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HANSARD

Tuesday, April 2, 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 |
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| 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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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, April 2, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper, as they are outdated: Motion No. 676, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge, and Motion No. 901, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, we have a few folks here for our tribute to municipal milestone birthdays. In the gallery, we have: Samantha Crosby, who is our director of Community Affairs; Riel Allain, who is our community advisor; Shelley Hassard, who is the executive director of the Association of Yukon Communities; and with Shelley, we have David Rozsa, who is the manager of operations. Could we please introduce them and welcome them to the House?

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to please help me welcome a few guests who are here today for the Indigenous Languages Day tribute. We have Suzan Davy, one of our assistant deputy ministers of Education; Paula Banks, director of First Nation Initiatives, Department of Education; and Danielle Sheldon, First Nation policy analyst, Department of Education. We have Sarah Jarvis from the First Nation School Board, Indica Stewart from the First Nation School Board, and Roxanne Stasyszyn from the First Nation School Board.

Please help me welcome our guests today.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, we have a few guests here today for the Royal Canadian Air Force 100th anniversary tribute. We have Red Grossinger, Morris Cratty, Joe Mewett, the president of the Whitehorse Legion, and Brian Read. We have Rick Nielsen, Brooke Nielsen, and Maureen Nielsen, Kerri Scholz, Dale Stokes, Doug Phillips, Mel Brais, and Chris Nash. We have Ed Peart here from 551 cadets, and I believe that David Knight is here from the Whitehorse Lions. Welcome them, please.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

Unanimous consent re extending time limit allotted for tributes, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 11(6)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I request the unanimous consent of the House, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 11(6), that the time allotted for tributes today may exceed the 20-minute time limit.

Speaker: The Government House Leader has requested unanimous consent, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 11.6, that the time allotted for tributes today may exceed the 20-minute time limit.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

In recognition of Royal Canadian Air Force 100th anniversary

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge and commemorate a significant milestone in Canadian history — the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Air Force. As we reflect on a century of service, sacrifice, and innovation, we pay tribute to the men and women who have served in the Royal Canadian Air Force, protecting our skies and contributing to the defence and security of Canada.

The Royal Canadian Air Force has played a vital role in shaping our country's history. From its early days as a fledgling air service during World War I to its evolution into a modern, technologically advanced force, the Royal Canadian Air Force has always been at the forefront of aviation excellence. Its contributions during times of conflict and to peacekeeping missions have been invaluable, earning respect and admiration both at home and abroad.

As we celebrate this centennial, we honour the courage and dedication of the Royal Canadian Air Force members, past and present. Their unwavering commitment to duty, their willingness to face adversity, and their spirit of innovation have been the cornerstones of the Royal Canadian Air Force's success. We remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country and we express our deepest gratitude to all who have worn the Royal Canadian Air Force uniform.

The legacy of the Royal Canadian Air Force extends beyond military operations. It encompasses humanitarian efforts, search and rescue missions, and support for communities in need. The Royal Canadian Air Force's contributions to aerospace technology and its role in advancing aviation safety have also been significant, leaving a lasting impact on the global aviation industry.

In acknowledging this milestone, we must also recognize the role that the Royal Canadian Armed Forces' station in Whitehorse played in history. This station, located at what now is the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport — well-named when we think that our former Deputy Prime Minister of Canada had 33 missions in World War II for the Royal Canadian Air Force — has been an integral part of the Royal

Canadian Armed Forces' operations, serving as a vital hub for refueling, communications, and support during critical periods. Its role in the Northwest Staging Route during World War II and its subsequent evolution reflect the station's importance in our aviation history.

As we look to the future, let us reaffirm our support for the Royal Canadian Air Force and its continued role in safeguarding our nation. May the next century of the Royal Canadian Air Force be marked by continued excellence and service to Canada and may we always honour the legacy of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition and the Yukon NDP to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Air Force and all those who have served in this distinguished branch of our military.

The RCAF formed on April 1, 1924 with three components: a regular force, an air reserve, and a reserve of non-active personnel. It played an important role in shaping the Yukon as we know it today.

With the outbreak of World War II, a series of airfields known as the Northwest Staging Route was established to ferry planes and supplies to Alaska. Whitehorse airfield was transferred to the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1942. Designated as RCAF Station Whitehorse, it had detachments in Teslin, Aishihik, Snag, and, in 1946, Watson Lake. After the war, the Whitehorse station continued to function as a refueling point on the Alaska route. The intercept positions were later moved to Whitehorse and closed in 1968.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the stories of two young RCAF pilots from the Second World War. The first young man was a pilot with the 101 Squadron special operations. This Lancaster bomber had one extra crewman who was a radio operator, fluent in German, who would send out false radio messages to confuse the Luftwaffe. He flew 33 missions and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for courage and devotion to duty. Lieutenant Erik Nielsen would later become Yukon's Member of Parliament from 1957 to 1987 and rise to the role of Deputy Prime Minister. There is a display in MacBride Museum in Whitehorse that honours his military service.

