I wasn't going to ask about this, but he mentioned a conversation with the federal government on potential amendments to the YESAA legislation. I am curious if he can tell us what those potential amendments are and when any public consultation is expected to be conducted on those amendments.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will come back with a legislative submission because I want to make sure that I don't miss anything on it. We will go through the extensive process over the last number of years that has occurred on consultation and then the process we see in front of us.

Really, this comes back to the dialogue that happened in the House, and it was around really trying to ensure that we reduced some of the burden that we saw in front of us on existing projects when they are looking at expansion and having to go through the environmental assessment. We will make sure to do that work.

Of course, this work is live in that we are waiting for the federal government to come back and have a discussion with us. I can just touch on a few items.

Of course, assessment and regulation should be efficient, predictable, and grounded in the principles of reconciliation. The Government of Yukon is developing our new legislation, which we know, and new public lands legislation. But also, since early 2021, the YESAA oversight group has been developing an approach that will allow — with Yukon First Nations' consent — an exemption from assessment for projects that involve a renewal or amendment to an existing authorization. That is really the bulk of that work — but get back and just take a look at what work has been done around the scope of consultation. Of course, we are going to be back here debating the main ECO budget later on this spring session, and we can provide some further information even then during debate.

**Mr. Kent:** Does the Premier have any idea of the timing for the feds to come back — I think were his words — to the Yukon government and First Nations with respect to these amendments? He mentioned that this is sort of where we're at right now — we are waiting on the federal government to come back. Is there any timing horizon with respect to them reporting back on the potential amendments or how the amendments will be done and, as I mentioned, in the process going forward, when there would be some sort of public consultation on those?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I don't want to predetermine the outcome. I think we have stressed as a government — and industry has as well in dialogue — that the sooner the better. I know that there has been really significant work done in the Yukon by First Nations and their technical team and the Executive Council Office. My sense was that there was a dialogue with the broader industry, but I don't have a particular time. Of course, the federal government will be defining their

legislative priorities over the remainder of 2024 and the spring of 2025, so we are hoping to see this work done as soon as possible. Again, I will talk to our officials and see if we have been given any indication since we have communicated with the federal government around when they believe that we can see this work being done at that level.

**Mr. Kent:** We will look forward to hearing more from the minister on that topic as the Spring Sitting progresses.

I do have some questions with respect to the staking bans in the Ross River Dena Council traditional territory and the Liard First Nation traditional territory. The RRDC ban came on, I believe, in 2013, so 11 years ago this fall is when that one came on. The Liard First Nation one came on, I think, in 2017 or 2018. I am just curious if the Premier has any updates with respect to negotiations on settling those disputes that would lead to more land being opened up for staking mineral claims in those areas, which represent a large withdrawal of Yukon land from new claim staking — so if the Premier could give us an idea of when the last meetings were held with respect to removing those broad staking bans with the Ross River Dena Council and Liard First Nation and if he has any idea on when those may come back.

I know that there have been a number of extensions to those bans over the past number of years — so if I can just get the current information as to when the staking bans in both of those areas are expected to come off.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that probably the member opposite asking the question and I are probably close to both of these situations. I can't remember who had the Energy, Mines and Resources file for the first one. I know that I was in the role for the second one.

What I would say is that it really comes back to the legal decision that was made under Judge Veale. It talked about certain changes that would have to happen and occur in order to meet what were called “declaration 1” and “declaration 2” of that particular court finding. Now we are in an even broader situation because we saw some legal activity occur this past year in British Columbia that cited the findings of the Veale decision. I know that now in British Columbia there is a tremendous amount of work being done by the BC government working with First Nations. I certainly don't have the legal expertise to disseminate all that was found, but really, it's about the notification that's required in order to go into these particular areas and to look at staking.

I think that there are a few things that are important to note on this one. No, I don't have a timeline to say when these particular moratoriums will be lifted, but what I would say is that there are ongoing conversations and work being done. I think it is important to put on the record that there are two separate tracks here. There is the technical working group that is looking at the modernization of mining legislation and, of course, they are contemplating this legal decision that was made in order to ensure that — whatever the legislation looks like — when it is passed, it meets the criteria that were found in the legal case, because there is so much of the Yukon that has been not accessible and is very mineral rich. So, that is one part of the conversation that is ongoing and there is work

happening almost every week, if not every month, on this. These are the sorts of things that are being contemplated.

The other parallel track is the bilateral agreements and the government-to-government conversations that are happening in this case. You will note that there is another area in the Yukon where we have had ongoing dialogue and where there is not a moratorium, and that is northwestern Yukon. But our last meeting — the last meeting that I was involved with — with the Ross River Dena Council happened in January. It was a very solid meeting with them. There continues to be dialogue as well with Liard First Nation. I have not met with Liard First Nation in this calendar year — with Chief Charlie and council — but will be. That dialogue is really around trying to understand the priorities of the nation. Of course, because they haven't gone through a land planning process, they are really trying to define areas where the community wants to support development and areas where there is concern.

I will say that there is progress. It is an incredibly technical conversation at all times at the table. I think that it is important for the Legislative Assembly to note that it will be paramount that modernized legislation gets passed for mining in the Yukon that is grounded and anchored in reconciliation in order to ensure that there is a path forward and that we are respecting all of our communities, municipalities, local area governments, and, of course, First Nation governments which we have an obligation to share mining legislation architecture with based on their final agreements and the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

So, we are moving forward, but I can't today put a time on the floor of the House saying that this is when either one of these particular moratoriums would be lifted, but I feel like we are moving in a direction and we are building the tools that are required to ensure that we can alleviate some of these past challenges.

**Mr. Kent:** I think the Premier mentioned that these staking bans in Ross River and Liard First Nation areas are now sort of rolled into the *Quartz Mining Act* and *Placer Mining Act* reviews at a technical level. I will ask the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources when we get to that department in the mains about progress on that and then some of the more technical questions there.

The Premier obviously won't have that information here today, but I'm hoping that he could provide us with a meeting schedule for the 2023-24 fiscal year where these staking bans were discussed — both with our RRDC and LFN. He mentioned, I think, that earlier this year, in January 2024, he had what I believe he described as a solid meeting with RRDC, so I am curious if that included discussions around the staking bans that are in their traditional territory.

I think he also mentioned that he hasn't had an opportunity yet to meet with the Liard First Nation Chief and Council in this calendar year, but I am curious if there were any meetings in the first three quarters, from April 1 to the end of December in 2023, with LFN regarding this specific issue. If there are upcoming meetings and if he could provide that meeting schedule, that would also be helpful for us.

