



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, March 28, 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

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Acting Deputy Clerk	Allison Lloyd
Clerk	Christopher Tyrell
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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Thursday, March 28, 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. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome two guests here today from the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. We have acting director Sarah Crane and policy analyst Lori Duncan.

Thank you for being here today for the tribute.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of International Transgender Day of Visibility

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to International Transgender Day of Visibility.

Each year on March 31, we celebrate transgender and gender-diverse people and their contributions to society, and we raise awareness of the discrimination they face. I want to acknowledge the tremendous amount of work that the transgender community and their allies have been doing to ensure that all Yukoners feel safe, respected, and represented. Visibility is part of an equitable representation, and representation can help reduce harmful stereotypes. It can also allow for more community support. Lately, we have seen a rise in rhetoric and policies that target the rights of transgender people — in particular, transgender youth. Often, being visible as a transgender or a gender-diverse person means being vulnerable to bullying, discrimination, and violence.

On this day, we raise our voices to support the transgender community and we fight against transphobia and discrimination in all its forms. One of the ways we support and celebrate diversity in the Yukon is through the implementation of the sexual orientation and gender identity policy — also known as SOGI. The policy promotes the rights of all students in their acceptance and expression of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Teaching children about diversity and inclusivity is essential for building a more tolerant, equitable, and compassionate society. When learning about trans and non-binary experiences, it's important to understand the diversity of this community. Transgender and gender-diverse identities and expressions have always existed in cultures

across the world. On the spring equinox this year, we celebrated the proclamation of the Two-Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQIA+ Awareness to Celebration Day in the Yukon.

The two-spirit resurgence is a step toward unlearning the harmful colonial understanding of gender binary in our society. Together, through education and centring transgender voices and experiences, we can work toward a more equitable and more inclusive society where transgender and gender-diverse people are more than visible. It needs to be a place where they truly thrive.

*Applause*

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize March 31 as International Transgender Day of Visibility. This day is dedicated to recognizing the challenges faced by transgender, two-spirit, and non-binary individuals and also to celebrate the achievements made toward equality. So many barriers are still faced by trans individuals. Violence, oppression, harassment, and discrimination are real issues faced around the world — even right here at home.

Statistics Canada has reported that transgender people in Canada are more likely to report their mental health as “poor” or “fair” than their cisgender counterparts, are more likely to have seriously contemplated suicide in their lifetimes, and are more likely to have been diagnosed with mood or anxiety disorder. Statistics like this are not okay. These are our friends, these are our neighbours, and they are our family.

It might not be easy for everyone to fully comprehend the difficulties that people face with respect to transphobic discrimination or violence, but make the choice to start building that understanding. I encourage everyone to take the time to listen and learn from those who face these barriers. Remember that the small gestures and the kind gestures make a difference. Be respectful, be humble, and be kind.

Thank you to all of our community organizations and allies who continue to advance equality for all trans, two-spirit, and non-binary Yukoners and move our community toward unconditional acceptance. Again, thank you to all those resilient people whom we are tributing today for all of your contributions and for just being you.

*Applause*

**MLA Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the International Transgender Day of Visibility. It is a funny thing — visibility. Right now, trans people are more visible than they ever have been in recent memory and it is wonderful to be able to see trans joy made visible. It is also a time of great danger and fear for trans people, as there are increasing attacks, both personal and political, across the country and around the world. It is clear that visibility may be part of the solution, but it is certainly not the whole solution.

In that spirit, I want to share excerpts from Canadian writer Kai Cheng Thom's 2018 essay, which rings just as true today as it did six years ago, called *Trans Visibility Does Not Equal Trans Liberation* — quote: “... we have seen certain gay rights

‘victories’ such as the right to marry and the repeal of ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policies, the neoliberal status quo itself remains largely unchallenged. The rich remain rich and the poor remain poor, and a relatively tiny group of queer folks got to join the rich while most of us stayed behind ... I know that I don’t want to live in a world where trans people can access medical transition care only if they have the insurance to pay for it. I want everyone to get the healthcare they need.

“I don’t want to live in a world where middle class trans people can use public washrooms, but homeless trans people are barred from public spaces. I want to live in a world where everyone has a home.

“I don’t want to live in a world where trans people can join the military or the police and join in the violent oppression of people of color around the world. I want to live in a world without wars or police brutality.

“I don’t want to live in a world where trans people are put in prisons that match their gender identity. I want to live in a world without prisons.

“I don’t want to live in a world where a handful of trans celebrities make millions of dollars while the rest of us struggle to survive. I want to live in a world where we all have what we need to thrive.

“I don’t want to live in a world where some trans people are considered normal and others are considered freaks. I want to live in a world where all of our freakish, ugly, gorgeous magnificence is celebrated for its honesty, glory, and possibility.”

Today I call us all to imagine and create a future that truly has possibility for everyone.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Dawson City International Short Film Festival**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Dawson City International Short Film Festival marking its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

Taking place on the traditional lands of the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in, the Dawson City International Short Film Festival is celebrated every Easter weekend. The annual event is presented by the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture, or KIAC, and brings viewers from across the north and beyond to Dawson City. Each year, the event showcases creative filmmaking from artists across Canada and even some from around the globe.

This festival is one of the northernmost competitive film festivals in the world and over the years has given so many Yukoners an opportunity to tell their stories on a globally recognized platform. Festival-goers also get the chance to partake in special events such as meet-and-greets, master classes for up-and-coming filmmakers, youth screenings, and, of course, the awards ceremonies. These events support the ongoing growth and development of Yukon filmmakers and industry professionals, and it is incredibly encouraging to see so many Yukoners participating and supporting local artists.

I want to congratulate all of the talented filmmakers who will be showcasing their work at this year’s festival. I can’t wait to see their films.

I want to thank all of the sponsors, the festival committee, and, of course, the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture for their commitment to making this year’s festival a success. I would also like us to please acknowledge and appreciate the people who have worked to bring this event to life for the past quarter-century — 70 volunteers each year putting in hundreds of hours of work. These folks deserve our praise.

I would like to recognize Dan Sokolowski, who has served as director since 2007, meaning that he has been integral to the festival for 17 years. A shout-out as well to past festival directors David Curtis, Dylan Griffith, and Lulu Keating.

Mr. Speaker, the Dawson City International Short Film Festival is something that many Yukoners look forward to each spring. Yukoners continue to be enthralled by the stories presented at the festival. Once again, congratulations KIAC and Dawson City on an amazing 25 years. I encourage everyone to check out this year’s festival and enjoy the wide variety of entertainment that it provides.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the annual Dawson City International Short Film Festival held this year March 28 to 31. It is 25 years old. For an Easter weekend, what better time to enjoy spring in Dawson City plus short films that will capture the imagination of audiences? And everyone can share film ideas and tips.

The entries — many local but some from as far away as Greece, Croatia, and Old Crow — are thought-provoking and there will be something for everyone to take away to contemplate. The logo of a raven and a popcorn bag is so Yukon. There will also be film festival swag such as mugs, hats, and tees, again, with the iconic raven.

The 2024 trailer contest winner is Suzanne Crocker’s squirting *Cucumber*. There are so many films, far too many to mention here, but check out the website and that alone should pique much interest. The audience has input as well. They can choose their favourite over the weekend. Just as in other years, this year’s attendees will be judges of one film that touches them.

The festival will be holding open evening receptions, workshops, a street feast, and, of course, visiting and meeting others. KIAC, with its one full-time employee and a volunteer committee, shows the tenacity and forward-thinking needed to host this annual event in the little town of Dawson — thank you. To the sponsors, again, too many to name in this tribute, and to all the Dawson folks who assist and volunteer, words are never enough — thank you. Congratulations on 25 years of hosting the most northern competitive film festival in the world and doing so with the same enthusiasm and joie de vivre as the first year.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to toast the wonder that is the Dawson City International Short Film Festival. There is something uniquely pleasurable about watching a tight, elegant short film that’s

exactly the length it needs to be and not inflated to an arbitrary length. They are digestible; they challenge us; they leave us enchanted or broken-hearted; they make us think.

Short films have the ability to impact the audience's future interactions and thinking patterns. Short films leave an impression.

For a quarter of a century, Dawson City has hosted film enthusiasts and creative filmmakers from around the world to celebrate the best short films on offer. For those making the pilgrimage north and those lucky enough to live in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in territory, enjoy a weekend jam-packed with interactive screenings, workshops, and, of course, short films.

We thank all of those who work so hard to make this festival memorable.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a December 5, 2023 letter addressed to the Premier and the Minister of Education from the Whistle Bend Elementary School Council regarding concerns with the new building in Whistle Bend.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, today I have a letter for tabling addressed to the Minister of Education entitled "Unilateral changes to educational assistant staffing and school allocations", signed by six community organizations.

**Speaker:** Are there any reports of committees?  
Are there any petitions to be presented?  
Are there any bills to be introduced?

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill No. 307: *Act to Amend the Education Act* — Introduction and First Reading

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I move that a bill entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Leader of the Third Party that a bill entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 307 agreed to*

**Speaker:** Are there any further bills for introduction?  
Are there any notices of motions?

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges Canada Post to restore full postal service to Dawson City, including service on Saturdays.

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

This then brings us to Question Period.

### QUESTION PERIOD

#### Question re: Mineral exploration industry

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, we are seeing a disturbing trend in mineral exploration statistics in the Yukon. According to Natural Resources Canada, we are expecting to see a 10-percent drop in overall exploration expenditures this year compared to 2023. We have seen individuals and organizations sounding the alarm on this for the past number of years. According to a December 2022 *Whitehorse Star* article, a Yukon government geologist told the Geoscience Forum audience that year that — quote: "The Yukon is not seeing very many new, early-stage grassroots projects ... adding the number of companies and prospectors active in the territory could drop to a 57-year low."

So, is the minister concerned about this low number, and what changes can he point to since his own geologist made these statements that are designed to increase mineral exploration in the territory?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I will point to a couple of things, and I think that I tabled it last fall, and then the member opposite wrote me a letter asking about mineral exploration numbers. What we saw last year was that exploration was robust in the territory and so were the development numbers for mining. I took a look at those numbers. They were similar to recent years, and that was — I don't know, after those comments — about a year after the comments made by the geologist. So, they didn't prove to be correct for last year.

I have seen NRCAN's projections; those are projections. What I can say is that I have been impressed with exploration in the territory, and we will continue to support that activity, and I guess I will also just point out that, when I compared those numbers back to when the Yukon Party was in office, they were much better under our tenure and under the work of the Premier, but mostly, I would attribute that to the industry itself.

**Mr. Kent:** Perhaps more worrisome is the trend that is emerging in the Yukon. For 2024, Yukon expenditures will represent 3.6 percent of total Canadian exploration expenditures. That is less than half of the 7.7 percent it represented in 2017.

In a March 11, 2024 article, the Fraser Institute stated — and I'll quote: "... according to a recent study, which measures the investment attractiveness of mining jurisdictions worldwide based on government policies and geological potential by surveying senior executives in the mining industry, Yukon is dimming in the eyes of mining investors."

We know that the government keeps close tabs on the Fraser Institute's rankings, as the minister has boasted about them when times were good. So, again for the minister, is he concerned about the Yukon dimming in the eyes of investors, and can he point us to anything he has introduced to reverse this trend?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Again, my compliments go to the industry. I know that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has done a lot of good work, but what I think we are

talking about is how active the industry is as a sector. My acknowledgements are about the industry.

The work that we are doing around industry is ongoing with respect to mining, but one of the things that I will say here is that we believe that mining is going to be essential as we transition away from fossil fuels. It's an important part of that transition to have the critical minerals that will be necessary for that move. The Yukon is blessed with our geology, and we are always working to untap that potential here in the territory.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, so exploration, as I mentioned in my second question, is on a downward trend, and industry needs some help from this minister to reverse that. The Fraser Institute also said — quote: “Moreover, investors took a dim view of Yukon’s taxation regime and also noted its regulatory duplications.” It goes on to say — and I quote again: “Clearly, policy improvement would help increase Yukon’s appeal in the eyes of investors.”