Another young Halifax bomber pilot who had a profound influence in the Yukon was James King. On November 2, 1944, he was on a bombing run to Düsseldorf, Germany when his plane was struck by flak, suffered severe damage, and caught fire. Six crew members bailed out while King force-landed the plane while it was still ablaze. For this, he received the Distinguished Flying Cross. After the war, Mr. King got his law degree and opened a firm in Whitehorse in the early 1950s, and he purchased the White Pass hotel, known as the Edgewater. His daughter, Dale Stokes, in the gallery today, still resides in the Yukon, along with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

These are only two stories of the many Yukoners who were and still are connected to the RCAF. We would like to thank all

of those who served or continue to serve in this important branch of our military. I would like to close by inviting all Yukoners and Canadians to celebrate this important anniversary by visiting the RCAF 100 website and learn more about events in the communities. I know that the legion is going to be hosting some events here in the Yukon.

To all those who have served and serve today, lest we forget.

Applause

In recognition of municipalities' anniversary of incorporation

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I wish to pay tribute to the six municipalities celebrating milestone birthdays in 2024. This year, there are five municipalities celebrating 40 years of incorporation: Watson Lake on April 1, Mayo on June 1, Teslin on August 1, Haines Junction on October 1, and Carmacks on November 1. Faro, of course, celebrates 55 years of incorporation on June 13.

People have been living collectively in the Yukon in one fashion or another for thousands of years. Today, however, we are celebrating those towns and people who made the relatively recent decision to assemble and call themselves a community under territorial statute.

The Yukon is well-acquainted with its history — from Old Crow's Bluefish Caves, which suggest human occupation for more than 24,000 years, to the Klondike Gold Rush, the rise of the sternwheelers, and the frantic construction of the Alaska Highway, legacies of which we are still dealing with today.

So, it is sometimes jarring to learn that several Yukon towns are relatively young. Five of eight of our incorporated communities made the decision to take up the challenge of becoming a municipality in the 1980s. Heck, I've been in the Yukon for 35 years, and this afternoon, I'm still reflecting that it is almost as long as several municipalities have been around. It's incredible.

Mr. Speaker, the act of incorporation is more than just official recognition of a new town on territorial maps. It involves assuming responsibility from the territorial government, like road maintenance and services to properties. It involves saying: We can do a better job of dealing with our issues than anyone; we've got this from here.

Becoming a municipality is really a declaration of local independence, a statement of resolve that nurturing one's community is work best left to the people living there. It is admittedly a heavy load to carry. The services and programs that most impact the people of our territory are delivered by our municipalities. Potable water, garbage collection and recycling programs, and recreation are some of the services that municipalities take responsibility for and deliver on behalf of their residents.

It is not easy, but 40 and 55 years ago, six resourceful communities made the choice to take on that responsibility. I commend them for their bold decision, congratulate them on their successes, and wish them a very happy birthday and many pleasant returns on the day.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to recognize the 40th anniversary of Haines Junction, Teslin, Watson Lake, Mayo, and Carmacks and the 55th anniversary of Faro. We would like to thank all former and current mayors and councils of each of those municipalities for the work that they have done throughout the years to create a community that they were proud of.

The dedicated individuals who serve their communities do so because they want their work to have lasting impact to make their hometowns better for future generations. Each of these communities has come a long way over the last 40 years. I would also like to thank the Association of Yukon Communities for their effort to help each community achieve and sustain effective and united local government and for advocating for the needs and rights of community members across the territory.

Mr. Speaker, last but not least, I would like to thank the community advisors with the Department of Community Services for all that they do in liaising between the communities and the government. So, thank you and congratulations to all.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to recognize several Yukon communities on important anniversaries. Starting this week and continuing over the next several months, the communities of Watson Lake, Mayo, Teslin, Haines Junction, and Carmacks will all celebrate 40 years since their incorporation as municipalities, and, as we heard, Faro will be celebrating 55 years.

Each Yukon community is a unique and special place. They are so much more than a signpost forest, a beautiful mountain range, or a mine. They are communities of resilient and resourceful people who contribute so much to our territory and to our collective story. Each of these communities existed long before their incorporation and, in some cases, for much, much longer, yet official incorporation brought new potential, new challenges, and new responsibilities for the people who live there.