I wanted to touch on just a couple more issues before I turn the floor over to my colleague from the New Democratic Party.

The first one is the proposed sale of a large parcel of land on the north end of Atlin Lake to the Taku River Tlingit. Obviously, we talked about it on the floor of this Legislature before. I am just wondering if the Premier has any updates on that. It was a large parcel of land that was to be sold, I think, for a dollar, but we haven't heard very much about that since we initially saw the announcement in the Taku River Tlingit's newsletter about that particular transaction. I am curious if the Premier can give us an update on where that transfer is at this time.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Just going back to the previous question around meeting schedules, normally, after we finish meetings in any of our communities, there is usually a chance to publicly state that — usually either through some sort of posting or a news release — we can go back and have that discussion.

I do want to say to the House that anytime we are having a dialogue with another government — although this topic today around staking bans is an extremely important piece of information and topic — and anytime I'm sitting down with another government, it's going to be covering a number of different conversation pieces and priorities that they have beyond just the priorities that the Yukon government may have.

Concerning the conversation about the land transfer, of course, this was a dialogue that really goes back to 2014 in some ways. It has to do with the relationship, as I understand it, between the then-territorial government and the Taku River Tlingit. What I can say is that there is dialogue that is still ongoing. I know that there is still significant interest from the Taku River Tlingit on this topic, but I also know that there is an obligation for consultation with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. I also believe that at least at one point the nations have — I have to remember and I apologize to Yukoners that I have to go back and see if it was either the Taku River Tlingit or the Carcross/Tagish First Nation that initiated communication with us talking about the Government of Yukon stepping back and have the Dakhá Nations working directly together to come up with some level of common ground on this.

Nothing has taken place to date. I know that there is still interest in the transfer. I have received communication even from the nation just following up, and I know that we have gone back just to see how the dialogue has transpired between the Taku River Tlingit First Nation and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. That is the update that I have at this point. Maybe by the time we get a chance to sit down and debate the mains, this will still be an ongoing topic and would still be a suitable discussion point at that time.

**Mr. Kent:** Yes, we will have an opportunity hopefully as the Spring Sitting progresses to follow up on further information with respect to that land transfer to the Taku River Tlingit.

Just from the supplementary estimates briefing material that was provided to us, I'm just looking for a bit more detail on a couple of line items here. The first one is an increase of \$845,000 for Aboriginal Relations. The explanatory note that we got is that the increase in First Nation capacity funding for consultation and engagement, bilateral negotiations, and

meeting final and self-government agreement obligations — so I'm just looking for a level of detail down from that. Which First Nations received money for that increased capacity funding for consultation and engagement, and how much did they receive?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Speaking to this, the figure was \$845,000. Aboriginal Relations requested a net increase of \$845,000. This is comprised mainly of funding to support confidential agreements with First Nations. The Aboriginal Relations main estimates are prepared with the best information available at the time, and this includes a base level of funding of just over \$1 million for capacity, negotiations, consultation, and engagement with First Nation governments. Transfer payment agreements are negotiated with First Nation governments annually, and any variances are identified in a supplementary budget request.

First Nation governments, of course, face significant capacity challenges that can emerge throughout the year, and these challenges will affect each First Nation government's ability to spend under their transfer payment agreements. ECO officials, based on previous year spending levels, try to forecast actual expenditures, but these forecasts are not privy to all of the external factors within First Nation governments.

An example that I would give for the House today would be — our previous line of questions was: Where are we at when it comes to the staking moratorium with the Liard First Nation and Ross River Dena Council or the work that we are doing with White River First Nation? In some cases, we have provided funding for their lands folks or technical members who will come in. Of course, at the same, Aboriginal Relations would continue to do that work.

The nations that we are talking about today are White River First Nation, as I have said, and Liard First Nation but also Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Selkirk, and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Just to get a sense of the type work — it is really making sure that they have that ability, especially for those nations that are still governed under the *Indian Act* that don't have the same capacity for funding access as the other nations. Hopefully, that gives a bit more clarity on that request for \$845,000 in the supplementary budget.

**Mr. Kent:** Madam Chair, I was also looking for the amount for each of those First Nations that the Premier mentioned. If he doesn't have it today, perhaps he can provide it at a later date. We will maybe circle back with this question when we start debating the mains here as the Spring Sitting progresses.

The other amount that I wanted to ask about is \$350,000 that was required to support the unanticipated legal proceedings and technical expertise to respond to several extraordinary unbudgeted items for the Yukon Water Board. I am looking to get a sense from the Premier on what those extraordinary unbudgeted items were for the Yukon Water Board and how much of the additional resources requested were applied to each of those items.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The supplementary budget is requesting an additional \$350,000. Of course, this was a request

that came over from the Yukon Water Board Secretariat. We provide the funding and support through the Executive Council Office for that entity which has tripartite representation from the Yukon government, the federal government, as well as First Nation governments. I hope that it was passed on during our briefing, but I am more than happy to do it. I would say that the key five files that then drove the request for more — in some cases, some funds for legal expertise, but other times, it's just technical expertise that is required — were: the Victoria Gold Corporation file with the Water Board; another one was Fell-Hawk, a placer mining operation; the Newmont Coffee water licence application; the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation water use dispute; and the reclamation and closure plans associated and security costs just in general on both the Victoria Gold and Keno Hill.

That drove the needs of the Water Board up about \$350,000. So, a series of requests came over, and that happens from time to time. Usually, there is a request for a signoff at the Premier's office on those, and it's everything — again, it's sometimes legal but sometimes just general expertise and specialty technical advice and advisement for the Water Board.

**Mr. Kent:** My final question — and perhaps I am just seeking some clarity from the minister about whether or not this is his file or if I should follow up with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. That's with respect to a transfer payment agreement that I believe was over three years to transfer to — I think I am getting this right — it was transferred to the Ross River Dena Council to transfer to their development corporation to pay the salary of the CEO of that organization for three years. I am just curious: Is that an Executive Council Office line item, or should I follow up with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources? If it is ECO, I am just curious if a similar funding arrangement has been made with other First Nations to pay the salary of their CEO for their development corporations?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Madam Chair, we don't have a funding agreement in the Executive Council Office. I think part of the questioning is for the mains or supplementary with Energy, Mines and Resources. I'm not sure if it's touched upon in the supplementary, but if there is ongoing in the mains, it would Energy, Mines and Resources.

**Mr. Kent:** We don't have EMR coming for supplementary debate, so I will follow up with the minister in the mains.

With that, I will thank the Premier and his officials for attending here this afternoon and turn it over to my colleague from the New Democratic Party.