We know that the Premier takes the Fraser Institute’s ranking seriously, as in June 2017, he sole-sourced a \$40,000 contract to a Liberal public relations firm for — quote: “... preparation for the Fraser Institute survey...”

Can the minister point to a single new policy designed to address these concerns around our taxation regime and regulatory duplications?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, the person who seems to raise the Fraser Institute is the member opposite.

Look, those analyses — they’re great. I think that they reflect on how robust the industry is here for the Yukon. When I looked at how well mining is doing in the Yukon, I looked back from 2012 to 2016, and under the Yukon Party, it wasn’t doing so well.

Okay, I will table those numbers again for the member opposite. By the way, the thing that he is talking about today is a projection — it has not come to pass — and he asked me for one example of something that we are doing around mining. Well, here is one example: We are modernizing this century-old legislation. We are working in partnership with First Nations, as we agreed to do under the devolution transfer agreement, to write new minerals legislation that will be for the future of the Yukon. That is what we are doing.

#### **Question re: Whistle Bend school**

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, in a December 5, 2023 letter to the Premier and minister, the Whistle Bend school council outlined a number of concerns after they toured the school. They said — quote: “Observations made at the visit directly contradict the ‘Review of Inclusive and Special Education in Yukon’, basic human rights and the ‘Ready-to-Learn’ schools initiative.”

Can the minister tell us if a subsequent tour was organized as requested by the school council, and what if any changes were made as a result of the letter and the tour?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. I’m very pleased and excited that our government is building the first new elementary school in over 20 years and that we are opening up registration very soon for the school. The construction is almost complete, and we will see children

in the school in August. Whistle Bend Elementary School will open its doors to hundreds of students to a very beautiful, 21<sup>st</sup> century, modern learning facility.

We have had an opportunity to have a recent tour of the school. I am certainly happy that we have the Whistle Bend school council in place. We worked to establish that council early.

I will note as well that we had a project advisory committee that included — in the planning for this facility — the Whistle Bend Community Association, Ta’an Kwäch’än, Kwanlin Dün, City of Whitehorse, Yukon government representatives from Education, Community Services, and many others. I’m very proud of the new, modern design of this facility.

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Education issued a news release stating that students in the Whistle Bend school attendance area have been automatically enrolled this fall. The school has a capacity of 450, and in that January letter, the minister informed us that anticipated enrolment for Whistle Bend school this fall will be 247 students.

Can the minister tell us what the updated projections are for enrolment in the school this fall? Can the minister please tell us how many teachers have been hired or assigned to Whistle Bend based on these projections?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, again, I’m very happy that we will be moving toward a formal enrolment in the new Whistle Bend school. The Government of Yukon is dedicated to ensuring the smooth transition for students and families as we open this new, beautiful school, which will be operating for the 2024-25 school year.

Students are expected to attend a school in their attendance area — and their primary home — and it has a lot to do with their primary home address. I know that we have heard a lot of announcements on the radio and through other means about this. Parents will be receiving formal letters asking them to register their children soon.

In terms of staffing, the Whistle Bend Elementary School Council has assumed regular school council duties now, such as hiring a principal, which has been completed. Schools are allocated staff numbers based on the number of enrolled students, so as students transfer from other schools, we may see staffing numbers adjust to other schools based on enrolment, and we will staff according to the enrolment.

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, the opening of the Whistle Bend school will have a big impact on at least two other schools: Jack Hulland and Holy Family. According to the minister’s letter, Holy Family will see a decline in student population from 179 to 127 and Jack Hulland from 430 to 320 students.

With these enrolment decreases, can the minister tell us about the corresponding decrease in teachers that each school is facing? When will those decisions be made public so that the school communities can assess what it will mean for their next school year?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, again, as we move forward to realize the new Whistle Bend Elementary School and to see children attending in the 2024-25 school year, I am

very excited about this. It will take some pressure off of other schools. In fact, I met with the Jack Hlland Elementary School Council this week. We had a very great presentation on some of the vision that they have for their school. We talked about the potential for the decrease in enrolment.

I feel like schools are really looking at this as an opportunity to readjust some of the vision that they have for their schools. I have yet to meet with Holy Family around this particular question that is being posed here today, but the Minister of Highways and Public Works and I left feeling quite inspired by the Jack Hlland discussion.

Again, I am looking forward opening this new, beautiful school, and I want to add that most of the workers or the contractors who worked on this school were Yukoners, and they have taken a tremendous amount of pride in building the first new elementary school in the City of Whitehorse in over 20 years.

### Question re: RCMP funding and staffing

**MLA Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice has said that her government is responding to the overdose crisis and concerns about community safety by increasing funding to the RCMP. The choice to hire more RCMP officers rather than providing more social supports is a concerning one. It speaks to the Liberals' view on solutions to community safety.

Too often we see this government equating policing to community safety when, in fact, studies show that there is no consistent association between police spending and crime rates in municipalities in Canada. Increased police funding does not decrease crime. In fact, what we hear from listening to people is that policing has not been equitable or effective for all Yukoners, and in many cases, it has been damaging to communities.

I ask the minister this: How will this increase in the RCMP budget help community safety?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, this is not an either/or situation, and Yukoners certainly understand that, despite the nature of this question.

We have put in the 2024-25 budget supports for our communities, supports to address the substance use health emergency, supports to address issues of RCMP services and, in particular, issues that involve the safety of our communities. With respect to the substance use health emergency, we certainly appreciate the devastating impacts that this is having on Yukon families and on communities.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Council of Yukon First Nations for their contributions to the substance use health emergency responses — to their approach to Yukon First Nation leadership, who have taken bold steps to help address and, in fact, lead the way in responding to this ongoing crisis. There are many specifics that I could point to with respect to programming and attempts to provide services for Yukoners who are struggling through this situation and I look forward to being able to do that.

**MLA Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, in my riding of downtown Whitehorse, the conversation of community safety is top of mind. Policing has increased over the years, but it has not

helped, because studies show that giving the RCMP more money cannot solve systemic issues. Until this government addresses the root cause of systemic problems, the cycles will only continue.

Just last year, the downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan was released. This plan lays out actionable solutions to better support people in our community. We know that the RCMP will get an increase of \$3.5 million. What we don't know is how the downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan is funded or managed.

What is the budget for the downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan, and how are those funds being allocated?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, there are frankly millions of dollars in the 2024-25 budget to do exactly what the member opposite is asking about. I certainly hope that we see support from every member of this Legislative Assembly.

Alongside the Council of Yukon First Nations, the government has released the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*. At that time, we announced an investment of \$1.9 million and we are pleased to say that an increase of that amount — to \$2.26 million — is in this 2024-25 budget. We have partnered with Blood Ties Four Directions, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Connective, the RCMP, Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nations, and the federal and municipal governments — all working together to address the public health emergency.

There is an incredible response to the work that is being done with respect to the downtown safety plan. I can also take this opportunity to thank the Council of Yukon First Nations for the Moccasin mobile outreach van, which helps to reduce barriers for street-involved persons in accessing support services by meeting them, and this is just one of the new initiatives that is making our community safer.

**MLA Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, time and time again, we see this Liberal government make big commitments that they're going to support community safety by addressing systemic problems. The minister said in the news that she didn't think this government could do more than what they have done so far. That sounds like she is out of ideas and is trying to solve social problems by throwing money at the RCMP, despite evidence that this won't work.

Harm-reduction practices, affordable housing, robustly funded social services — that's what works. When the Liberals give money to the RCMP, that's money that doesn't go to social workers and counsellors. It doesn't go to housing. It doesn't go to the non-profits that are providing essential services to vulnerable people. It doesn't go to making sure that people have their basic necessities met and access to supports that help them thrive.

Why did the Liberals decide that giving money to the RCMP was more important than investing in the community supports that are shown to keep people safe?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the questions from the opposition, but I really hope that they listen to the answers. This is not an either/or equation. We must support the RCMP for the services that they provide across the

territory, including in our communities across the north, and we must also support the social programs.

The downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan involves increases to: security services; the mobile outreach initiative from the Council of Yukon First Nations; winter housing strategy; land-based treatment funding; in this budget, the library outreach worker; the community engagement and education that we are doing with IRP — inspire, reconciliation company — and a signed letter that we have with Yukon First Nations to build a First Nation healing centre. There is communications and education. There is a new warming space in this very building where we are learning about the needs of our community as we go forward. There are expanded food services. There is culturally safe programming. There are additional supportive and emergency housing options. There is the operationalization of a managed alcohol program. I could go on.

### **Question re: Emergency preparedness in Dawson City**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** In February, a member of the community emergency management committee wrote a public letter to the City of Dawson, which appeared in their council package.

In that letter, the committee member raised some serious concerns about the Yukon government's emergency preparedness. The first issue raised was that it took almost eight months for the government to hire an engineering firm to consult the residents about last year's flood. All it resulted in was a "what we heard" document.

What real actions has the government done to prepare a response to the flooding in the Klondike Valley last year?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, right off the gate, I want to really thank the team at Community Services, the team at Health and Social Services, the team at Economic Development, housing — all of whom stepped up and came up with an absolutely incredible package for the citizens of Dawson in the aftermath of the flooding they saw in the community last year. It's the third year of flooding. We are seeing this all the time in the territory now. We are going to see it more because we have a changing climate, and we are working on the other front to make sure that we address some of the long-term possible implications of climate change. We will continue that work.

Up in Dawson — I am really happy for the question from the member opposite this afternoon. We just had a table-top exercise up in Dawson involving the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the City of Dawson just to make sure that our emergency preparedness — that we run the actual testing to see how prepared we actually are. We are going to continue that work with the citizens of Dawson. We are going to continue that work with all the communities that we have engaged with over the last several months — since the last season. We are going to continue that work into the future and refine and improve the way we respond to emergencies. That is what this government is committed to; that's what we are going to continue to do into the future.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** One of the most significant issues faced over the past few years, with the combination of flooding and landslides, is that the north Klondike Highway has been impassable for extended periods. This raises a very real concern about how goods, including food and supplies, can get to Dawson in the event of a prolonged highway closure. We have also heard that last year's flooding came close to affecting the operation of the airport.

What plans are in place to ensure that the City of Dawson and residents in the surrounding area will have access to food and supplies in the event of yet another emergency?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I am really glad that the member opposite is bringing these questions up so we can continue to talk about all the work we are doing to try to make sure that our communities are more resilient and prepared in the event of emergencies that we are facing more and more.

We have a plan. We have a plan to deal with long-term climate change. I have yet to see any planning or any preparation on behalf of the members opposite — zero, Mr. Speaker; zero. As a matter of fact, their plan is to get rid of any potential long-term mitigations of climate change.

What we are doing is working on behalf of the entire territory to make sure that we have communities that are resilient. We are investing in infrastructure; we are having planning exercises and tabletop exercises in every single Yukon community. We are helping First Nations to do the planning and the same with municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the issues that I have heard about more than any other in my riding and in my travels through the territory over the last little while. I understand how important it is for Yukoners, and we are going to continue to work diligently to ensure that this territory is as prepared as possible for man-made climate change and for the emergencies that are coming with it.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** In the letter, this member of the CEMC was critical of the Yukon government's lack of action and states that the City of Dawson cannot continue to wait for the Yukon government to act. It is clear that more engagement between the government and Dawson is needed, as well as engagement and preparation with the business community and residents.