I am taking a swing at the vernacular, so hold on; I might be a little off. But for 40 years and longer now, Faroites, Watson Lakers, Mayoites, Teslinites, Junctioners, and Carmackians have been serving their communities as mayors and municipal councillors to provide services and improve their communities. We thank them all — past and present — for their dedication to community.

It takes so much more than politicians to keep community running, though, and so we also thank the incredible volunteers, the business owners, the workers, First Nations, and the people who have chosen to make real Yukon home and continue to help to make these communities what they are.

Congratulations to each of these communities on their anniversaries and I hope to join in the celebrations this summer.

Applause

In recognition of National Indigenous Languages Day

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mēduh, Mr. Speaker. Dženēs hoti'e. Jeanie McLean ushyē. Tahltan esdats'ehi. Ch'yione esdats'ehi. Klogodena esdats'ehi. Edla Thelma Norby uyē. Estsu Grace Edzerza uyē.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to National Indigenous Languages Day that occurred on March 31. This day stands as a beacon illuminating the significance of language and culture in nurturing the well-being and resilience of Indigenous communities.

Here in the Yukon, this holds particular importance as we grapple with the critical endangerment of eight Yukon First Nation languages, each with multiple dialects. These languages are not just a means of communication; they hold the knowledge — holders of the world view and keys to understanding the deep connections between people and the land they inhabit.

The impacts of colonization have left these languages critically endangered. Some languages have only a handful of fluent speakers left, while others are on the brink of silence with no fluent speakers remaining.

The intergenerational transmission of language has been disrupted. Through education, we can reclaim and celebrate our languages, cultures, and traditions. No longer will they be marginalized or deemed inadequate. They are our strengths, our heritage, and our birthright. Forging a path to revitalizing Yukon First Nation languages are some inspiring, dedicated, and passionate individuals whom I would like to hold up, acknowledge, and thank.

I commend the Yukon First Nation governments, the Yukon Native Language Centre, the Yukon First Nation School Board, and the Council of Yukon First Nations for their unwavering commitment to promoting and supporting the revitalization of Yukon First Nation languages through their innovative programs and inspiring leaders.

One such program deserving recognition is the Champagne and Aishihik First Nation language program. This program is currently nurturing its third cohort of learners through a two-year, full-time intensive course. This year, we are supporting the fluency of Yukon First Nation language teachers through a pilot program where two teachers are currently in full-time studies in their program to increase their language fluency. This program will enrich the learning environments of Yukon children.

Similarly, other First Nations like Liard First Nation, Teslin Tlingit Council, Kwanlin Dün, Selkirk First Nation, and Vuntut Gwitchin are actively engaged in language preservation efforts, each in their own unique way.

As we commemorate National Indigenous Languages Day, let's not just celebrate the beauty and resilience of Yukon First Nation languages; let's also commit to supporting the vital work being done to ensure their survival.

Sógá sénlá. Mähsi' cho. Mahsi' cho. Másin cho. Shäw níthän. Günèlchish. Tsin'jj choh. Mēduh.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize National Indigenous Languages Day. The Yukon is home to speakers of countless languages. Eight of those belong distinctly to the original inhabitants of this land, each with multiple dialects: Upper Tanana, Gwich'in, Northern Tutchone, Southern Tutchone, Tagish, Tlingit, and Kaska. Others, such as Tahltan, were spoken prior to contact with non-Indigenous peoples.

Much work is being done to assist in the revitalization of these languages within families, schools, and on the land. Many elder fluent speakers are working to pass along their languages to younger generations, and many now speak a second language.

To all Yukoners, from the young children learning their first words in Southern Tutchone to the elders passing on their stories in the Gwich'in language to those who are working so hard to keep their traditional language alive today, thank you.

Mahsi' cho.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to National Indigenous Languages Day. Indigenous languages are the core of our history, culture, and identity as Indigenous people. Our language is what ties us to our ancestors, our homelands, and our nation. Language is memory. It holds intricate knowledge and information that has been kept for thousands of years.

We live in a territory rich in culture of Indigenous people. The diversity of Yukon's eight distinct languages is reflected in the stories, the songs, the dances, the art, and the history of our territory. We celebrate all the language speakers and the work being done to keep Indigenous languages alive across Turtle Island and here in the Yukon for future generations.

We celebrate the work of the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Native Language Centre, which are doing the work to preserve and revitalize all Yukon First Nation languages. We thank the language keepers who have kept the languages safe and passed them along to future generations despite the impacts of colonization and the residential school system.