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank my colleague. It was like we were at the same briefing or something and he literally just knocked off all of the questions from the list that I had, so I thank him for that.

One question that I asked during the briefing — and I don't actually anticipate there to be an answer now, but I will put it out there again: I am looking for the greenhouse gas emissions for each department and what the plan is to reduce those. I am curious if the minister has that number now for the Executive Council Office. I'm interested in knowing what the number is

for the department and what the plan is for that reduction. I'm happy to have that conversation as well in the mains, but if he has an answer now, that would be great.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Madam Chair, yes, I will definitely come back. I think this line of questions has come up for a multitude of departments. I will just be asking our team at the Executive Council Office that we are coordinating with organizations, such as Yukon Housing Corporation and others, to see how the *Our Clean Future* strategy, which identifies a tremendous amount of work across government with a number of deliverables, is looking at and supporting some of the emissions reductions work.

**Ms. White:** Madam Chair, I thank the minister for that. The reason why the NDP have been asking each department is that instead of — I mean, it's important that we talk about *Our Clean Future* and we talk about that overarching — but it's also really important, for example, that each department knows the role that they are playing. As an example, if the Department of Environment is doing helicopter surveys of wildlife, that is a big increase — right? — and the decision as to whether or not it should be made. There is a whole series of things that are made, so, by asking each department — I understand that they play a part of the whole, but it is trying to find out that accountability of each department. I appreciate that from the minister and I am looking forward to those answers.

I was just going through a mental list and I know that I didn't quite achieve it, so can the minister remind me how many deputy ministers there are currently and how many of those deputy ministers identify as women?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Just give me one second. We are going to pull this up for the members opposite. I don't want to misspeak, but I can tell you that one of the things that I have been striving for in taking on this role is to see that a real balance — and in some cases, I went back and looked at even striving to have just a proper representation at the deputy minister level. I know that in January of last year, very closely, we were watching some incredibly talented folks come up through government.

I would say that the two key things that I have tried to ensure is that I want to see Yukoners who have worked through the system here and learned to take on those roles. I have not looked outside of the territory for individuals to take on those senior roles. I want folks to understand, when they are moving through the public service, that — and hopefully for those listening — they know that they can continue to put the time in and the work and the leadership skills and that there's a pathway into those most senior of roles. That is one thing that I think is quite important here and are the decisions that I have tried to make while I've been in the role.

The second thing I'm just pulling up now because I want to see exactly where we are. I am just going to hold for a second; my deputy minister is going to get this number for me. I will stand, and hopefully whoever is helping out will be getting that work done right now. They are saying that, right now, there are 14 deputy ministers serving the Government of Yukon and eight identify as women. In this last year, it's probably the first time in the history of the Yukon government

that we have seen more women in those leadership positions. I think that has been a benefit for everybody in the Yukon — having their leadership.

**Ms. White:** That is radical in ways that are so exciting. I will just repeat it again: Out of 14 DMs, eight are women. That is something that I think we should all celebrate in here. I thank the minister for that. This is a day that we should mark on the calendar, actually, because this is really exciting.

With that, I have no further questions for ECO, and I look forward to the conversation on the mains.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I thank the members opposite for their questions today. I know that we should be able to expand on a few of those topics when we come back to the Executive Council Office in the main budget, but I do want to thank our folks here today. I want to thank Mr. Ferbey, Ms. Driscoll — thank you for your preparation previous to today, your work with the opposition, and the preparation that goes into producing our budgets for the mains.

I thank the Chair for the work today.

**Chair:** Is there any further debate on Vote 2, Executive Council Office?

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

**Ms. White:** Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the Committee of the Whole to deem all lines of Vote 2, Executive Council Office, cleared or carried, as required.

### **Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 2, Executive Council Office, cleared or carried**

**Chair:** The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines of Vote 2, Executive Council Office, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures*

*Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,595,000 agreed to*

*On Capital Expenditures*

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

*Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,595,000 agreed to*

*Executive Council Office agreed to*

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any further general debate?

### **Department of Education — continued**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Madam Chair, I would like to welcome back our officials from the Department of Education. We have the deputy minister, Mary Cameron, and director of finance, Andrea McIntyre. Welcome.

I do not have any opening comments.

**Ms. White:** Madam Chair, I welcome back the officials for another day of supplementary debate. I am looking forward to getting to the mains.

One question that I had to follow up with, I think, before I am done is about the \$1.082 million for the collective agreement for the university. Could the minister tell me what exactly that is for, and will that bring up the university workers to their counterparts in the Yukon government?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the follow-up question from Question Period today. In respect to the dollars that are actually in the supplementary budget, this is directly related to the negotiation for the Yukon University Employees Union. They have their own bargaining that they do with their union, and this is the amount that they have negotiated and we provided those dollars. I know there are some specific caseworks that are underway right now and we are working to provide that information back to that employee about the increase that their union has negotiated on their behalf.

**Ms. White:** Although I appreciate that answer from the minister, just to go back to Question Period — in 2022, the unionized workers at Yukon University did negotiate a new collective agreement, but within that, there was a letter of understanding between the workers and their employer that said that when the Yukon government — when YEU went to negotiate and if they achieved a higher increase, Yukon University would receive the same. It seems that the sticking point, though, is that if Yukon University doesn't get adequate funding to meet that, then they aren't able to get that increase.

So, what I am looking for is trying to understand what part the Minister of Education had in that conversation, and has she been approached by Yukon University to get those additional funds to make sure that the university employees are able to have the same increases as their Yukon government counterparts?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** The amount that we provided to Yukon University is actually slightly higher than what they negotiated in their collective bargaining. Again, they have their own union, so Yukon University negotiates their own collective agreement. We received notice for our collective bargaining on March 5. My understanding is that Yukon University's employee union will be doing bargaining this year as well, so there will more alignment, I believe, with the two negotiations.

We went back and did a little chart because we are working on a casework right now for an employee. The July 1, 2022 YEU increase was 4.5, and then the same date for Yukon

University was 3.25. That is slightly higher than what they negotiated, so the variance is 1.25.

On July 1, 2023, YEU was three percent and the Yukon University was 2.5 percent with a 0.5 variance. Again, both unions are going into collective bargaining. We are currently in collective bargaining and we anticipate that the Yukon University will go forward with their collective bargaining this year as well.

**Ms. White:** Has the minister been approached by Yukon University to fully fund what that letter of agreement was between the employer and the workers at Yukon University?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I have not had any direct request from Yukon University. This is at the technician level, so our director of finance works directly with their finance department at Yukon University. Again, they are a stand-alone institute; they have their own legislation.