What plan does the Yukon government have to engage the community about emergency preparedness, and when can they expect the Yukon government to proactively communicate about it?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I have held a few news conferences and media briefings now on this very subject in the last month. As a matter of fact, just a couple of days ago, Mr. Speaker, I brought forward a ministerial statement to this House to actually discuss this question before Yukoners in front of the entire territory here and anybody listening. You know what? It was turned down; they said no.

We are trying to get the word out, and we are working very diligently to make sure that we get our communities and our citizens prepared. I have spoken about this. You know, municipalities and First Nations are the subject-matter experts when it comes to their communities and how to protect them in



the event of an emergency. They are the first responders. The Yukon government — the Department of Community Services, health, and the other departments that are working as the whole of government are there to backstop and make sure that our communities have the resources that they need to respond in the event of an emergency.

We are holding tabletop exercises in Carcross and Dawson; we have held them in Mayo; we have worked in Faro. We have worked across the territory making sure that these emergency plans for the communities are up to speed. We are working with the City of Whitehorse as well. We are going to continue that good work to make sure that the territory is as prepared as possible in the event of the emergencies that we are facing now because of man-made climate change, a situation that we have a plan for. We have yet to hear anything from the opposition.

#### **Question re: Takhini River Road maintenance**

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for the Minister of Highways and Public Works about the Takhini River Road. The Takhini River Road was originally a CAT trail. It has never had a proper roadbed, and some sections have poor drainage. When there is spring melt or rain, the surface of the road quickly disintegrates into potholes, washboards, and pools of water. This happens multiple times a year. Right now, it's almost impassable for small cars.

I have raised this issue with the minister many times and appreciate that he did have design work done for future upgrades to the road. Would he please provide an update on the planning and design work for the upgrade project, including the cost estimate, and could he let us know which parts of the road are included in that project?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the member opposite and his dogged advocacy with respect to the unfortunately poorly designed Takhini River Road. We do try to be as responsive as possible over the course of the three years I have been here. In any event, the safety of travellers is a priority of the Department of Highways and Public Works.

So far, during the 2023-24 fiscal year, the department has spent over \$62,000 on maintenance and upgrades to the Takhini River Road. The Takhini River Road's surface undergoes scheduled grading twice a year and more frequently, as required, to improve the road condition. We are continuing to monitor the Takhini River Road and will be conducting repairs beginning the week of April 8.

The Department of Highways and Public Works is working to improve drainage to address erosion issues on the Takhini River Road near its intersection with Gully Road. The department is conducting preliminary design work and looking at reconstruction alternatives in order to improve safety and drainage for the Takhini River Road beyond the Gully Road intersection area. The reconstruction design will include: strengthening the road structure; improving drainage and alignment; widening the road at particularly narrow sections; installing culvert markers and steam pipes; cleaning and

adjusting existing culverts; and improving soft spots in the road.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Highways and Public Works made reference to, improving Takhini River Road is an issue that I have raised with him and his predecessor many times. It's one of the first issues I raised with him, in fact.

The population of Takhini River Road has grown a lot and hundreds of people live on it now. I have heard many concerns from constituents about damage to their vehicles and the risk that an ambulance or fire truck may have difficulty responding to an emergency. I appreciate that he has listened to my requests and has had preliminary design work done.

Would the minister please tell me when public consultation on the design for the Takhini River Road upgrade project will happen, and will he please commit to holding at least one open house so that my constituents can attend to ask questions and provide input on the project?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I certainly recognize the member opposite — the growth that has occurred on this Takhini River Road over the course of the last 10, 15, or 20 years, which, of course, increases the stress on a road that was poorly designed at first instance. Notwithstanding, in the coming months, two packages will be submitted to YESAB for this area. The first will be related to the reconstruction plans for the Takhini River Road. The second submission will cover upgrades in the Gully Road intersection area.

I am advised that letters were sent to the Gully Road residents in the fall of 2023, and department officials heard directly from the residents. These conversations are resulting in refining the design. Once an updated design is completed, department officials will notify the residents again prior to submitting to YESAB.

Construction on the road will be prioritized in relation to our overall upgrade priorities. In the meantime, we will continue to work to monitor and provide maintenance to these roads, as required.

To answer the member opposite's direct question, certainly, we will follow up with my department with respect to engagement of Takhini River Road residents.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the answer and would appreciate it if he could ensure that the consultation includes an open house.

The Minister of Highways and Public Works indicated that there will be consultation with property owners and that the project will be submitted to YESAB in the coming months. Actually, I believe that he indicated there would be two submissions. However, he had previously indicated that the Takhini River Road upgrade project hadn't yet been added to the five-year capital plan.

Could he please tell us when the project will be submitted to YESAB, and will he confirm that the project is now in the capital plan and when that construction work on Takhini River Road is expected to happen?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I will be brief in this response because I believe that I did respond to this. The first question was — in the coming months, two packages will be submitted to YESAB. I can try to get more particularity with

respect to that. And the second was that construction on the road will be prioritized in relation to the overall upgrade priorities. So, that is how it pertains to the funds that are available under the operation and maintenance and also, to a certain extent, the capital budget of Highways and Public Works.

Just briefly while I have a short moment, in 2022, the department installed a wooden deck to allow traffic to cross a very soft spot at the far end of the road. Just briefly, the Takhini River Road was built by local residents prior to the 1940s, and development has obviously increased significantly over the years.

In the past decade, large spring runoffs have caused significant erosion to the Takhini River Road and the Gully Road. As indicated by my colleague the Minister of Community Services, these are becoming, unfortunately, more frequent.

The Government of Yukon uses a road classification system that considers traffic volumes and socio-economic factors when determining maintenance schedules and planning upgrades.

Thanks so much to all Highways and Public Works staff on their strong work with respect to the Takhini River Road.

**Speaker:** Order. The time for the Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

#### Motion No. 925

**Clerk:** Motion No. 925, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT, pursuant to Standing Order 2(5), the House be empowered to sit beyond 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 28, 2024 for the purpose of:

(1) completing Committee of the Whole consideration and third reading of Bill No. 212, *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*, as required; and

(2) receiving the Commissioner to grant assent to a bill passed by this House.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that yesterday I tabled this motion because we are looking to move forward with our third appropriation act, sometimes called the “supplementary budget”.

We have been debating — this will be our ninth day of Committee of the Whole — this bill. This is a way to ensure that we can have a fulsome debate and still get to a vote.

Opposition parties have chosen to ask a lot of questions during Committee of the Whole budget debate for the third appropriation bill. This motion allows them to have that opportunity while also ensuring that we get a vote on the budget before fiscal year-end.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, I will be very, very brief here. With this being the last business day — across the country, really — there are countless smart, insightful, and experienced financial experts across the country wrapping up reports, ledgers, and returns so that they can approach the upcoming fiscal year with due diligence and foresight. So, I just want to take this opportunity to thank not only our financial team but those in other governments as well — but mostly the Yukon government finance team. They do an incredible job in the Department of Finance, and I just want to take this opportunity to thank them for the incredible work that they do to get us prepared. Whether it is for a supplementary budget or mains or any of the period variance reports, the work of the Department of Finance is 365 days a year, and I just want to take the opportunity to thank them all.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, we in the Official Opposition will be supporting this motion today to extend today’s hours, if needed.

It is important that the Finance minister does not breach the *Financial Administration Act* for the second time in six months. Perhaps more important — well, obviously more important — is that we maintain the ability to meet payroll and to cover important expenditures into next week.

I just want to speak briefly about how we have arrived here at this 11<sup>th</sup> hour today. At just over \$61 million in operation and maintenance and additional capital, including an almost \$41-million bump in Highways and Public Works, this is one of the largest if not the largest second supplementary budget in history. Health and Social Services has \$47.5 million in new requested spending. We have seen required debate across multiple departments for this budget bill.

The Liberals waited until the last day possible — March 7 — under our Standing Orders to call the House back for this Spring Sitting. Every minister who spoke at second reading on the main estimates used close to their maximum allotted time of 40 minutes, while we had one speaker, our Finance critic, at this stage of debate.

Aside from our one opposition private members’ day, the Liberals have controlled the House business for the balance of this session so far, so they have nobody to blame but themselves for us arriving at this point today.

Of course, the Liberals will be quick to point fingers. Yesterday, the Government House Leader said during Question Period — I will quote him: “The reason we are going long is not because we haven’t called it. No. It’s because the members opposite continue to ask questions that are well beyond the supplementary budget.” For the minister to say that is quite something.

The supplementary budget represents additional funds required in 2023-24 because of other spending choices that the government makes throughout the year. As an example, perhaps Executive Council Office could have asked for \$13,000 less if, instead of travelling there, the Minister of Health and Social Services had her Scotland meetings via Zoom, as she did with the Watson Lake town council. That

September 2023 expenditure affected this supplementary budget.

The Government House Leader may not like it, but our job as Official Opposition is to ask questions of the government and to hold them to account. We have just 60 days in the calendar year to do that, so perhaps when he closes here this afternoon, he can answer a simple question for us: Why does he believe that he and his government colleagues should control the questions that opposition asks?

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Speaker:** Order. Under Introduction of Visitors outside the usual time provided for introductions of visitors, please join me in welcoming Kathryn and Naomi Tyrell, family of one of our clerks, Chris Tyrell.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP will be supporting this motion.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I will make a few comments. First of all, I would like to thank the opposition parties for agreeing that we stay longer today — possibly. Actually, it depends. It actually is at their discretion. It's about the questions that they choose to bring to us, and I agree that it is a very important part of this Assembly. In fact, it's probably one of the central pieces of this Assembly that there is an opportunity for members to pose questions, to challenge the decisions of government, and to help inform their choice around votes. I think that this is an important thing, and budgets are one of the central things that we do as an Assembly — and that we look to set the direction of the territory here through our budgets.

I did look back and I agree with the member opposite that we spoke at second reading of the mains budget and that they did not.

I also looked at — whenever you start a session, you start with the spring budget. The Finance minister did that on the first day. On the second day, we went into the rest of second reading, and then the next thing that we did as an Assembly was get through our interim supply bill.

That bill is for \$450 million. That bill went through second reading and Committee in a day, and on the next day, it went through third reading. This bill, as the member points out, has significant dollar amounts in it — \$115 million — so roughly a quarter of what the interim supply bill is, but we have taken every day except one since then to come into Committee of the Whole. We have had nine days of Committee of the Whole, and during that time, we have answered questions on all of these departments.

We will be back here on general debate for the budget, so I think that is important to note. Also, when I looked back, I tried to ask myself how long third appropriation bills take, and

so I looked at what the average amount of time was under the Yukon Party to get through Committee of the Whole. The average was one and a half days.

Then I looked forward in time and under the 35<sup>th</sup> Assembly, our government has averaged six days — where we bring it in — so, four times the amount of time to allow for these questions. This time, it is nine days — that is the most that I have seen. I looked back to under the 33<sup>rd</sup> Assembly to the first time that a third appropriation act was brought forward and I read the remarks of Premier Pasloski. I am now quoting from Hansard on page 818. He said — and I quote: "... I have said that there is a responsibility of the opposition to budget their time wisely in the attempt to be able to have discussion on all matters that are important and worthy of discussion by the members opposite."

On the following page, page 819, he said — quote: "The members will have the opportunity to raise questions in general debate if desired." He was referring to the mains. That was what Premier Pasloski talked about.

Then, I looked to see how many questions have come up. During the 33<sup>rd</sup> Assembly, in Committee of the Whole for the third appropriation act, it was an average of six questions — six — by opposition members. Then I looked to what the average is under the 35<sup>th</sup> Assembly and the average is 150 questions, and this time we are up to 285 questions to date. So, I think that we have been here to answer questions.

We want to continue to answer those questions today, but we also want to get to a vote. The reason is that the end of today will be the last business day ahead of April 1, which is year-end. What we're talking about here is whether or not we are able to move dollars to pay our public servants. I think this is why we bring this motion forward. It is not to limit debate; it is to make sure that we have the ability to get to a vote for Yukoners.