Today, I am thankful to the late Helen Charlie and Annie Lord, who worked so hard to teach many generations the Gwich'in language at Chief Zzeh Gittlit School. I'm also grateful to our elders today: Jane Montgomery, Marion Schafer, Irwin Linklater, Shawn Bruce, Lorraine Netro, Florence Netro, and our young language warriors Brandon Kyikavichik and Sophia Flather and many others in Old Crow who continue to uphold our Gwich'in language in the community.

Mahsi' cho.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House encourages Yukon residents to register to become an organ donor.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow the Whitehorse Public Library hours and extend the hours at the warming centre located in the Jim Smith Building to include weekends and evenings.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Yukon Hospital Corporation funding

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, we have repeatedly raised concerns about the Liberal government's chronic underfunding of Yukon hospitals, which the minister always dismisses, claiming that everything is fine. Last fall, we raised concerns about the impact of sweeping service cuts imposed at Yukon hospitals as a direct result of the Liberal government's chronic underfunding. This morning, CBC revealed documents acquired through access to information showing how deep those cuts went — quote: "In the surgical services department, the corporation slashed elective surgeries by a third, by taking operating rooms temporarily out of service from mid December."

They also revealed that 14 physicians and surgeons wrote to the Premier and ministers to express disappointment and anger. The minister of health has tried to downplay these cuts, but it's clear that they had a big impact on Yukon patients.

Does the minister now acknowledge that these service cuts were a direct result of the Liberal government's chronic underfunding of our hospitals?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, no, of course, I will not acknowledge that, because it is not the actual case. The Government of Yukon is providing additional funding and did ensure that the Yukon Hospital Corporation could address the immediate pressures impacting surgeries, potentially, and medical imaging, potentially, and those programs in the territory back in December 2023.

At the direction of me as Minister of Health and Social Services, additional investments were being made to ensure that Yukoners had timely access to the care and health services that they require. This was designed to ensure that imaging and surgical services would continue without disruption. Recognizing that there was a regularly scheduled slowdown of surgical services planned for mid-December to early January, the government at the time worked collaboratively with the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that the services were maintained and

were returned to the previously anticipated levels from that point on.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, it's pretty amazing how the minister can dismiss letters from doctors and even the Ernst & Young report that the Premier commissioned, all of which show the impacts of chronic underfunding of Yukon hospitals. One of the letters uncovered by the CBC was from 14 physicians and surgeons to the Premier and the Minister of Health and Social Services — I'll quote from it: "We are concerned that the hospital administration, and your government, are not aware of the potentially dire impacts such cuts will have for our patients and your constituents. The intention of this letter is to lay out the high stakes of such shortsighted cuts as they are likely to cost the Yukon's healthcare system more in the long run than they are immediately worth."

Does the minister now recognize that the Liberal government's chronic underfunding of our hospitals is actually causing long-term damage to our health care system?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear about what occurred. The Yukon Hospital Corporation set out some possible cost containment measures in some documents that were sent to folks at the Yukon Hospital Corporation. I suggest to this Legislative Assembly and to Yukoners that this was conscientious work and work that needed to be done. When that information also reached the Yukon government, we quickly worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon Medical Association to ensure that additional funding was provided to the Hospital Corporation so that the immediate pressures identified at that time — back in December 2023 — that potentially could impact surgeries and medical imaging programs were avoided by having the government work with the Hospital Corporation and with the Yukon Medical Association to ensure that the regularly scheduled slowdown of surgical services occurred but that no additional concerns with respect to imaging or surgical services were cut at that time.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is a pretty rich response by the minister. I remind her that the Ernst & Young report shows four years of chronic underfunding. The documents revealed by CBC show that the Liberal government should have been well aware of the results that these cuts were having, and it was caused by their lack of financial support for hospitals — quote: "... wait times would grow, there'd be an increased risk of nurse burnout, and more people might face medical emergencies." On top of this, they show that the wait-list for scopes, orthopaedic surgeries, and general surgeries would all increase. MRIs and mammography would also see wait-lists grow.

All of this is the direct result of the Liberals' decision to underfund our hospitals. Fourteen physicians and surgeons signed the letter to the Premier and minister expressing their anger at the impact on patients. Why did the minister of health let things get this bad at our hospitals before she provided millions in needed O&M funding?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Lake Laberge will never let the facts get in the way, but let's not take it from this side of the floor. Let's hear it directly from the CEO of the Hospital Corporation here on November 21 last year in

Committee — and I quote: "Now I go back to my original statement. It is an extremely dynamic environment, and I will say that, at the beginning of this year, we were forecasting and forwarded a balanced budget, thanks to the Yukon government. But as the year progresses, yes, we are seeing expenses greater than that budget and it is because of all of the pressures and demands that I am speaking about. Thankfully, though, I would say that we are working very closely with government, and on a personal note, I think that we are working more closely with government than I have ever seen in the past under the direction of our chair and under the direction of the minister."