The increase that we have in the supplementary budget is intended to make their collective bargaining whole. That is why we are bringing forward the supplementary amount today in this third appropriation act — to make that increase that they require for the collective bargaining whole.

**Ms. White:** I am just going to pivot. The Yukon-wide student data report 2022-23 was finally published online in March 21, 2024, but it did have a date of January 17, 2024 on the document. Why was there such a delay in it being available publicly?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Yes, we release the Yukon-wide student data report each spring. This year's report covered 2022 to 2023. There is a lot of data that is received and it takes that time, so it's actually that calendar year. They work with BC, as well, around ensuring and checking the data in order to bring it into a report form. It does take those few months to work through all of the data to accurately report back. It is consistently received in January and it takes those few months to work on the actual report.

**Ms. White:** Just understanding that this one is now available, where are we in having the "how are we doing?" report 2022-23? So, that one has not been brought forward yet and there is a timeline — actually a legislated timeline — for the minister to bring that report forward. Where is that one now?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** We have a number of reports that we work with, and we work with our partners around this specific one. We work collaboratively with Yukon First Nations on the "how are we doing?" reports, with recognition that our Yukon First Nation partners need to be part of that review process.

I just let the House know today that these reports were published today.

**Ms. White:** What a surprise — I had a motion that was tabled asking for both of those reports to be tabled or presented, so I am glad to know it and I expect that it will come off the Order Paper tomorrow.

I do have a question, though. Based on the enrolment reports of 2022-23 — from May 2023 — it says that the number of grade 12 active students is 462, but in the grade 12 graduation rate in the Yukon-wide student data report 2022-23

document, it says that potential graduates is 373 and the successful graduates were 295. That means that there were at least 89 active grade 12 students who were not reported at all. That's of concern.

Were the 89 active grade 12 students who were not reported students who were enrolled in the adult education program — and school completion certificates? I just wanted to know why the department would only report the results of a subset of the grade 12 students in the graduation programs and not all of them. I am just wondering about the 89 that were between in those reports.

We are talking about the enrolment reports of 2022-23. It says that the number of grade 12 active students was 462, but in the grade 12 graduation rate in the Yukon-wide student data report 2022-23 document, it says that potential graduates are 373 and successful graduates were 295. So, where did those 89 students go?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I will work with the department to bring that information back to the House. It is very specific, and we will work to bring the information back.

**Ms. White:** I guess I will just let the minister and her officials know now that I have great interest in those reports and the difference between graduation rates and the number of enrolled students. I am happy to have that conversation during debate of the mains.

**Mr. Kent:** I just wanted to quickly thank the officials for attending today. I have no further questions on the supplementary estimates, but I have a number of questions when we get to the main estimates for the current year.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education?

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

**Ms. White:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required.

### **Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried**

**Chair:** The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures**

**Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$4,306,000 agreed to**

**On Capital Expenditures**

**Total Capital Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$1,765,000 agreed to**

**Total Expenditures in the amount of \$2,541,000 agreed to**

**Department of Education agreed to**

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

### **Department of Justice — *continued***

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

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am happy to rise today in the Legislative Assembly to welcome the deputy minister of the Department of Justice, Mark Radke, and the director of finance for the Department of Justice, Luda Ayzenberg. Thank you very much to them for the assistance today.

I know that we have had some debate with respect to Vote 8 already. I am happy to answer any further questions.

**Mr. Cathers:** As I noted earlier in speaking to this, we are going to ask most of our Justice questions as well as other budgetary questions during the mains instead of the supplementary estimates. I asked all of the questions I had intended to ask at this stage during the previous debate on the supplementaries. With that, I will hand it over to the Third Party for any questions that they may have and thank officials for coming here today.

**Ms. White:** I have just one question based very much on a recent experience. I have a senior friend whom I am supporting and we needed to get her enduring power of attorney done. We had to go to an attorney to get her enduring power of attorney done, but in this House in 2020, we actually passed Bill No. 17, *Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)*, which removed the requirement for a lawyer to witness an enduring power of attorney. As the lawyer I recently saw pointed out, this is not the case yet. I am wondering where we are at in enacting Bill No. 17 so that when people need to get their documents sorted out for life planning, they don't need to go to an attorney to get that done. So, where are we on Bill No. 17?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Madam Chair, thank you for the question. It is one that I had recently, and I know that the deputy has looked into it. The *Enduring Power of Attorney Act* and the amendments done previously — I think it was in Bill No. 17, although it seems like a long way back now that we are into the 30s. Nonetheless, it requires regulation to deal with a prescribed form that is currently required by the act. In order for there to be consistency, the prescribed form is necessary, but it is not in its current form appropriate; it's not making reference to the changes that are necessary. This is an active file at the Department of Justice. We intend to go out quite soon to engage with seniors and the legal community with respect to

what the form should look like — as noted in the question, the idea being that individuals could create an enduring power of attorney with some witnesses and support through the appropriate documents that will be part of what is available to the public but will not require legal counsel to do so.

**Ms. White:** Madam Chair, although I appreciate the answer from the minister, knowing that this was Bill No. 17 and it's from 2020, how long are we expected to wait for regulations? The act doesn't say three to four years or five years plus for creation, so why has there been such a delay in getting something that, on the surface, seemed like it should have been pretty straightforward when it was tabled? What is the anticipated timeline for this to be completed?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Certainly, I would have preferred to have been here quite some time ago with respect to having this and some other pieces of legislation proclaimed following the appropriate drafting of regulations. I do want to take the opportunity to support the legislative counsel office and the important work that is done there by a very small and dedicated team of individuals who are responsible for drafting everything — every piece of legislation, every change, every regulation change, every order-in-council, every directive — that might be necessary for government. They are a very dedicated team of individuals who do that work for us.

While I don't disagree with the member opposite, I think I have to hasten to remind us all — because it sometimes seems like a distant memory, but there was a world pandemic in 2020, 2021, and 2022, for three full years, for the purposes of delaying the kinds of work that we might otherwise have been doing. The legislative counsel office — the small group of individuals I'm noting — were responsible for almost daily responses to government for the purposes of achieving what was necessary during the COVID-19 pandemic to give life to the rules and regulations, orders-in-council that were necessary for the management of the pandemic, for the management of programs to support Yukoners, Yukon businesses, Yukon individuals, to deal with border crossings, border closings, to deal with other levels of government and to deal with vaccinations and the public health concerns that we had all during that period of time. My recollection is that the work just during that period of time with respect to orders-in-council was over 1,100 documents. Unfortunately, that meant that some work like this was delayed. We are certainly hoping to return to a schedule that supports us moving forward and getting the regulations and the pieces of legislation that have been delayed in force and effect.