What I will say is that, when I came into this House and became part of the government and Cabinet, one of the first things I noticed was how tough it is to be a public servant. The public worries about what government is doing and often will raise a lot of criticism toward our public servants. I just want to say that I think our public servants have done a great job. I think that we should be praising them, and I don't think that we should be holding up the work of government.

By the way, I am really excited that we have our interim clerk's family in the audience today.

Thank you very much.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

*Motion No. 925 agreed to*

**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 now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social 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 15 minutes.

*Recess*

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

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

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

#### Department of Health and Social Services — *continued*

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

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Deputy Chair, I would like to start by welcoming the officials back to the Legislative Assembly. We have today with us Deputy Minister Tiffany Boyd; we have with us Assistant Deputy Minister of Social Services Jen Gehmair, and we have with us the director of Finance, Melanie Wallace. Thank you very much, all, for attending.

Deputy Chair, I was asked a question at the end of yesterday's opportunity to ask questions about the Ernst & Young report of the Yukon Hospital Corporation last year, and I am happy to respond to that question first.

The Government of Yukon is, of course, committed to financial responsibility and ensuring that taxpayers' funds are being used effectively to expand hospital services, address wait times, and increase access to care for Yukoners. In order to understand the financial needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Hospital Corporation engaged a third party, Ernst & Young, to conduct a review of governance, financial management, and internal controls at the corporation. It was instigated by the information that capital funds had been used by the Hospital Corporation for some O&M expenditures, and this did cause serious concern.

We certainly appreciated the work of Ernst & Young and the important recommendations that they have provided to enhance processes and to ensure that funding needs are well understood as we move forward together. In response to their review, we are working with Yukon Hospital Corporation and have implemented many of the recommendations through the transfer payment agreements, as well as with frequent,

transparent communication with the hospital's leadership team. Ernst & Young's review provides valuable preparatory insights to improve fiscal governance as we move toward the creation of Health and Wellness Yukon, or Shāw Kwā'ą. That move and the work that we are doing together as a result of the Ernst & Young recommendations is committed to by the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board as well.

Our government is continuing our ongoing work to improve the financial processes at the Yukon Hospital Corporation and remains committed to working together to identify and meet the funding needs of the Hospital Corporation on behalf of Yukoners.

The government did enter into a contract of up to \$300,000 for the Ernst & Young work and report. My recollection is that approximately \$200,000 was spent on that contract, but I can confirm that, if it is necessary.

Some of the significant changes that have been adopted: The Yukon Hospital Corporation sends weekly cash-flow projections to the Department of Health and Social Services, and this includes week-over-week reconciliations that identify any changes to projections.

The core funding transfer of payment agreement with the Hospital Corporation for 2024-25 has a schedule of approved service levels, volumes, and wait times. Reporting on the transfer payment agreement must include explanations of any variances, compared to the approved values, so this work is being monitored by everyone very closely. This aligns with the recommendation from the Ernst & Young report.

The new transfer payment agreement responds to the report by encompassing all of the O&M funding for the Hospital Corporation in an effort to reduce confusion and unnecessary administration.

Previously, there were separate TPAs — or transfer payment agreements — for core funding: a separate one for Health and a separate one for lab services. We are responding to the recommendations from Ernst & Young by making those changes.

We are also responding to the recommendations that were made in relation to the mental wellness unit. The Assistant Deputy Minister of Corporate Services is now a member of the mental wellness unit's steering committee. They or their delegate attends regular meetings to ensure that Health and Social Services is kept abreast of the critical progress and reporting on the project, and significant updates were also made to the mental wellness unit transfer payment agreement.

As the work continues there, we look forward to the mental wellness unit being completed and proceeding to provide service for Yukoners in the near future.

I think that will answer the question with respect to the Ernst & Young report that was posed yesterday.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would also like to begin by welcoming officials here.

I do have to remind the minister that, in looking at the Ernst & Young report, Ernst & Young found that government was repeatedly informed of the hospital's financial situation — that they were facing a deficit — and Ernst & Young said specifically that no one asked where the money was coming

from. So, this should not be spun — as the minister appears to be attempting to do — as a lack of reporting by the Hospital Corporation when, in fact, it is clear from the Ernst & Young report that they repeatedly told government about their problems and that government failed to step up to provide them with those resources, even knowing that they were facing a deficit.

Just to quote from a few notable excerpts here, Ernst & Young reviewed four years of financial statements — which I would point out is a very large chunk of this Liberal government's time in office — and Ernst & Young found that the Yukon Hospital Corporation suffered from — quote: "... a chronic cash flow and operating shortfall." In 2022-23, the financial shortfall was so serious that Ernst & Young found — quote: "... YHC was facing a deficit and was at risk of not meeting payroll and operations obligations..." had it not diverted \$7.3 million in capital funding. So, again, it is concerning that, during that four-year period, even the independent body that government entered into a contract with found that government was repeatedly told about the hospital's financial pressures and did not provide adequate resources or ask where the hospital was getting the money from to cover their deficit.

As I touched on yesterday, it is also concerning that it appears from what was provided at the start of the current fiscal year that the government still hadn't understood the cost pressures at Yukon Hospital Corporation because, at the beginning of this fiscal year, the 2023-24 main estimates show that government at the time was providing Yukon hospitals with just over \$95 million in O&M funding. So, overall, under pressure from us as well as from people within the system, the government finally gave the Yukon hospitals a little over \$17 million in Supplementary No. 1 last fall and another \$12.5 million in O&M in the second supplementary for 2023-24. That is an increase from what the beginning of the year was — \$30 million — which also means that our hospitals were short almost \$30 million in necessary O&M funding at the start of the fiscal year that we are debating here.

According to the 2024-25 main estimates, the revised final amount for the 2023-24 fiscal year, as of the passage of the supplementary budget, would be \$124.78 million in O&M for Yukon Hospital Services.

According to the same page, total O&M being provided for the upcoming 2024-25 fiscal year is just \$110.41 million. That is a \$14.3-million drop from the estimated O&M costs from the current fiscal year, which is not comforting.

However, that brings me to a related point, which is asking the minister to actually clarify how much money our hospitals are getting for the current fiscal year. There is a discrepancy of over \$1.5 million between what the main estimates for the upcoming fiscal year say it is and what the supplementary says it is. Specifically, page 10-4 of the supplementary lists \$123.25 million as the revised total for O&M for the current fiscal year. Page 13-4 of the mains for the upcoming fiscal year says that the revised number is \$124.78 million. Which of those figures is correct?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I want to say, although not part of this question — I appreciate that the member opposite reads the Ernst & Young report in a particular way. I think we will disagree about that. Not only will we disagree about the reason it was sought in the first place, but we will clearly disagree, I think, about what it says. We have certainly approached it on the basis that it is providing us all information — the partners, the Hospital Corporation, and Health and Social Services — and gives us the opportunity to improve systems, and we have done so.

I want to be clear that I understand the current question to be regarding the funding breakdown between 2023-24 Supplementary No. 2 and the 2024-25 mains. I understand that to be the question.

The funding allocated for the Yukon Hospital Corporation reflects, in 2024-25, the corporation's anticipated budget and is exactly what the corporation has submitted to the Yukon government for their current funding needs for 2024-25.

Changes in funding for the Hospital Corporation in the 2024-25 mains compared to the Supplementary No. 2 are driven by a combination of some small increases as well as the non-renewal of some time-limited funding. The budget for 2023-24 has a number of large items — of one-time funding — included in the total that will not be included initially in the Hospital Corporation budget and the mains for 2024-25.

There is a total of \$16.3 million in one-time funding included in the 2023-24 budget. There is approximately \$7.6 million for an operation and maintenance deficit that existed from 2022-23. I think we all understand that to have been the use of capital funds by the hospital for O&M operations. In 2023-24, the Department of Health and Social Services presented those funds, transferred those funds, to the Hospital Corporation to alleviate that deficit.

There is \$936,000 of one-time funding to offset the operation and maintenance budget that was used for capital expenditures. There is \$300,000 for breast cancer screening which we anticipate being added to the core funding in 2024-25, and going forward, there is \$5.2 million for 2023-24 operation and maintenance pressures. These pressures are largely attributable to the cost for agency nursing, which we anticipate to be lower in 2024-25. There is \$2.3 million of one-time funding for the pension solvency fund, and no solvency requirement is anticipated for 2024-25, so that is the discrepancy or the difference in what is included in the total of the budget for the Yukon Hospital Corporation for 2023-24 but does not yet appear in the amount for the 2024-25 mains for the hospital.

There is also a question with respect to a \$1.5-million — as the member opposite describes it — discrepancy. That is as a result of a restatement of the funds for 1Health. Initially, the 1Health funds were included in 2023-24 in Corporate Services at the Department of Health and Social Services. In the 2024-25 budget, they are included in the core funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would suggest that the minister might want to reread the Ernst & Young report and what it said about the government being made aware of the deficit.

I would also just ask again for clarification on that amount and the discrepancy. I have the budget pages out — I know that the minister was reading from a briefing note here, but I'm looking at the budget page from the supplementary estimates, page 10-4, which lists the columns beside Yukon Hospital Services. Again, 10-4 is the page in the Health and Social Services budget.

Yukon Hospital Services has the columns next to it "2023-24 voted to date", the total for Supplementary No. 2, and in the column on the right-hand side of the page, the "2023-24 revised vote". It notes that number under O&M as \$123,256,000.

In the mains for the next year, when it lists under the column "2023-24 Forecast", those numbers should align with each other and be the exact same number, but the number on that page — page 13-4 — in the mains for the upcoming fiscal year says that Yukon Hospital Services is receiving \$124.789 million for the fiscal year that we are just wrapping up. Again, the minister's explanation just didn't seem to make sense — explain — why those two numbers aren't identical, as they normally would be.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Deputy Chair, I did provide the answer for the difference between the numbers appearing on the supplementary budget, page 10-4 — I don't have it in front of me, but I'm quoting the "10-4" from the member opposite — and the estimate in 2024-25 for what was paid in the hospital budget for the total fiscal year ending that we are currently in and fast approaching the end of. The difference between those two numbers, as I have said just previously in my answer, is the difference between the restatement of funds that are allocated for IHealth, previously allocated to the Department of Health and Social Services and now allocated through that exercise of restatement to the Yukon Hospital Corporation. So, the difference is approximately \$1.5 million. It is now allocated to the Hospital Corporation.

**Mr. Cathers:** I want to continue on with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and their financial needs as well as the wait times that are being seen at the hospital both in the emergency room, where we have received a spike in complaints in recent months from Yukoners waiting for long periods in the emergency room, and the Yukon Hospital Corporation itself, on their website, is also warning patients to expect longer wait times. To quote from their website, as of yesterday, it says information about "Hospital Pressures" — quote: "Service impacts and longer wait times are becoming more regular as we face new and ongoing pressures."

Can the minister tell us what specifically the government is doing to reduce hospital wait times?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** There are potentially too many to list in this forum of things that are being done to address wait times here in the territory for a variety of services. The member opposite is focusing on the hospital wait times, so I think that my response can do the same.

There are a number of new clinics that are designed to provide options for care and reduce wait times here in the territory, particularly for non-acute services.

If we're talking about the folks who need to attend the emergency department, in March 2024, there has been a total of 2,515 eligible applications for the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre, which is a significant increase in options for Yukoners to have that kind of care.

In the 2024-25 budget, we have included \$1.43 million to support the operation of a Whitehorse walk-in clinic. Once fully staffed, the walk-in clinic staff complement will include a clinic manager, two nurse practitioners, two licensed practical nurses, three medical office assistants, one social worker, and one full-time equivalent physician.