I would ask the Member for Lake Laberge one quick question: If he cares so much, why did he vote against that money that they are asking for — that we made sure got to the hospital?

Question re: Yukon Hospital Corporation funding

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the documents uncovered by CBC show clearly that the results of the service cuts at the hospital last year were well known. To quote from the CBC: "The Yukon Hospital Corporation expected its sweeping service cuts last year would double wait times for some MRIs and CT scans, exacerbate surgery waitlists and risk nurse burnout."

As terrible as that was, we are concerned that the Liberal government hasn't learned from that experience. The 2024-25 budget includes over \$14 million less O&M funding than was actually provided to the Hospital Corporation last year.

So, what assurances can the minister provide to Yukoners that what happened last year won't happen again this year?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, again, the Yukon Party is not interested in the facts of the situation, but I can tell you what it is that will avoid these kinds of situations in the future, and that is relationship building. The relationship that we have built with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, with the Yukon Medical Association, with allied health professionals, with the nursing associations in this territory are markedly better than they have ever been before.

We just recently heard a quote from the Premier, from the CEO of the hospital, when they were here testifying last year.

We work together constantly to make sure that the proper funding is available to the Yukon Hospital Corporation and more importantly that Yukoners are served by the best hospital system — perhaps in Canada.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, it's not just us in the Official Opposition who are concerned about the Liberals' chronic underfunding of Yukon hospitals. We continue to hear from health professionals who share that worry as well. Here is what one long-time emergency department doctor told the CBC today — and I quote: "We do not have a place for patients to be looked after. The hospital is over capacity all the time. So if it is over capacity, obviously this is causing more budget overruns."

He went on to say that last year's cuts were a direct result of chronic underfunding. Despite this, the Liberals have budgeted less O&M money for the Hospital Corporation in this year's budget than was provided to the hospital last year.

So, can the minister assure Yukoners that we won't see the types of sweeping cuts to the hospital services again this year?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, it is quite difficult to take these concerns seriously from the opposition given their record when the Member for Lake Laberge was Minister of Health and Social Services for that period of time with respect to underfunding of the hospital.

A *Yukon News* story from 2007 indicates — and I quote: “The...” — hospital — “... board tried to bring its issues to...” — the MLA for Lake Laberge — “... but he wasn't always available to listen...”

Again, in 2007: “The hospital has been in deep financial trouble for years — it's always been in deep financial trouble...”

Once more, under the MLA for Lake Laberge's watch — quote: “There's no money to pay the benefits of permanent staff.”

So, advice from the Yukon Party about chronic underfunding is in their back pocket, and they should look at the history of this situation.

Can we fund the hospital better? We can, and through budget 2024-25, we will. Hopefully, the members opposite will vote for it.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, this is a classic example of a tired government. We ask a question citing a medical professional from today and they respond with a quote from 17 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, last year, it was not until the Hospital Corporation was forced to impose those sweeping cuts that the Liberal government finally woke up and provided additional funding in the supplementary budget, but by then, the cuts had already been made and the damage was already done.

In the words of the 14 doctors that sent a letter to the Premier about this, those cuts were short-sighted and — quote: “... likely to cost the Yukon's healthcare system more in the long run than they are immediately worth.”

So, what assurances can the minister of health provide to Yukoners that the hospital will not need to impose sweeping cuts to its services in order for the Liberal government to step up and provide sufficient funding?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party clearly does not understand the way the hospital is funded, but Yukoners do. They know that there is core funding and that we work continuously with the Hospital Corporation, the medical association, and other professionals who work through that setting to make sure that their needs are met and more importantly the needs of Yukoners are met during that period of time.

I can assure the members opposite and all Yukoners that the relationship we have built between these three organizations and other allied health professional and nurses organizations will hold us in good stead as we work together for the benefit of Yukoners. We have heard from Yukoners that they value our public health wellness system and they want more autonomy, shorter wait times, and more services, and we have our health care workers here in the territory doing remarkable things with the resources that they have.

They are supported as we move forward; we want them to feel supported; we want them to get the equipment that they need to do the work for Yukoners. Health care workers can experience burnout. They want fair wages, affordable homes, groceries, and places where they can access goods and services here in the territory, which makes them like all Yukoners.

I certainly want to take the opportunity to thank everyone who is working in our health care system, everyone who is working to improve Yukoners' well-being.