**Ms. White:** Can the minister remind me of the size of the legislative counsel office? How many folks work within that branch?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Madam Chair, the legislative counsel office is a total of 12 individuals, two of whom are support staff. I think that one or two are French legislative drafters, remembering that everything has to be produced in English and French. I can also indicate that in the last couple of years — without getting too personal — there has been some maternity leave and other leave for individuals. I am going to correct myself: There are three French drafters, leaving nine —

12 in all, support staff included. As I said earlier, they are responsible for all pieces of legislative drafting and legislative counsel advice that happens in the territory.

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the minister for that.

My question around having the regulations sorted out for a bill that was passed in 2020 isn't a criticism of those folks. Because of all the work, including the 1,100 orders-in-council that the minister just mentioned during the pandemic, I guess that my question is: Are they adequately resourced? The minister and her colleagues talk about the heavy legislative calendar that they have and the work that has to get done. I understand that there are lots of folks, including, let's say, those who work within Education, who would like to see the *Education Act* have a comprehensive review.

My question is: Is the legislative counsel office adequately resourced?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question; it is a great one. It is something that the deputy minister and I were talking about earlier today. In addition to the question about adequate resources, like all places in government at the moment and actually probably many private businesses and other organizations that are affected by the babyboomers becoming of a particular age, succession planning is required and absolutely necessary. I can say that we are actively recruiting for these legislative counsel office positions. I can also indicate that succession planning is an important part of that. I can lastly say that drafters are a bit of an elusive group. It is, of course, a specialty and a niche legal practice.

The legislative counsel office — just for the benefit of Yukoners who may be listening — prepare all of the legislation of government both in English and French; they provide legal advice to client departments on the development and interpretation of legislation. Also, I am describing sort of the niche expertise that is required for this work. The legislative counsel office works with other government entities to ensure that the legislation is available. It also advises on government organization and parliamentary practice. The office of the registrar of regulations is housed in the legislative counsel office, and it is responsible for filing, indexing, publication, and maintenance for all regulations, as required under the *Regulations Act*. Staff in the legislative counsel office work, as I have noted earlier, very hard to support modern and effective and, I would even add, responsive legislative and regulatory frameworks for the territory.

I am very happy to have the opportunity to not only recognize this really important work but to provide our thanks, which I think is, I'm sure — although I always hesitate to speak on behalf of everyone in the Legislative Assembly, but I'm sure it's appreciated by all.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice?

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

**Ms. White:** Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines of Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required.

### **Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried**

**Chair:** The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures**

**Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$9,494,000 agreed to**

**On Capital Expenditures**

**Total Capital Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$116,000 agreed to**

**Total Expenditures in the amount of \$9,378,000 agreed to**

**Department of Justice agreed to**

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

### **Department of Community Services — continued**

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

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Madam Chair, it is great to be here this afternoon. I have a few minutes left. I just want to take a brief moment to welcome Phil Macdonald and Matt King to the Chamber this afternoon. They will be providing support to me and I really do appreciate the information and the advice they provide me as we go forward.

I believe that I am going to start this afternoon with a question about water delivery costs by communities. I think that was the last question I was asked before taking my seat at the end of day, last debate. I will say that the costs of water delivery services are as such: In *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*, we have \$380,000 for Carcross; that is up from \$300,000. We have \$160,000 for Keno; that is the status quo, no change. We have in Ross River, \$355,000; that is up from \$265,000 — a \$90,000 increase. Territory-wide — this is outside of more established communities — the supplementary estimates have risen to \$100,000 from \$65,000; that is a difference of \$35,000.

In Old Crow, they have gone to \$370,000 from \$325,000; that is an increase of \$45,000. The total change in water

delivery services for 2023-24, as outlined in the supplementary estimates, is \$1,365,000, up from \$1,115,000; that is a change of \$250,000. I believe that answers the member opposite's question as it was posed to me last we met. I will now take my seat and await the next question.

**Ms. McLeod:** I want to thank the minister for providing that information. So, in this supplementary budget, it was \$1.2 million or \$1.365 million — I am not going to go down that road.

But my question is whether or not that is a continuing cost as years go on. Will that always be embedded in the budget now?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** To the opposite member's question, this is, at this point, a one-time cost. We will be assessing. We are asking for this money for this year. We will be assessing costs. The costs are going up, but we will work with our various communities and see what the continuing costs are, and that will be reflected in the mains for next year. At this stage, this is the supplementary for this year. It covers the shortfalls we have for various reasons, and we will work with the communities to see what the costs are going forward.

**Ms. McLeod:** Can the minister tell us what effect the increase in the carbon tax will have on this amount?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I thank the member opposite for the question.

Here we go again talking about the price on pollution in this House. This really does differentiate the Official Opposition from our side of the House explicitly. We believe that polluters should pay for the cost of the pollution that they are producing and the members opposite don't. The members opposite play around with the cost of a price on carbon. When it's convenient for them to campaign on such a thing, they campaign on it, and then when it comes time to actually implement such a thing, they play: I don't know what you're talking about; I never did it; it never happened; I never actually committed to it.

So, there is a great rift between the members opposite in the Official Opposition and our side of the House.

Not to put too fine a point on it, we don't have the cost broken out for what effect the carbon price will have on tenders. We know that the Canadian budget office said that 80 percent of Canadians are doing better with carbon pricing than without and that there is a cost for everything we do. If you don't put a carbon price in effect, there is still a cost of all the climate change effects that we're seeing across the country. There is a cost whether you put in a price on gas and fuels or if you don't. What we are saying is that the price on fuels is a way to recover from the polluters and force change in society that will reflect in some savings to society, making the polluters pay and shift behaviour that will draw down our costs over time and allow investments in clean fuels and change behaviour. That's really the way that most of the experts on reducing the effects of man-induced, pollution-induced climate change — this is the best way to do it.

Now, we are open on this side. The Premier has been very clear on that if there is a better idea, we'll take it, but we haven't seen a better idea yet from anywhere to actually substantially

change course, so we are sticking with the proven, because we know that Yukoners from Old Crow to Watson Lake to Beaver Creek and all points in between want change. They see the flooding, they see the fires, they see the landslides, they see the massive amounts of forest burning across the country, and they know that things have to be done. Right now in Canada and in many western jurisdictions and many jurisdictions like China and eastern jurisdictions — and around the globe, people are endorsing a price on carbon as the best way to force the polluters to actually change behaviour and change that.