We are excited for the walk-in clinic — which is currently open — to move to its new location in the coming weeks. As of March 8, 2024, the clinic has provided care to more than 600 patients.

We have additional operations at the hospital. Additional funding has been provided to the hospital to make sure that we are working closely with them through the 2024-25 budget to make sure that, in their core funding transfer payment agreement, we are properly and appropriately funding the hospital services in that transfer payment agreement. It includes core volume requirements for the hospital to meet.

There is a joint management committee including the Department of Health and Social Services, the Hospital Corporation, and the Yukon Medical Association for the purposes of managing exactly these kinds of expectations.

There is a *Health Human Resources Strategy* designed to improve the number of employees in core nursing positions and other allied health professionals at the Hospital Corporation so that services can be provided to Yukoners seamlessly.

I perhaps need to note that — which is many, many days — a fully staffed emergency department — it is not about the number of staff there necessarily but what walks in the door as far as the services that Yukoners need, what kinds of injuries, and what kinds of illnesses, because, of course, that emergency department serves Yukoners for everything that comes to them.

The emergency department and the Hospital Corporation — total average time in the department for a patient discharge was 2.8 hours over this past year. So, while there are certainly stories where there has been a longer wait time for some individuals, depending on what they are presenting with, that is the average time in which somebody is served through that process and through that space. I can also note that the hospitalist model — in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the chief of medical staff, and the Yukon Medical Association, the Government of Yukon has been working to support a formalized hospitalist program at Whitehorse General Hospital.

We have been working on a doctor-of-the-day program before now, but those physicians who have taken on the trial hospitalist-type model back in 2020 are interested in pursuing that. The work with the Yukon Medical Association, the Hospital Corporation, and our department has resulted in an expression of interest, and we are working with our partners to stand up a hospitalist program which will support the work of physicians who are currently required to attend if one of their patients or someone who belongs to their patient roster is

admitted to hospital. A hospitalist will support not only those physicians in not necessarily being required to come to the hospital and being able to attend to their patients at their practice but will support the operation of the emergency department in a cohesive way. I believe that will answer just a few of the things that we are doing to address the idea of service to Yukoners and reduced wait times.

**Mr. Cathers:** Just switching gears slightly, I would like to ask the minister about the increase in full-time-equivalent employees in the current supplementary budget. There are some who are assigned to the walk-in clinic, and she did provide an explanation for those. I would ask about the eight other positions associated with the territorial health investment fund that are listed in the handout that we were provided with by officials during budget briefings — if she could explain what those positions are for and also how many of those positions that have been requested are front-line positions and how many are policy, administration, or management.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I have some information in response to this, but we will return with a breakdown of the six.

The member opposite is asking about eight FTEs in the budget for the purposes of Health and Social Services. I think that the information the member will have received is that one FTE is related to cultural safety — a director of the cultural safety program for the purposes of the transformation of the health system — and one FTE is related to the director of the HHR strategy — the *Health Human Resources Strategy* — course put together by experts in the field and designed to address the health and human resources challenges here in the territory. There are six additional full-time-equivalent positions related to the creation of Health and Wellness Yukon and the health system transformation, and I can come back with a breakdown. I don't have a breakdown right down of those six positions or where they will be allocated — maybe that they haven't yet been allocated. So, of course, the *Health Authority Act* being before the Legislative Assembly still and movements going forward after that bill is debated and hopefully passed and then ultimately how those positions will be assigned — but we can return with the specifics if I can uncover them at the moment.

**Mr. Cathers:** I look forward to receiving that additional information and clarity from the minister.

I would also, just moving on to the — again, at the hospital, we understand that the collective agreements for both PIPCS and PSAC have been up since the summer of 2023 and that both unions voted to give a strike mandate. We understand that there was a tentative deal with the unions, but we have learned that the ratification votes originally scheduled for this week were delayed.

Can the minister please update us on the current status of this, and is the minister concerned about a possible strike at the Yukon Hospital Corporation by one or both of those unions?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** As the member opposite will know, the Yukon Hospital Corporation is responsible for the conversations and negotiations with respect to the outstanding collective agreements with the unions that operate and represent employees at the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Those

conversations are ongoing. It is, in fact, the case that a recent ratification vote that was scheduled was delayed.

The Yukon Hospital Corporation is working closely and, as I understand it, is having extremely positive conversations with the unions. I wouldn't be able to comment on the content of those conversations or how they are progressing other than I have been given information that it is positive and that ratification votes will be rescheduled by the unions, hopefully in the very near future.

**Mr. Cathers:** With regard to the unions at the hospital, we understand that, in seeking the strike mandate, one of the issues at hand was uncertainty being caused as a result of the government's plans to move toward a health authority.

I understand that another issue that has been of concern right now, in terms of the question of whether they will ratify or not, is a pension surplus at the Yukon Hospital Corporation and a proposed contribution holiday for the employer. I would ask the minister to confirm if that is correct and the size of that pension surplus.

It is also notable and very relevant to this budget because the minister noted earlier in her comments that among the funds going to the Hospital Corporation in this current appropriation bill is additional funding for pension solvency. It does seem notable if the government is transferring additional funding to the hospital for pension solvency and then subsequently there is a contribution holiday happening.

What I am saying with that is that some additional clarity on this would be appreciated, because it certainly does raise questions for employees.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The negotiations with the unions that represent their employees and employees at the Yukon Hospital Corporation are led by the Hospital Corporation. I don't think it's appropriate for me to comment with respect to what issues are outstanding, particularly because, if there are issues that are outstanding, it is not for me to comment on them; it is for the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the well-represented unions to resolve those issues without commentary by me, publicly or otherwise.

I do have an update with respect to the last question that the PIPSC ratification of their potential agreement started today and is open for a period of 10 days. I am also advised that the PSAC union has announced that their ratification will take place on April 5.

**Mr. Cathers:** If the minister isn't willing to answer the question, I suppose I may not get an answer, but I would point out to her that these are relevant questions for her since, as I noted, two of the concerns that we had understood from employees at the hospital were directly being talked about as reasons to potentially go on strike — or the uncertainty being caused for their jobs such as pay, pension, and benefits by the health authority plans, which is a top priority for this health minister and her colleagues.

Secondly, this issue of the pension surplus, which apparently exists in the last actuarial evaluation — which presumably differed significantly from the last one — because, as I noted, the minister in the supplementary estimate told us that part of the money that they are asking for, for the hospital

is directly related to covering the pension-solvency issue. Clearly, there has been a change in the valuation — or certainly it would seem so based on the information that we have at hand. It does raise questions about not only the funding being requested here in the supplementary budget but also about the potential volatility of the hospital pension plan.

We have been in situations in the past, as the minister may recall. Years ago, early in my time as health minister, one of the very first issues we had to deal with was a \$10.4-million pension-solvency deficit issue that the Yukon Hospital Corporation — similarly, what was then Yukon College was also facing a solvency deficit. In both cases, the government of the day, which I was a part of, stepped in to cover the whole amount of that.

My point is that this has been an issue that has occurred over time through volatility in the markets and other factors directly beyond the government's control, and it also becomes a question not only in terms of the stability of that plan and the potential future need for government to make contributions to it, but as the government moves forward with its plans to develop a health authority, we understand, based on the meeting that we had with the Health Transformation Advisory Committee, that the health authority will likely have a new pension plan — or a “pension solution”, as it was referred to — and that this would likely result in hospital employees transferring their existing pensions into whatever this new plan is and in government employees also moving out of the existing same superannuation plan as they are transferred to the health authority. We don't know the timelines for when government employees will be transferred under the corporation. We don't know the timelines of when their pensions would be converted into the new “pension solution”, as it was referred to, but it does raise concerns about the potential volatility of pension costs going forward, especially if it applies to a broader group of employees whom the government has a responsibility to and who are no longer part of the federal superannuation plan, which has been less subject to volatility.

I would appreciate any information that the minister can provide me on that. I would also specifically ask — we know that there was at least one report, if not two reports, done for the government on the pension plan scenarios related to the health authority. Would the minister please commit to providing us a copy of that report before calling the *Health Authority Act* back for debate in the Assembly so we can better understand the pension implications?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I don't have any issue with commenting on the 2023-24 pension-solvency payment that exists in this supplementary budget. I mentioned the amount earlier and I can dig it out again, if necessary.

It is in this supplementary budget because the pension solvency, as the member opposite well knows, is an annual calculation, and as such, the 2023-24 contribution that is required in order to comply with the federal legislation involving the pension with respect to both the Hospital Corporation and Yukon University, which is still an outstanding issue, is required in 2023-24.

It is absolutely not appropriate for me to be commenting on the details of what may or may not be issues between the unions and the Hospital Corporation at the moment. They are in the process of ratifying — or will soon be in the process of ratifying — potential collective agreements. Not only is it not appropriate for me to do so, it would be wholly inappropriate for me to say anything that could influence that one way or the other — other than to say that we look forward to working with the Hospital Corporation as we go forward and that they ratify new collective agreements for the purposes of supporting their employees and the individuals who provide such great service to Yukoners through the Hospital Corporation. I look forward to working with them as we go forward.

The pensions will be an issue that needs to be dealt with pursuant to a new health authority. The pension solutions will be determined through negotiations and conversations between those currently responsible for representing those employees and how that should move forward. It is one of the big conversations. As I said the other day when we were talking about the importance of the health authority at second reading, it is one of the issues that requires us to have the structure in place of a health authority so that we can proceed with those conversations and make those determinations in collaboration with our partners.

There are obviously — maybe that's not obvious — there are experts who have been engaged by the Department of Health and Social Services for the purposes of having expert advice on the pension question. Those reports that have been asked for here are subject to Cabinet confidence. I will certainly review those reports and determine, once they are not subject to Cabinet confidence, if they can be released to the opposition; I will be happy to do so. What I cannot do here is determine whether or not that will be before the health authority is called for debate.

Nonetheless, I am very pleased that the opposition is interested in the details of a health authority here in the territory — how that can come to be, the importance of the decisions that will be made as we go forward together with our partners — and we will be keen to provide them with a briefing, much like they had today, as we move forward. Or if they have future questions, we certainly encourage them to ask them so that we can address them in meetings or in information that we can provide to them so that they and their constituents who have questions of them can be very well-informed.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would urge the minister to request of the Premier and her colleagues that Cabinet confidence on those reports regarding employee pensions be waived. This is a very important matter, and if this Legislative Assembly is being asked to approve legislation that gives Cabinet the ability to unilaterally — without seeking approval by this House — enter into the regulations — transfer of employees, transfer of their pensions, et cetera — it is very important, in my view, that all members have an understanding of what the pension implications will be for employees and what the cost implications will be for government, including how the pensions are booked. It is also, as I noted, a concern that there may be increased volatility in the pension as a result of more



employees transferring under a plan and out of the federal superannuation program that government employees are currently part of.

Could the minister first of all confirm — I understand that she will get back to me on the question about the reports — but can the minister confirm our understanding that, with the establishment of the health authority, we will see a situation where they are proposing developing what they refer to as a “pension solution” under the health authority that would see hospital employees move out of their current pension plan into this new pension plan and government employees move out of the superannuation plan they are currently part of and under a new pension plan operated by this corporate entity?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** No, I can't confirm that the description of what will occur under a new health authority with respect to pensions for employees, as described by the member opposite in the question, is the solution. What I can confirm is that the Department of Health and Social Services, the Hospital Corporation, the Public Service Commission, with the support of work with the unions, is strategically planning the overall human resources management function for a new independent health authority. Our support encompasses various critical labour impacts and strategies, including pensions, benefits, union engagement, classification, personnel transfer, legislation, and human resources management systems. It encompasses the entirety of the important role of supporting employees through the change that is anticipated and the new entity of a health authority as the employer.