Question re: Services for vulnerable individuals in Whitehorse

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the Whitehorse Public Library provides an incredible service for our community: a safe, warm, and comfortable place for people to read, use a computer, and find resources, open from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. seven days a week all year long.

With the recent closure of the library, we saw the opening of a warming space in this building. We have been pleased to welcome folks into this space; however, it closes every evening and weekend, leaving people without somewhere to go. Weekends and evenings are the most challenging time for people, as most organizations close their doors. The library has been a place where they can go.

So, what options are currently available to individuals in Whitehorse seeking a warm, safe place to go on evenings and weekends?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the opening of the warming space in this building has been an important part of the downtown safety plan with respect to providing additional spaces for Yukoners.

What I can also indicate is that the importance of that opportunity allows us to work with individuals who come to that warming space. I am provided at least initially with the information that it is not necessarily everyone who is accessing the library and not necessarily everyone who is accessing different services in downtown Whitehorse, but we are getting good feedback on the feedback forms. We are providing an amazing service here as part of the downtown safety plan. We are continuing to expand on those services as needed and as we learn more about the folks who are coming to use this location. I am quite proud of the fact that we have done that. It does align with the closure of the library, but that is just an added benefit. It was certainly not to replace the closure of the library, which was scheduled quite some time ago for the services that it needs to have the library retrofitted.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, what I was really looking for were options for people currently looking for support in the evenings and on the weekends, but we didn't get an answer.

Warm, safe spaces for people to go are crucial to our community, and part of the community downtown safety action plan includes the Safe at Home warming centre open seven days a week until 9:00 p.m. Unfortunately, due to the needed renovations in this space, it is now closed. This means that once again the only place for people to go in the evenings and on the weekends is the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter.

This leaves us back in the situation that we were in before the launch of the downtown safety action plan, and we already know that this does not work for many individuals or for the community.

So, what is this government doing right now to provide supports for people who need a place to go to access services and a safe place to be?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, we want all residents, business owners, and visitors in downtown Whitehorse to feel safe and welcome in our community. We know that for many downtown residents and business owners and their employees, some areas of downtown can feel unsafe, particularly at night. We are working with our partners at the City of Whitehorse, the RCMP, the Council of Yukon First Nations, Yukon First Nations, Connective, and NGOs operating downtown to implement our government's downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan. The opening of the warming centre is but one part of the downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan.

We have worked to decentralize support services to activate the impacts on specific streets and businesses in Whitehorse. We have been working with Whitehorse residents to get access to the community services that they need. We are working diligently to make sure that the services have been provided. I have a long list of things that have been done through this downtown safety plan.

Unfortunately, I think that the member opposite is equating the closure of the library with the support services that are being supplemented and are in addition to the services that are otherwise provided downtown.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, once again, we see this government trying to solve systemic, long-standing problems with short-term solutions. The closures of the library and Safe at Home were known well in advance. There has been more than enough time for this government to make a plan to provide services while these locations are closed. The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter provides an important service to our community, but it cannot meet everyone's needs. People cannot use the shelter as a warming space during the day, nor was the shelter ever intended to fill that purpose. We need a diversity of services that meets the needs of Yukoners, and we know that temporary services with no long-term plan could do more harm than good.

Will the minister tell Yukoners what the long-term, sustainable solution is for people looking for a safe, warm space with access to services, including evenings and weekends?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, in the preamble to that question, I think it said that there was no long-term planning, but the first two questions talked about renovations happening in two different pieces of infrastructure because of long-term planning. When we looked at the potential renovation of the downtown library, we certainly looked at a number of different ways to not have that disruption, but understanding what the leadership at Community Services said, working with Highways and Public Works, it was the appropriate time to get that work done so that we can have it reopened and again be a vital part of our downtown infrastructure.

The second piece of infrastructure that we are talking about is the Safe at Home project. This is one of the most substantial investments for the vulnerable population here in the Yukon that has ever been made. That's because it is a long-term plan. We are looking at almost 70 units to help youth who are aging out of care — something that we didn't have in the Yukon before — and support services for women fleeing violence, especially with their children, so this is long-term planning for the next number of decades.

Other things we are doing is working with the Council of Yukon First Nations on a new project that will be opening soon in the Whistle Bend area, which is something, again, that is for some of the most vulnerable folks in our community. We are continuing to work at 408 and again supporting a number of other decentralizations. Yes, there is short-term and also lots of long-term planning in place.

Question re: Border crossing hours of operation

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear concerns from tourism operators in the Klondike region about the reductions in service at the Yukon-Alaska border on the Top of the World Highway. The border is opening later and closing earlier than it did prior to the pandemic. This means a big hit for tourism operators, as it does shorten the season.