We know that, on April 1, the price of gas could go up three cents. My good colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources reminded people that the gas companies themselves jack up gas prices by 10 cents because of conflict or whatever it is. They do this on a routine basis. The Government of Canada is raising prices on fuel by about three cents, and all that money is going back to Yukoners, to Canadians who have signed on to the carbon-pricing mechanism, and Canada's budget office has said that 80 percent of Canadians are better off. They are getting more back from carbon by doing this.

There are other parties in Canada who want to get rid of that tax and deprive Canadians of that quarterly revenue that they are getting and that makes life more affordable. We feel that it is not the way to go on this side.

I don't have the breakdown of the increase in carbon pricing on the water delivery in Whitehorse. I am sure that it has some effect. There is probably some cost to the businesses that are providing that essential service to Yukoners. I get that. Those businesses will get a quarterly rebate, and hopefully they will invest in more efficient trucks to deliver the water, which will then make their businesses a lot more efficient than ones that don't make that investment and they change to a much better way of doing business. Yukoners will receive a rebate cheque for the carbon pricing, and those Yukoners who have actually invested in better household heating fuels and systems and smaller cars and more efficient trucks will actually see a benefit from the carbon-pricing model that Canada has endorsed and that we certainly endorse here in the Yukon.

I really do thank the member opposite for raising carbon pricing again in the House. I am happy to talk about this all afternoon. I did it just the other day. I have lots of stuff to talk about on that front. Bring on your next question.

**Ms. McLeod:** I want to thank the minister for reiterating their philosophy on carbon pricing. In this case, though, I would suggest that the Yukon government is the polluter. My question was whether or not the Yukon government is tracking their own carbon costs, but I am going to guess that they are not.

But the minister did raise the issue of flooding, and that is good because that is where we are going next. I have a few questions about the Klondike River flood of last year. So, there was a program put out by the government for recovery, and perhaps the minister could tell us who is eligible and who is not. What kind of work is covered? How many applications were received? How many were accepted?

Now, if the minister wants me to go through this one at a time, I am happy to do that, and, of course, I will revisit if some are missed.

How long is this program available?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Madam Chair, okay, we're back at this again, and it's great to continue to talk about the costs of climate change writ large. We are certainly seeing that — and certainly in the Klondike this last year. That is what society — in this case, the Yukon government and the federal government — is having to pay out in the aftermath of the unprecedented change that we are seeing in our climate. Our climate is warming a lot faster than others. We are certainly seeing change here, and that goes for the entire nation of Canada. It has enormous impacts that are being felt in our changing climate from BC to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and all points in between — Québec, Ontario, Alberta. We are seeing fires starting already this year in Québec. It is one of the earliest starts to the season ever. In some places in Alberta and BC, the fire season never ended. We are seeing this.

At the federal-provincial-territorial ministers table, we're talking about this all the time — the fact that there isn't even a break. Among some ministers in provinces, they used to have a defined season for emergencies and a calm season, and they're not seeing that anymore. It's one thing to the next. This is the cost that we're seeing, so the price of climate change is either recouped and dealt with through change and trying to bring that price down through a price on carbon and on the pollution that we're creating as a society, or we turn a blind eye to it and there's another plan.

I look forward to hearing from the members opposite their plan, because we still haven't heard one — nothing cohesive in 13 years in office and certainly nothing since they have found themselves in opposition. I look forward to having them elaborate on what they would do without a carbon-pricing mechanism in the territory. I don't know what the plan is to sort of change behaviour. We are open to hearing the great things that they would do, but we haven't heard anything yet. For us, we are looking at what is tried and true and supported by educational facilities, by institutions, by economists, and by very learned people around the planet and is in effect in places like China, many of the US states, and in Canada across the country here. Maybe they have another idea. I look forward to hearing it.

As far as the costs in the Klondike last year, we had a total of nine claims being looked at through Energy, Mines and Resources and Economic Development. Energy, Mines and Resources is handling claims on agricultural parcels; Economic Development is handling claims on commercial properties. EMR has four claims; Economic Development has possibly five claims, as it's still being assessed. Then there is the Yukon Housing Corporation and they are working with 25 claims. If my math is correct, there is a total of 34 claims, but the commercial properties are still being assessed, so there may be less there.

The department is managing with claimants. Each department is handling their own claims and agricultural parcels, commercial, and homes themselves. Community

Services is coordinating and working with Ottawa to recover the process. The policy that we enacted last year in the Klondike mirrors the federal disaster financial assistance program, and so we are aligning it with the federal program to ensure that the territory can get as much money back from Ottawa as we possibly can.

At the national tables that I have attended, the federal government has let the provinces and territories know that they are working on refining the disaster financial assistance program. They are going to make it more transparent so that we have a better idea of what will be covered by Ottawa. We don't have the details on that. The territory worked with Ottawa to align our plan in the Klondike to reflect the existing disaster financial assistance program, but we will be working with Ottawa as they come up with their new program criteria. We will adapt our criteria to match the feds so that they align and so we can maximize the drawdown of support from Ottawa in the face of these escalating costs that every single province and territory and the feds are seeing across the country. The increases are extraordinary; the damage that we are seeing is unprecedented, and that is really the true cost of the pollution that we are throwing up into the planet, which is what we're hoping to mitigate through the carbon-pricing mechanism — in this case, about three cents a litre on the price of gas as of April 1. It seems a small price to pay in the face of everything that we see going on.

**Ms. McLeod:** So, if I understand what the minister is telling us — because I didn't actually get any answers to my questions — this is a program that is being refined through the Government of Canada — that the amount of money involved, nobody knows.

I am wondering, with all of these applicants, when these people will know what is covered, how much is covered, and where they stand financially as a result of this 2023 flood.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am hurt this afternoon. I am doing my very best to answer the member opposite's question. I thought I had provided quite a bit of information.

I said the number of claims and that each department is managing their own claims. Yukon Housing has 25 claims. I don't have eyes on that. When Yukon Housing is up — if they are up again — I'm sure you could ask them how much is in their budget for those claims. I am sorry if they have missed their window. Maybe they can come back on it in general debate of the main budget.

The budget for Community Services is about \$600,000 this year. That's our budget for the small part that we play in this, but most of the work is being done through Energy, Mines and Resources and Economic Development. Each of the departments with specialties are managing their own programs.

I am honoured actually that the member opposite is asking me these questions on the floor of the House today — as subject matter. I have my two colleagues here to certainly guide me through this fairly complicated recovery effort.

I will say that we have communicated and we are working — these claimants all have the criteria. We have worked very closely with them. They know what's going on, and that's what we are talking about — 34 claims. We have worked very

closely with these claimants to make sure they know what they are entitled to and how they are — and we worked out this program last year in the face of the extraordinary event that we had last year up in the Klondike. This is the third year of unprecedented floods that we have seen in the Yukon.