I can also confirm that preserving and matching pay, benefits, and pensions is essential to our transformation goals. We are committed to consulting with the unions and keeping individual employees informed through that process or additionally through communications from their current employers all through that process.

I can also note for the record, as I said so before and said so publicly, that it is important that the recognition be available to Yukoners that, under the *Canada Labour Code*, successorship rights exist for all bargaining unit employees. This means that employees represented by a union will continue to be represented by one and will port their existing negotiated collective agreements — which is why it's so important for the collective agreements that are currently being finalized to continue to be finalized — so that they are in place and provide the protections for employees that are necessary. Additionally, corresponding pension benefits and comprehensive benefit packages will be transported — or “ported” is the labour term — with employees to the new employer.

In particular, the member opposite is asking about pensions. No commitment can be made at this time about how that will look because not only have we confirmed that we will and committed to doing so, but we must work with the unions in the event that Health and Wellness Yukon, or Shāw Kwā'a, is available as an option here in the territory once we pass the *Health Authority Act*.

It is critical that all members of this Legislative Assembly understand the importance of the commitment that we have

made to Yukon employees — of both the Hospital Corporation and of Health and Social Services — who will be and can be affected in the future by a health authority.

**Mr. Cathers:** We are trying to understand the implications and we are hearing concerns from people, which is why we are asking.

When the Yukon Hospital Corporation was set up — which resulted from the devolution of health services from the federal government — at that time, those employees had to move under a pension plan operated then by the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Based on what happened then, our understanding is that employees transferred under a corporation — including this health authority corporation — would not be able to remain part of the federal superannuation plan.

Does the minister have any information to suggest otherwise, or will she confirm that indeed any government employees — whether it's 500 or 1,000 or 1,500 — who are moving out of the government will leave the federal superannuation plan and be part of some new pension plan?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the questions and I appreciate the concern on behalf of the member opposite. I think what I have just said — and I am happy to say it again — is that I cannot confirm which version of a pension will be available to employees of a new health authority. What I can confirm is that individuals will have, by virtue of the operation of the federal law in this country, successorship rights and that they currently exist for all bargaining unit employees, and that means that their union will continue to represent them and that their existing negotiated collective agreements and their corresponding pension benefit packages, comprehensive benefit packages, and pay packages will port with them to a new health authority.

Preserving and matching pay, benefits, and pensions are essential to our transformation goals. We are committed to consulting with the unions that will work together with us to determine which version of a pension will be available to new employees of a health authority. What I am also confident in saying is that our goal is that no employees will be adversely affected by a Yukon health authority becoming their new employer.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do have to remind the minister that having a goal and achieving it are not the same thing. I would remind the government that, in their throne speech in 2017, they said that they would have publicly funded midwifery up and running the next year, and it took, well, up until this year — after the program started and stopped and got back up and running — that it is finally running well behind schedule. So, goals and a realistic plan to achieve them are not the same thing.

What I would point out — since the minister was not willing to provide that information — is that our understanding based on legal advice that we have received is that any and all government employees being transferred under a corporation, including this health authority corporation, would have their pensions moved out of federal superannuation. I would invite the minister, if she has any information — whether legal advice or the pension reports that they haven't shared with us yet and that is different from that — then please share it. In the absence

of that, our understanding is that every single government employee, whether it is hundreds or over a thousand, who moves out of government under the new authority would see their pensions moved as well.

The point I was making — which, again, the minister unfortunately did not provide any information of comfort on — is that the hospital pension plan and the Yukon College or Yukon University pension plans have been subject to more volatility in the past due to market fluctuations, among other things.

We see in this current budget that the minister is asking for a substantial amount of money to transfer to the hospital to deal with pension solvency. We also understand that, based on a new actuarial valuation, they are taking a contribution holiday — the employer plans to, I should say. Previously, back before I got the job as health minister a number of years ago, we had seen a situation where the Hospital Corporation had taken three years of contribution holidays from the pension plan, contrary to what the federal regulator was telling them, and we ended up with a deficit at that time of over \$10.4 million. My concern is for employees transferring from the Yukon government to a health authority corporation — of whether their future pension rights and development become subject to increased risk due to increased volatility from being out of federal superannuation.

I am guessing that I am not going to get much more information from the minister on that today. I would again strongly request that they share the reports that they have had done by Osler and anyone else regarding pensions. We do want to see what the government knows as far as the financial impacts on the government employees and risks associated with pensions.

So, moving on to another area that I believe is associated with the health authority, but I am seeking clarity from the minister — one of my colleagues brought to my attention a contract on the government contract registry with the contract number C00074374 totalling in the amount of \$49,500 to Dr. Smart. The project manager is issued as one of the assistant deputy ministers in Health and Social Services. The two questions I am asking — and I am just seeking clarity on the purpose of that contract. Was that related to providing advice on the health authority? Secondly, has any money been drawn against that contract, and if so, what is the total amount?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The contract with Dr. Smart was put in place for the purposes of drawing expertise for work that was being done — expertise from the medical community — and, of course, she has previously been the president of the Canadian Medical Association. Her expertise was anticipated to be used by the Health Transformation Advisory Committee with respect to the work being done to develop both the *Health Authority Act* and the transformation of the health system here in the territory. No funds have been drawn against that contract.

**Mr. Cathers:** Thank you, Deputy Chair; I appreciate the answer. I want to move on to the area of EMS, particularly as it relates to remote responses. I am going to make reference to a letter that I wrote to the minister last year and to which she responded. I would just caution the minister, as I did in my letter. I wrote about a situation involving a constituent and was

careful to try to describe the issue and what happened in enough detail to allow the minister and her officials to look into it. I also emphasized that I was seeking solutions and a commitment to action, not an explanation of what went wrong.

I would remind the minister — as I did in my letter and as she did in her response to the letter — to be mindful of the privacy of the people involved and avoid sharing any unnecessary information, including the location and date when it happened, just in case that would lead to unintentionally compromising that person's privacy.

I do want to ask about the issues I raised and to which the minister responded to me in a letter dated November 22. The issues I raised include that EMS response was significantly delayed, and the reasons involved how 911 calls were handled by dispatch and the lack of equipment suitable for providing medical transportation on trails. The constituents who were involved informed me that, in this case, it was not until a third 911 call that EMS sent an ambulance, and this related to dispatch being reluctant to send an ambulance due to the caller not being able to give a precise location, such as GPS coordinates or a civic address.

The minister in her letter did acknowledge that this was, as she called it — quote: "... a possible training gap for 911 dispatch as it pertains to trail and wilderness responses..." I appreciate that acknowledgement. My first question about it is: What has the government done with regard to that training gap for 911 dispatch? The second issue is — the minister knows that I raised the question of the fact that, while the City of Whitehorse has a side-by-side that is capable of doing medical transport on trails within the city, neither EMS nor the fire service have that ability.

So, if a rescue is required on a trail within Whitehorse — I am talking medical rescue, in this case — there is the ability within city limits for a response to occur by trail, but there can be situations outside city limits where it is not possible to land a helicopter at the location or nearby, and a response by trail with a properly equipped side-by-side or ATV would be the best option, but the Yukon government does not have that either through EMS or through fire halls managed by the Department of Community Services.

My second question is what the government has done in response to that issue — whether either EMS or the Fire Marshal's Office are working on procuring vehicles that are capable of doing a medical rescue on trails — again noting, Deputy Chair, that there are times and locations where someone can reach there by trail, but it is simply not possible to reach there by ambulance or by helicopter.

If the minister could provide me an answer on those two issues: how dispatch is handling those issues and the question of suitable rescue vehicles for medical extraction on trails.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Deputy Chair, EMS offers a variety of training models. I will speak about EMS for a moment, but the question is really about the 911 training issues, which are related to the RCMP, but let's speak about EMS first.

They offer a variety of training methods and programs aimed to increase recruitment and retention of community responders to ensure the support of community responders

throughout the territory. These include a training centre, a mobile training unit, high-fidelity training mannequins, an online learning platform, local training nights, and certificate courses. In addition to peer support programs and mental wellness and supports, with a focus on psychological health and the safety of our first responders, EMS also provides accredited programs and certification for community responders.

EMS has two clinical educator positions dedicated to education and training, and these positions provide in-person and virtual training throughout the territory. EMS hosts biweekly training nights for community responders. EMS recently increased monetary compensation to four hours of non-operational pay per month to encourage increased training opportunities being taken up by community responder individuals. And to support the biweekly training nights, community responders are provided with non-operational pay of over \$19 an hour to attend training and have access to additional funding to attend training programs that might be outside of their home area, and this includes offset for meals, incidentals, tuition, books, and accommodation.

Community responders receive honoraria for the commitment to EMS provided to on-call services, including training and all operational deployments. We have increased the on-call honoraria — doubled it actually 107 percent, I think, from \$3.71 an hour to over \$7.70 an hour. What I can say is that dispatchers are trained to use the MTPS system. Incidental information and key questions are used by dispatchers to quickly identify resources that are required for appropriate responses. This approach guides dispatchers in providing all post-dispatch and pre-arrival instructions and priority dispatch, and the provider of the MTPS is a company that has been used by EMS for over 20 years. It is used to answer 911 calls, assess incident needs, and provide pre-arrival instructions and verbal medical support, such as CPR. This system-based approach enables a standardized, consistent, and trackable response by EMS.

I, like the member opposite, am not in any way commenting on a particular case. I don't even have the letter that he is referring to in front of me, so I won't and wouldn't do that, but I am happy to provide this information about EMS generally.

The Yukon EMS has one of the highest scopes of practice in the country, including community responders, primary care paramedics, expanded care paramedics, paramedic specialists, and critical care practitioners. I will note that with respect to the combined services — fire, Emergency Medical Services, and RCMP responders here in the territory — the RCMP are responsible for leading search and rescue in the Yukon. Emergency Medical Services works collaboratively to provide medical supports for emergency medical search and rescue calls.

In March 2024 — so this month — a total of four full-time-equivalent paramedics successfully completed joint rescue training with the RCMP to increase capacity to support, which I think helps to respond to the question about how things are improving as a result of the situation that has been mentioned by the member opposite. As of March 2024, trained paramedics

have been deployed once to an emergency under the RCMP response.

Their special operation and medical extraction team — also known as SOMET — under the fire and life safety was reorganized in December 2023 to streamline operations supported by fire and life safety. The Emergency Measures Organization is working with Yukon Search and Rescue to bring together the volunteers from both of those organizations and to schedule appropriate training and explore opportunities for utilizing the interest and expertise of the SOMET members within the Yukon Search and Rescue infrastructure.

Those are improvements that are being made. I appreciate the opportunity to speak about these important services.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the information provided by the minister. I understand that she doesn't have my letter right in front of her, so I will not press at this point for much in the way of a more specific response. I would just remind the minister, though — as I indicated in my letter to her back in September — that the issue involved a situation that — it was not in the public safety answering point operated by the RCMP where the issue occurred. It was transferred over to EMS dispatch, and it was not until the third call that an ambulance was sent. As I mentioned to the minister earlier, what is absolutely essential is that the dispatchers have the necessary training to be able to talk someone through a call and figure out how to get first responders to the location of a medical emergency when a caller is having difficulty providing precise coordinates. I also know of past situations in the Yukon when dispatchers did exactly that.

I won't ask for more information at this specific point other than to ask the minister to review the letter that I sent previously and her response and to get back to me with information about what is being done to make sure that this doesn't happen again. As I noted in my letter, I am also aware of another incident that occurred last year. In this case, in the riding of the Member of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, there were also issues of delays in dispatch and people being encouraged to try to find transport themselves. That suggests that this was not just a one-time incident.

I want to emphasize as well that I appreciate the work done by all of those in our call centres. I am just trying to ensure — in the wake of a problem that occurred which should be avoided in the future — that the proper system response occurs to avoid there being a situation when someone calls for emergency medical help and that response either doesn't arrive or is delayed because of a gap in training or procedures.