Can the minister tell us what work the Liberal government has done with American and Canadian officials to get the border openings restored to appropriate levels?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. Yes, we do have work that is ongoing, of course. This is Canada Border Services Agency, and it aligns with US Customs and Border Protection, so it is a federal piece of jurisdiction about how long the border crossing will be open.

I think the deputy minister was just up in Dawson a week or two ago meeting with the Klondike Visitors Association and talking about this very issue and has been in touch with Canada Border Services Agency. I will hear soon what the hours or the times will be for the coming year, but we have been in fairly constant contact with the agency to let them know that we are interested to see longer border-crossing times at the Dawson crossing.

Ms. Van Bibber: Earlier this year, the Premier met with the governor of Alaska. Can he tell us if he raised this issue with him, and if so, what was the governor's response?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, yes, absolutely. This was a key part of our conversations. I requested that we have a united front dealing with both the Canadian federal officials as well as the US federal officials on this particular topic. This dialogue is something that is going to continue on through the spring. We want to make sure that we can see an extended season.

We have been able to push to get the season, over the last number of years, back to a little bit later in the fall, but what I also noted is the fact that, with climate change and some of the disruption that we've seen in the past, I think in the long term it's going to be imperative that we also have that ability for potentially an emergency opening in the spring. If we're in a position where we don't have a river crossing, where we have

mudslides, and if we have some real challenges, we need to be able to ensure that those folks on the other side in West Dawson also have the ability to move into the Alaska region.

So, I think that, long term, it's not just about tourism; it is about a vital piece of infrastructure here in the Yukon, and we need to be able to connect to Alaska and we need the support of Alaskan officials, and that's what I asked of the governor.

Question re: Residential lot development

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon continues to experience serious issues with the affordability and availability of homes. One of the biggest choke points is the lack of available residential lots.

Last week, the Minister of Community Services confirmed that, since the last election, the Yukon government has only released less than 250 residential lots. We are now approaching the three-year anniversary of the last election.

Why hasn't the Liberal government released more lots?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about all the work that this government has done and is continuing to do to deliver on lot development in the territory. It is extraordinary — the amount of work that we have done. We are on track to deliver more than 1,000 lots over five years — by fiscal year 2025-26. It is an historic investment in lot development. It came about because the now Premier identified this as an issue in 2017 and had us mobilize in ways that we can actually help address the housing issue in the territory, and we did that work. My predecessor in this role got more housing lots to market than any previous government in history. The department said that they couldn't even do it, and we actually got it out the door.

Not only that, but we are looking at alternate measures as well. We have the historic investment in early learning and childcare — again, another program that this government implemented — because we wanted to get more people into the market — liberate the labour market and make sure that Yukoners living here can go back to work.

So, in addition to all the other solutions that we put on the table, there are other issues as well that we are working on very, very hard to make up for the historic lack of investment in housing — to make it an historic investment. That is what this government is doing.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, many contractors and home builders noticed that the Liberals waited until over a month before the call of the election to do a massive land lottery in January 2021. While they were happy that the government got lots out, they wondered why they sat on those lots and released them all at once.

Can the minister confirm whether they are planning to do something similar next year, or will the government commit to steadily releasing lots in a predictable way so that home builders can make plans to get homes out to market?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I will look back to see what happened in January 2021, but what I can say is that we have always been pressing to try to get lots out as quickly as possible.

Last spring, we released roughly 145 lots. Several of those were townhouse lots and multi-residential development lots in town and 28 of those were outside of the Whistle Bend area. This year, we are looking at trying to get out close to 200 lots. About 130 of those are in Whistle Bend and a little under 70 are across Yukon communities, so we're always putting in a lot of effort to develop lots. One of those lots is 5th and Rogers. It is just one lot, but it's going to provide housing for several hundred folks, so it's an important lot.

These are examples of the lots that Community Services has been doing the work to develop, and Energy, Mines and Resources has been doing the work to release them through lottery to Yukoners.

Question re: Minto mine reclamation

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources regarding the situation at the Minto mine. At two separate briefings, EMR officials informed us that the overall cost estimate for remediation is approximately \$20 million over and above what is currently held in security for the mine. However, during his budget speech, the Minister of Finance said that all the money required for this work is held in security. He said — and I quote: "We are doing everything we can to ensure Yukoners are not left footing the bill for corporate greed and irresponsibility by bad actors."