As I said, I'm glad that the member opposite has come to me. The member opposite could go online where all the criteria is spelled out on [www.yukon.ca](http://www.yukon.ca), and it goes into when to apply, the application deadline, who can apply, other funds, housing funding, program limits, grant funding for principal residents, who is eligible, what's eligible, what is not eligible, when we approve a funding request, loans for principal and secondary residences and outbuildings, loans, financing available, who is eligible, what's eligible, grant funding to replace possessions, what's eligible, what's not eligible, who's eligible, funding for temporary accommodations resulting from displacement, who is eligible, what's eligible, how to apply, after you apply — all of that information for housing, for commercial properties, and for agricultural processors is all laid out online in detail.

We have been working very closely with the claimants to make sure they know what is going on. That process is ongoing. That is where we're at. Once again, I will endeavour to get the member opposite answers to every question that she asks here this afternoon in as much detail as I possibly can.

**Ms. McLeod:** I thank the minister for that commitment.

Back in January, I think it was, there was some discussion in Dawson City at a community meeting that was held in relation to the Klondike Valley flood. It is my understanding that there was some pretty strong feedback about that flood, so I wonder if any changes were made to plans going forward on how things will be dealt with or managed as a result of that feedback from the City of Dawson?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Madam Chair, I can confirm that, yes, we have had several meetings and after-action debriefs up in the Klondike region. It has been my commitment from the start that we take action and then assess how the action went and then make the changes necessary to make sure it goes better in the future. It's a philosophy of constant improvement that I have been talking about since coming into the role of Highways and Public Works minister back in 2016. I am carrying on, of course, with the good crew here at Community Services, which has embraced that with gusto. I want to credit them for that. We want honest feedback from the people whom we're interacting with in the face of these very challenging and often emotionally fraught situations that we're seeing throughout the territory, be it flooding in the Klondike, evacuations in Old Crow or Mayo, any of the work around the Takhini bridge, or any of the other disasters that we've faced over the last three years. There have been several.

In fact, EMO was back there last week doing a tabletop exercise involving the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the town of Dawson, Emergency Measures Organization staff, and community responders. We have another exercise — meetings and engagement — on April 12 up there involving our team. We have been up there several times over the winter, so there's lots of work happening. Lots of work has happened and there is lots more to come. We are working through to make sure that

we learn — practice makes perfect. I wish we weren't getting the practice in disaster planning, but we are and we are going to seize that opportunity and make sure that we meet with the folks who are on the front lines and who are handling the crises in their front yards to find out how we can do it better into the future.

**Ms. McLeod:** Following last year's flood, can the minister tell us what preparation is being made for this year in the Klondike Valley? As I listened to the snow report for Yukon, it was north Yukon that had seen heavier than normal snowfall, so I am wondering if the department is anticipating that this is going to cause further flooding in the Klondike Valley — or what your assessment is.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am going to just follow up on the comments that I made last time — that practice makes perfect. When 2021 happened, we had historic flooding in Marsh Lake. That type of flooding is not something that we had a lot of experience in. We had to call experts in from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, and we had some folks from BC as well. We brought expertise in to help us with this. We looked at new ways — Tiger Dams — and invested in more sandbagging equipment. We had enormous support from the community of Whitehorse helping out their neighbours in Marsh Lake — and really, people from across the territory and across western Canada helped out. We brought the Canadian military in and so we learned some hard lessons from that.

In 2022, we had another historic flood. It wasn't heard about that much, but it was actually more challenging because we had record floods in virtually every community in the territory in that flood season. Community Services, working with municipalities and Yukoners across the territory, dealt with that flood season stoically and with very little fanfare. Much of it was outside the media's eyes because it was happening in rural Yukon. But they stepped up and saved virtually every community, working with municipalities, and it worked very, very well. We learned some lessons there as well.

Then, in 2023, we had the Klondike flood — again, another flood — and we were learning lessons from that.

So, the lessons keep coming — practice makes perfect. We understand the concerns that Yukoners have about the potential for spring flooding and we have experienced, as I have just noted, several significant floods in recent years. We are working hard to be prepared to respond — buying the equipment and getting the sandbagging equipment and everything in place that we need, trying to get that out to communities that may be at risk of flooding in the coming years based on the projections that we are having. We are planning and coordinating with local governments and agencies to establish an inventory of sandbags and the necessary response tools and materials. It is focused on training to bolster capacity and ensure our readiness. The organization continues to refine and improve its operation through a review of past responses and ongoing engagements with communities, municipalities, and First Nation governments.

It is too early, however, to confidently determine the flood risk to the territory. Spring weather, the timing and progression of snowmelt, as well as the amount of rain that we receive in

the coming weeks and months are important drivers of flooding regardless of snowpack levels. Every March, April, and May, the Government of Yukon conducts Yukon-wide snow surveys to help forecast water levels and flow conditions across the Yukon. The first snow bulletin is released in early March and contains a preliminary look at how the winter weather has evolved in addition to how much snow is on the ground. The April bulletin informs our spring flood-risk assessment, which is shared publicly, so that is coming in the coming weeks.

I did have a news conference in March about the coming fire and flood season. Officials from Community Services, working with Environment, will track water levels and snow levels and provide forecasting data. April will be the next shoe to drop — where we have a little bit of a clearer focus on what is coming to the territory.

So, yes, to answer the member opposite's questions, we are gaining a lot of experience in flooding in the territory. We are working and have worked out the last three years to improve and refine our approaches to such things. Every single flood that we have had is different. They have all had their own charms — that really is probably not the best way to describe it. "Their own challenges" is probably a better way to put it. They have all had their own unique circumstances. Last year in the Klondike, it had to do with the breakup of the ice, which was somewhat unusual for that region. We will deal with these things as they come up and refine our techniques to deal with the very often unique circumstances that we find with every year's flooding events.

With that, I will await the next question.

**Ms. McLeod:** I guess what I got from that is that the government's position is that they will wait and see — that they will learn from the past and they will wait and see what happens in the future — all right.

I presume that because the minister went on to talk about Marsh Lake, the philosophy is the same for that region, because, of course, I have some questions about Army Beach and South M'Clintock. I'm wondering what the government has done for future flood mitigation in those areas and whether or not any further mitigations are planned for 2024.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am going to begin by respectfully but strenuously rejecting the members opposite's characterization that we are taking a wait-and-see approach.