Also, I would ask the minister to get back to me again regarding the issue of equipment for transport, specifically ATVs or side-by-sides that are equipped to carry a stretcher board properly. Again, the City of Whitehorse does have that. I would also suggest that there be consideration given to the possibility of having snowmobiles equipped for that if that is not already available, just recognizing that it is not always possible to respond by helicopter.

The minister made reference to the SOMET being realigned. That is something that has been raised with us as a concern, particularly in light of the fact that, according to the

information the minister provided me in August of last year, typically EMS calls involving a helicopter range at around a dozen a year on average. Again, we are just concerned about ensuring that there is the appropriate capacity and the appropriate response there.

Moving on to a very different issue, I would like to move on to the question of addictions treatment. As the minister knows, we have emphasized repeatedly that there should be, as part of the substance use health emergency response, an increased focus on addictions treatment. We are aware of multiple situations where people have been turned away from treatment. A report done for the government — I believe that the one I'm quoting is from the House of Wolf & Associates Inc. — noted that clients interviewed at the shelter at 405 Alexander Street — a very substantial percentage said that they had sought addictions treatment, primarily detox, and had not been able to get in there.

My question is: Has the Department of Health and Social Services, in the current fiscal year — has there been any expansion to addictions treatment services in Whitehorse? Has there been any expansion to addictions treatment services in rural Yukon?

Last but not least, I would ask the minister, when she responds, if she could indicate as well what government does to monitor the compliance by Connective with the operation contract and terms. We have had concerns raised with us about that, and at this point, I am simply seeking information about that.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I understand the member opposite to be asking about treatment that is available. Now, there is lots of treatment that individuals might be wanting to avail themselves of, so I will just speak relatively briefly about those that are available both here in the territory and outside of the territory.

The withdrawal management services program here in Whitehorse is a 24/7 medically supported program that provides a safe place for people to withdraw from substance use. Services include medical assistance for withdrawal from substances, psycho-educational programming and referral to ongoing treatment, counselling and social work supports, and also therapeutic groups and other support services. We have implemented phlebotomy in our withdrawal management services, which has reduced hospital transfers and improved patient care. We have increased our after-care programming options that include an alumni group twice a week, as well as our beat the blues community group.

Mental Wellness and Substance Use services has partnered with a local Indigenous-led recovery program to offer programming up to three times weekly for clients wishing to maintain sobriety. There are 14 beds available for adults and four beds available for youth in the withdrawal management program here in the territory. Our government has increased funding for withdrawal management to hire additional licensed practical nurses, and with these additional providers, the program will be able to offer increased detox bed nights. One additional full-time equivalent and two casual licensed practical nurses have been hired.

We're working to recruit an additional three licensed practical nurses. Bed availability is variable, as they are offered on a first-come, first-served basis, and the number of bed requests does not represent unique individuals. Clients who are delayed a bed are typically provided a spot within 72 hours if they continue to want the service, and they are supported if they are not available — if a place is not available for them initially. Youth bed requests are never delayed. We increased our bed capacity in 2023 by approximately 7.5 percent, with 953 admissions in 2022 and 1,017 admissions in 2023. In 2023, we averaged 85 admissions per month, and in 2022, we averaged 76 admissions per month.

With these additional providers, the program is able to offer increased detox beds and provide more comprehensive withdrawal care to continue to keep clients from unnecessarily attending Whitehorse General Hospital and to receive the services that are available in that specific withdrawal management situation.

When a request is delayed, staff work with the individual to build a safety plan and connect them to other supports and resources, such as perhaps the emergency shelter or other medical care or the hospital. Withdrawal management staff can also refer individuals to the Referred Care Clinic and opioid treatment services that exist in that program, and withdrawal management and treatment services have added a traditional foods program as part of their efforts to be more culturally relevant.

There is a land-based healing program and funding for land-based healing in 2023-24 and going forward into the mains. It is First Nation-led, and it is focused to be culturally safe. I believe that the question will also be as broad as to include out-of-territory treatment. Insured health services and Mental Wellness and Substance Use services continue to work with Yukoners to ensure that they can receive the medically necessary mental wellness and substance use care that they need, including if that care is required out of territory at a residential type of facility.

In February 2022, Insured Health services implemented a directive that expanded coverage for out-of-territory residential treatment. I will just note that it was one month after the declaration of the substance use health emergency and in response to that. It expands coverage for the out-of-territory residential treatment centres to support Yukoners to access pre-approved out-of-territory medically necessary substance use care and mental wellness care. Treatment is supported in Ontario, in British Columbia, and in Alberta through the Homewood Ravensview, Edgewood Treatment Centre, and Last Door Recovery Centre, and Last Door Addiction Recovery Services.

Insured health services provides pre-approved coverage for eligible beneficiaries through certain plans to attend out-of-territory facilities, based on established criteria. I can also note that a letter of intent has been signed with the federal government, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and the territorial government for the purposes of a healing centre here in the territory. It is unfortunate, at this time, that the kind of residential care that is contemplated by the centres that I have

just noted is only available for somebody who has to travel out of the territory. We support individuals to do that. We certainly look forward to a time when there is that kind of treatment available closer to home.

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

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Ms. Blake:** I would like to start by welcoming the officials here today. It is nice to have you guys here in the House.

I just have a few questions to try to get through. I am on a little bit of a time crunch, but I will start with the supplementary.

There is \$400,000 in the supplementary budget to address vaccine pressures, and we know that this increase is because the federal government is no longer funding COVID vaccines. Does the minister have estimates for COVID vaccine uptake in the Yukon, and are there any plans to increase the uptake? Is there tracking of the vaccination status in place for COVID? Does this increase cover costs of other vaccines, such as the RSV or MMR vaccines?

I am just going to stack my questions. What are the plans for vaccinations for other illnesses in the Yukon, including MMRI? What public education and awareness plans are there to encourage vaccine uptake?

Mahsi'.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the opportunity to look up some information about this. I apologize if I miss some of the last part of the question, but I'm happy to read it in the Blues and make sure that we get that information to the member opposite — or if she wants to repeat it. I am sorry if I have missed it all.

The COVID vaccines have been federally funded and will ultimately soon not be, and the provinces and territories will be responsible for providing publicly funded COVID-19 vaccines to populations. We commit to doing that.

The other part of the \$400,000 that was mentioned by the member opposite is for the replacement of some expired vaccines. There is a cost of increased influenza vaccines to be provided to individuals 65 years of age and older. I wish that I had the time to talk about how great Yukoners are about — I can certainly say this — how great they are about having vaccines and coming to get their vaccines. We have administered just an extraordinary number of vaccines in the territory, including Shingrix vaccines and COVID-19 vaccines.

Just as one statistic: Between January 1, 2021 and December 31, 2023, a total of 120,593 COVID-19 vaccines

were administered here in the territory. We also provide flu vaccines free of charge, measles vaccines free of charge, travellers' vaccines are not covered — they never really have been — and individuals have paid for those in the event that they have needed to travel and get appropriate vaccines to do so.

The RSV vaccine and HPV vaccine are covered and youth and childhood vaccines are covered here in the territory. It is such an incredibly important opportunity to provide those public health and safety measures for Yukoners.

**Ms. Blake:** My next question is with regard to the walk-in clinic. There is \$445,000 for the new walk-in clinic, which includes eight FTE positions. Can the minister provide a breakdown of which positions are filled, and if there are vacant positions, what are the plans to fill them?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The walk-in clinic here in Whitehorse — certainly a great addition to provide service and options for Yukoners — opened in December 2023 at its current location, which was always designed to be temporary. We look forward to opening the clinic at its new location. I think that the estimate at the moment is by the end of April. Once fully staffed, the walk-in clinic staff complement will include one clinic manager, two nurse practitioners, two licensed practical nurses, three medical office assistants, one social worker, and one full-time-equivalent contract physician. I'm sorry that I don't have what positions are currently vacant, but we can return that information to the member opposite.

**Ms. Blake:** My next question is regarding the land-based healing budget. There is an increase of \$2.2 million for land-based healing. In the supplementary budget briefing, we were told that there would be a policy developed to set out eligibility criteria for who can apply for this land-based healing funding. Who is developing the policy? What are the details of this policy and when will it be ready?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the question. The qualifications and policies with respect to the land-based healing program are being developed in consultation with the Council of Yukon First Nations, which has been contracted for the purposes of administering the program. The criteria will be clearly set out in the transfer payment agreement.

I do have some of those details, but they are being finalized as well. To qualify for funding, land-based healing initiatives should be within the following guiding principles: they should foster connections with communities and promote traditional values for land-based programming; they should focus on culturally safe programming; they should incorporate community-based programming that fosters collaboration; they should improve the quality of life of individuals, families, and communities; they should build from the strengths and resources of the community to create local expertise; they should focus on improvement within various determinants of health, such as self-determination, cultural values, life skills, connection with land, and fostering healthy relationships; and they should contribute to a quality health continuum of care, including prevention, treatment, and recovery.

Eligible recipients include individuals, organizations, Yukon First Nation-led businesses, and Yukon First Nation

governments, groups, associations, and non-profit organizations.

No funds have flowed with respect to that program yet. It is being stood up as we speak. I have appeared in front of leadership for the purposes of answering questions regarding the land-based healing program and for the purposes of answering questions of Yukon First Nation leadership regarding this program, and we certainly look forward to it expanding the options of all kinds for individuals who will benefit from this kind of programming.

**Ms. Blake:** Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I thank the minister for her response to that question.

My next question is in regard to the land-based healing funding — when I travel to communities, I often spend a lot of time with youth who — in the communities, we have high absenteeism rates within the education system. But in saying that, we have a lot of our young people across the territory who make the decision on their own to leave the community, go out on the land, go cut wood, stay at their camp, cut ice, and stuff like that. One of the questions that I am often asked by young people is: What supports are in place to support our youth to be out on the land? I wonder about that question, because oftentimes, these are young people who don't have an adult in their corner. So, how are youth a part of — how is the minister answering that youth have access to this funding when they don't have adult supports in place to access this funding?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Deputy Chair, thank you for the question.

Certainly, the focus on making sure that youth can access land-based healing was an important aspect of the land-based healing summit that took place and will, I believe, take place again with respect to making sure that land-based healing is well understood. It was a great opportunity for organizations, businesses, and governments to come together, including First Nation-led governments, and have conversations about what is already happening and what is available, and then I — I can get the paragraph back — but I just noted that individuals could apply for funding to this program, meeting that criteria — obviously organizations — there is no size, big or small. It is not only governments or businesses that can do so. We tried to make it as broad as possible and ultimately a focus on youth and their availability to access this kind of land-based healing.

I believe, and I know that the officials of the department believe, that this will be critical, because it is part of the prevention aspect of the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* going forward — that the earlier that we can have youth decide to not use substances or to minimize use and have life choices that don't involve that, the more successful we will ultimately be.

What I would like to add on that is that there is nothing in the criteria at the moment that is age-based. I should also say that youth are supported through cultural funding at Family and Children's Services as well to attend those kinds of programming — even children — through the requirement under the *Child and Family Services Act* for cultural plans to be written in conjunction with a child's First Nation so that they can be connected and stay connected to those kinds of activities

and traditional teachings. Those are not exactly related to the land-based healing program but certainly an important protection and recognition that these are critical activities for children and youth as they grow.

**Ms. Blake:** Thanks to the minister for that response.

There is an increase of \$150,000 to EMS services for the opioid response drug-checking program. My questions relate to the home and mobile spectrometers. A spectrometer costs roughly \$50,000, and the term "home spectrometer" is unclear. What is meant by a "home spectrometer" and a "mobile spectrometer"? How many of these will be purchased, and what type of spectrometers are they?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** This is quite a specific question. I would not want to get the technical details wrong, so I will undertake to provide this information to the member opposite with respect to the intention of purchasing spectrometers, what they specifically measure, and what the difference is between the home and mobile spectrometers. We can provide that to you.

**Ms. Blake:** At the BC Centre on Substance Use, there is a requirement for a minimum of 30 hours of training for a technician to use a spectrometer. Further questions I have regarding this are: Who will be using the spectrometers? What training will they be provided? Who is providing the training? Will EMS commit to doing the training and following the guidelines for best practices? Is the government working with Blood Ties Four Directions as local drug-testing experts?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Emergency Medical Services has a paramedic specialist clinic, which is located at 405 Alexander Street, and a paramedic response unit in the downtown core of Whitehorse. The clinic ensures that there is a paramedic on-site — at this point, at least 20 hours a day — and we are working toward expanding that to 24 hours a day. I know that is quite close.

The clinic has a spectrometer to test samples of drug supply on-site. The spectrometer provides a more accurate detection of benzodiazepines, fentanyl, and other contaminants that might be in a drug supply. The paramedic response unit operates 10.7 hours a day, seven days a week.

I also am aware that there is a spectrometer that operates at the safe consumption site — I always get that title wrong — in downtown Whitehorse for the purposes of allowing people to bring drugs to be checked. There are individuals there who are authorized and certainly have more than 30 hours of training in providing that service. Emergency Medical Services, as well — I think you have asked some other questions around that about who will, in addition to that, be trained.

There are certainly drug-testing abilities — although not likely yet with a mobile spectrometer on the outreach van that's operated by Blood Ties and, of course, usually supported by nurses.

**Ms. Blake:** In regard to the spectrometers, what communities have spectrometers in place, or what communities will have spectrometers?

What is being done to ensure that the mobile machines are properly calibrated? Spectrometers are delicate machines that

must be operated properly, including calibration every time they are moved.

How will mobile spectrometers be utilized, and what locations will they be used at? I think the minister answered that question already, though.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The calibration of a mobile spectrometer — first of all, where they exist will add to our answer for you with respect to the details and the specifics of that. I should say that I always say “safe consumption site”, but it is “supervised consumption site”, so I apologize for that being incorrect earlier. It’s one of those names that doesn’t sit in my memory right at the front.

Calibration is part of the training for the experts and the technicians who run the spectrometers, and we will add the details of that to the answer that we will provide to you about this particular technical equipment.

I can return to the answer of the Whitehorse walk-in clinic and indicate that we have hired two nurse practitioners, one social worker, two licensed practical nurses, one clinic manager, and one medical office assistant, and we have a system whereby physicians sign up to cover different shifts throughout the week.

**Ms. Blake:** There is \$12.5 million in this supplementary budget to increase funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation. I apologize if I’m repeating this question if my colleague has already asked it.

We were told in the briefing that \$5.2 million of this is to address pressures from agency nursing and overall forced growth. How much of this is for the planned use of agency nursing, and what is the government’s plan to reduce reliance on agency nurses?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The \$5.2 million that is in the supplementary budget will be for those potential costs in 2023-24. Going forward, we anticipate that they will be reduced, as I said earlier today, by a lessened need at the Yukon Hospital Corporation for agency nurses.

We are invoking and implementing the *Health and Human Resources Strategy* focused on hiring more health practitioners on a permanent basis. We certainly hope that to be the case. I can also indicate — I mentioned earlier — that the collective agreement with respect to medical staff, including nurses at the Yukon Hospital Corporation, is soon to be ratified — taken to the members and hopefully ratified for the purposes of providing some stability going forward.

With respect to those positions, I can also indicate that the Yukon government is extremely competitive when it comes to hiring licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, and nurse practitioners. The nurse practitioners are paid more than the median nurse practitioner. Here in the territory, working for Yukon government would start at \$65.23 an hour. The median pay across the country is \$52.59 an hour, and our potential maximum per hour for those positions would go as high as \$75.79 an hour, which is more than the median in Canada. Yukon government registered nurses start at a higher rate than every other jurisdiction that we looked at, including Nunavut, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia, by earning \$54.97 an hour. Yukon hospital registered nurses begin at

\$45.81 an hour. They can go higher, up to \$72.65 an hour, but that discrepancy is one that we hope to resolve with the implementation of a health authority, for instance.

Licensed practical nurses here in the territory who are working for the Yukon government begin at a rate that is higher than all the other jurisdictions we looked at — including Nunavut, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and Alberta — by earning \$45.83 an hour and they can go as high as \$53.09 an hour.

Those are extremely competitive rates of pay. The member opposite and the members in the Legislative Assembly will be aware as well of the bonuses that have been announced with respect to retaining and recruiting nurses for Yukon government across the various kinds of positions that we have there, including nursing bonuses that have been announced with respect to the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Again, with the collective agreement being finalized hopefully in the next little while — some stability there — we will continue to actively recruit nurses to come and be here and improve the services for Yukoners.

**Ms. Blake:** Thanks to the minister for her response on that question. The Canada prenatal nutrition program provides funding to community groups to improve the health of pregnant women, new mothers, and their babies. Two years ago, the Yukon government agreed to match funds from the Canada prenatal nutrition program, and currently this program is under review. So, is this government going to maintain its funding to the Yukon organizations that benefit from this program?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I do recall the Canada prenatal nutrition program — the decision made by this government to match the contributions made by the federal government to seven programs throughout the territory. That has been maintained since that decision was taken. The federal government is currently reviewing that program — how they will fund it — and we are anxious to see what they ultimately decide and whether or not they will continue to do that or whether there is a possibility of funding coming to our government to continue that, but we are committed to making sure that a prenatal nutrition program is one that is supported by the territory.

**Ms. Blake:** The Yukon NDP — we continue to hear from Yukoners who have complex medical conditions that include both substance use and mental health challenges. Because there is often no appropriate treatment facility for them in the Yukon, they must leave the territory to access specialized treatment. What steps do Yukoners need to take to access treatment if they have complex conditions that include both substance use and mental health conditions and their needs are not able to be met here in the territory?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate this question. I did get a chance to speak a little bit about it earlier. I noted that, in February 2022, this government issued a directive with respect to removing or lessening barriers with respect to individuals who might need to go outside of the territory for treatment. We have recently made sure that this directive is made available to all primary care providers in the territory. It is available to the doctors, health professionals, nurse practitioners, and nurses

who work at the emergency department in the hospitals, and it is available to the walk-in clinic, to the Constellation clinic, and all primary care providers across the territory for the purposes of them understanding how they could assist their patients with finding out about these services and how to access them.

As I said in an earlier answer, I listed the places that we have arrangements with for individuals to go Outside for treatment. I also noted that we look forward to supporting the potential of a healing centre closer to home in the territory and that a letter of intent was signed by the federal government, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and this Liberal government in December 2023 for the purposes of exploring that. Ultimately, that would be a great addition to the services that are provided. In the meantime, we do have the ability for people to travel Outside, and it is supported by government.

The more information we get to medical professionals about their knowledge of that, I think the better the response will be for individuals. I am speaking about places that focus primarily on addictions treatment, but there is no addictions treatment that does not involve the mental health services, the mental health supports, and the importance of treatment for mental health issues in order for full recoveries to be made.

**Ms. Blake:** I am mindful of the time, so I have a few more questions for the minister on the supplementary budget, but I will submit these questions in writing to the minister with hopes that I get a response prior to debating the main budget for Health and Social Services.

In saying that, I thank the officials for being here, and I thank the minister for her time in answering my questions.

Mahsi' cho.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Just in relation to the last comment made by the member opposite, I am happy to commit to getting answers to the written questions that we have not had time for today to you in the time frame you have requested.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services?

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

**Ms. Blake:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried**

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Deputy Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted.  
*On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures*

*Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$44,871,000 agreed to*

*On Capital Expenditures*

*Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$2,618,000 agreed to*

*Total Expenditures in the amount of \$47,489,000 agreed to*

*Department of Health and Social Services agreed to*

**Ms. Blake:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all remaining Votes in Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*, carried.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all remaining Votes in Bill No. 212 carried**

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all remaining Votes in Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*, carried.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures*

*Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$71,064,000 agreed to*

*On Capital Expenditures*

*Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$44,151,000 agreed to*

*Total Expenditures in the amount of \$115,215,000 agreed to*

**Ms. Blake:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses, schedules, the preamble, and the title of Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*, read and agreed to.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses, schedules, the preamble, and the title of Bill No. 212 read and agreed to**

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses, schedules, the preamble, and the title of Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to*

*Schedules A, B, and C agreed to*

*On Preamble*

*Preamble agreed to*

*On Title*

*Title agreed to*



**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*, without amendment.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that the Chair report Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*, without amendment.

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

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

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

### Chair's report

**MLA Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 212, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

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

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 212, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, I know that we're moments away from having the Commissioner arrive here in the Legislative Assembly to get to assent. While we wait, I recall from Committee of the Whole that I ran out of time in some of the conversations we were having at that time. So, while we wait, if it is okay with you, sir, I will move into that area of revenues that I didn't have a chance to talk about as we wrap up our time here in the Legislative Assembly in the third appropriation Bill No. 212.

When it comes to revenues as part of the supplementary estimates — we have discussed a bit about it but not much — we've seen a \$14.9-million decrease in the total revenues. As I explained in second reading, this is largely due to two groups of changes. First, we have a variety of tax and transfer adjustments in Vote 12, Department of Finance, and these

consist of a \$2.1 million decrease to tobacco taxes and additionally an \$8.5 million decrease in corporate income tax partially offset by a \$3 million increase in personal income tax revenues.

I could go on, but I have it under good authority that the Commissioner is here, so what I will do is say thank you to all my colleagues who made comments during Committee of the Whole, and I look forward to this bill getting assent in the Legislative Assembly.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, the matter before us is a budget bill and therefore a matter of confidence, so the Official Opposition will be voting against the budget bill, noting, of course, that we do not have confidence in the government.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of confidence, and we have a lot of balls in the air with the confidence and supply agreement, which I'm incredibly proud of, and we will be voting with the government this afternoon.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let's just get this voted on.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Agree.

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

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

**Mr. Dixon:** Disagree.

**Mr. Kent:** Disagree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Disagree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Disagree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Disagree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Disagree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Disagree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Disagree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Blake:** Agree.

**MLA Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yea, 8 nay.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.  
I declare the motion carried.  
*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 212 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 212 has passed this House.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of Yukon, in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to the bill which has passed this House.

*Commissioner Webber enters the Chamber accompanied by the Sergeant-at-Arms*

## ASSENT TO BILLS

**Commissioner:** Please be seated.

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

**Clerk:** *Third Appropriation Act 2023-24.*

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

It has been a busy week. I wish you all a very happy long weekend, and for those of you who celebrate Easter, enjoy Easter with your families. I'm going to Skagway.

*Commissioner leaves the Chamber*

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, just before I move to adjourn, I think we should all wish the Clerk of Committees a happy birthday for tomorrow. I happened to notice cake out there.

*Applause*

**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. Tuesday.

*The House adjourned at 5:19 p.m.*

## The following documents were filed March 28, 2024:

35-1-189

Whistle Bend Elementary School, letter re (dated December 5, 2023) from the Whistle Bend Elementary School Council to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Premier, and Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education (Kent)

35-1-190

Unilateral changes to educational assistant staffing and school allocations, letter re (dated March 27, 2024) from Stephanie Hammond, Executive Director, LDAY Centre for Learning, Melanie Bennett, Executive Director, Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, Katie Swales, President, Autism Yukon, Rebecca Fenton, Executive Director, Autism Yukon, Ted Hupé, President, Yukon Association of Education Professionals, and Sandra Henderson, Chair, Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees, to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education (White)