As my officials have reminded me, we are not taking a wait-and-see approach. We are engaged with flood and water forecasts. We have experts at the university working with us. They are working on a potential mitigation plan for the Klondike region based on reconnaissance that is currently underway. We are assessing satellite images; we are assessing the ice thickness and doing other work both in the Klondike and other flood-prone areas based on data. The data isn't complete yet and it is going to keep coming. We are working on that.

I am working with the federal government on details about the disaster financial administration plan. We are tailoring our plan, as we did in the Klondike last year, to mirror the federal plan. We look forward to hearing what they come up with. In Marsh Lake, we are working with residents and we are coordinating the response to South M'Clintock and Army

Beach. They have a water committee with flood mitigation options and what we heard in recommendations.

Our team has representation from a number of government departments, including Environment, the Water Resources branch, and the Climate Change Secretariat. Community Services has the Infrastructure Development branch, Communications, Community Affairs, finance, policy, and Wildland Fire Management. Highways and Public Works is bringing in the Transportation Engineering branch, Transportation Maintenance branch, Geomatics Yukon, and Yukon Energy. Energy, Mines and Resources — the Land Planning branch, the Land Management branch, and Yukon Geological Survey. Health and Social Services has the environmental health branch. Tourism and Culture has the heritage branch, and Yukon Housing is also involved.

We are preparing a response to the water committee's report. We are actually working with that water committee on the status of the four recommendations that it has made to us. A number of recommendations that they have made require additional and ongoing work. The responses won't immediately and definitively address all the issues of the community. We have to find funding and plan out the work that has been proposed by that community.

This work includes exploring high-level, long-term options for flood mitigation, developing flood hazard maps, and providing communities with basic flood risk information.

The Marsh Lake area is just one of the communities for which we are working on with long-term mitigation approaches. It's complex. We have to do technical studies and identify the unique circumstances of each community. In Marsh Lake, they have done a great job with their report, so that's certainly something we can work with, with that community, and we will continue to work with them to define the work that needs to be done in the Marsh Lake area.

We are having more public briefings and forecasting data given to the communities — expected in mid-April. That will be the seasonal briefing and it will be informed by the April snowpack survey and ongoing work on forecasting.

Just to reiterate, we are not taking a wait-and-see approach. We are doing the hard work with communities across the territory to have tabletop exercises to make sure that we have the equipment needed in the face of flooding.

I met with the joint task force north — the military — again. Just recently, we also had a tabletop exercise here in Whitehorse that pointed out some of the challenges we face in town and allowed us to help to deal with some of those challenges in the face of a disaster here in town.

We are doing work not only on flooding but also on fires. It is a very dynamic field. We're not sitting on our laurels taking a wait-and-see approach. We are actually actively working to make sure that Yukoners have the best information they can so they can respond to a natural disaster in the coming year, if one presents itself, in the best possible way. I will remind residents once again that, as much as the Yukon government has a responsibility, the First Nations have responsibilities, the municipalities and communities have responsibilities, and Yukoners living in unincorporated communities have

responsibilities as well — but Yukoners should be getting their 72-hour kits together. We are going to be bringing in some focus to that in the coming weeks — to make sure that they have food and water, have a plan, have their most precious valuables identified and placed so they can easily get to them — have at least in their heads what they need to protect — that Yukoners actually make sure that they have the proper insurance and that they have enough insurance to protect their properties and their belongings.

They should keep their trucks and cars topped up with fuel and, should they travel, when travelling in the territory, not take anything for granted, much as they do in the wintertime. They should plan for any eventuality — being cut off from bridge washouts, as we have had recently, mudslides, or whatever it is. They should have food and water, perhaps a tent, perhaps a sleeping bag — something in the car that they can use to look after themselves should they be stranded in this very vast, beautiful, and somewhat isolated, even today, territory that we have — that they can look after themselves until help arrives.

With that, Madam Chair, we are not taking a wait-and-see approach. We are actually actively working to protect communities.

**Ms. McLeod:** I just have one further flood question to ask the minister. I do have many, many questions for this department, but I want to give some time to my colleague the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

My question is about McConnell Lake and I wonder if the government can give us an update on that project. The last time we had this discussion, as a result of having an invite from the folks out there, the minister said that he would get his boots on the ground and have a look. I am wondering if that happened and what the update is on McConnell Lake.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Madam Chair, when last we left off, I was in the midst of working with an engineering — well, I wasn't, but the good folks at Community Services had hired and are working with a new engineering team to work on a study that will inform us on next steps. That study is on the cusp of being received by my team at CS within the coming weeks. Once that is in hand and we have assessed it, we will certainly hold a meeting, as I promised to do, with the good folks out at McConnell Lake — to meet with them and discuss next options informed by the engineering study, which we have not yet received but will be getting very, very shortly. That will then lead to the next steps with the good folks at McConnell Lake.

**Ms. McLeod:** Madam Chair, I thank the minister for that. I am going to continue on with some questions that I have. I'm sure that there are some things that we'll come back to when we get into the mains to have some further discussion on.

With regard to the irrigation project at the Mountain View Golf Course, what were the expenditures in 2023-24, and is that work complete?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Madam Chair, yes, with respect to the Mountain View Golf Club, I'm looking into the actual costs we may have incurred in 2023-24. It would have to do with work that we did on the procurement, more than likely, and some of the project management fees. It won't be terribly significant, I don't think.

We have actually tendered the contract for the work at Mountain View three times now and I have had no takers for the work. A golf course is a fairly unique recreational facility. I recently met with the folks at Mountain View here at the main administration building to discuss the challenges they faced in hiring and having their tender accepted by a contractor. When last we met, we went over the project and what they expected and the work that we are doing to actually make the next procurement successful. The team at Community Services is working with Mountain View Golf Course to see how we can proceed with this project in a way that meets their needs. I have confirmed with the Department of Community Services that the Investing in Canada infrastructure funds that are necessary to complete the project are good until 2033.

In 2022-23, we spent \$6,000 on this project, and in 2023-24, we have administrative costs of \$14,000. The total over 2022 to 2024 is about \$20,000, and they are all procurement-related.

**Ms. McLeod:** How much of that money was through ICIP, if the minister can just clarify that?

**Chair:** Member for Watson Lake, please.

**Ms. McLeod:** If I could just clarify that a little bit with the minister while he gets his information together — the portion that comes from ICIP — I guess what I want to know is what the total budget amount is and how much of that money is coming from ICIP.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Spoiler alert: We will have to resume this when we get back — saved by the bell.

Seeing the time, Madam Chair, I move that you report progress.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

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

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

### Chair's report

**Ms. Blake:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

**The following sessional paper was tabled March 25, 2024:**

35-1-149

*Yukon Ombudsman, Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner, and Yukon Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner 2022 Annual Report (Speaker Harper)*