Can the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources confirm what his officials told us: that we are \$20 million short in funding to remediate Minto? And, if so, why did the Finance minister provide inaccurate information in his Budget Address?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the amount of money that we estimate for the remediation of Minto is very close to the amount of money that we had identified as being needed for the remediation of Minto. Of course, the bond that was held was less than that, so there is a shortfall. We are at all times doing everything we can to bring those costs down to make sure that it is not Yukoners who are left to deal with that remediation. That is exactly correct.

I thank the Minister of Finance for his words during the budget speech. That is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister, during his budget speech, said that we have enough money, but officials and now the minister have confirmed that we are short money. In fact, officials told us that we are \$20 million short for that project.

During the receivership process, one company was identified as a potential purchaser for the Minto mine; however, in a document on the receiver's website, it says — quote: "As at the date of this Third Report, there are still significant issues that remain to be resolved with the Key Stakeholders, which make it unlikely that a definitive agreement can be reached in the near term."

So, can the minister tell us what significant issues remain unresolved for the Yukon government as referenced by the receiver?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the receiver, of course, in this case is PricewaterhouseCoopers, and they are working to find a buyer.

The sorts of things that we have always talked about with the receiver when they have had questions for us: (1) that we want to make sure to use the bond to remediate the site and make sure that we are protecting the environment; (2) that any consideration about future purchasers should be talking very closely with the Selkirk First Nation because, of course, this is on category A land, so it's critically important that they be at the table; and (3) that we consider those creditors who are owed money.

Those are the things that we have always passed across as information to PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Mr. Kent: So, this afternoon, we have established that the Minister of Finance provided inaccurate information during his budget speech, but the report on the receiver's website also states — and I will quote: "... the Receiver plans to terminate the SISP..." — the sale and investment solicitation process — "... and move to actioning alternative methods of realizing on the Property, namely an outright liquidation of all assets."

This was prepared for a court date of this Friday, April 5. So, can the minister advise us if there is any work being done to avoid throwing out the one potential bid and selling all of the mine's assets?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, again, I am not going to speak for PricewaterhouseCoopers. Their process is underway. I have explained in detail what things we have been talking about with the receiver. We always have worked to make sure that we are protecting the environment, that we are looking at a relationship with First Nations and the governance issues, and that we are making sure that those businesses that were shorted as a result of the Minto mine closure are considered so that we can do the best by them as possible.

We will continue to do that work. I will share the member's comments with the department so that if they are talking with PricewaterhouseCoopers, they can pass those across.

I will continue to say that the Minister of Finance had accurate information because it came from the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources around the cleanup of the Minto mine.

I would just like to give a shout-out to Assessment and Abandoned Mines and all of those contractors who have been working to do that work to protect our environment. They have been doing a great job at the Minto site.

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

Notice of opposition private members' business

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, April 3, 2024. They are Bill No. 307, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, and Motion No. 384, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, April 3, 2024. They are Motion No. 905, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge, and Motion No. 775, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

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

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, it is a pleasure to begin Committee of the Whole debate on Bill No. 213, which represents the first appropriation act for the 2024-25 fiscal year or the main estimates for that year. As always, with me today is Deputy Minister of Finance Jessica Schultz, whom I welcome back to the Legislative Assembly to support me for questions during this debate.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I would like to thank Jessica Schultz as well for appearing here today to assist the minister.

At this point, we will not be spending much time in general debate, as we are interested in getting into departments as quickly as possible. So, with that, I will hand the floor over to the Third Party if they have any other questions, and if not, we can proceed into the first department.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause 1. The bill's schedules form part of clause 1. One of those schedules is Schedule A, containing the departmental votes.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Ms. Blake: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources

Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, first of all, I would like to welcome officials who are here to assist us with questions and answers today on the main budget for Energy, Mines and Resources. We have with us the Deputy Minister of EMR, Lauren Haney. We also have the Assistant Deputy Minister of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships, Patricia Randell.

Just a few quick comments and then I will turn it over to opposition MLAs to get to questions and answers. First of all, I just went back and re-read the budget speech, and I am on page 17, so I — maybe the member opposite can help me to know what it is that they are concerned with, but everything in here is correct. I just read it again to be sure. This year, we are planning to spend \$21.5 million on Minto mine remediation. That is what's in the budget, and that is coming from the security bond that we had collected. I will also note that — I have asked for there to be fairly regular briefings on Minto to try to keep the public apprised, and I asked the department as well to make sure — or I offered to opposition members that we brief them as well. So, that is the briefing that the member opposite is talking about — is something that we have made to try to exchange information.

My last comments before I sit down and get to the question-and-answer portion of today — I just want to give a shout-out to the various branches of Energy, Mines and Resources: Agriculture; Assessment and Abandoned Mines; climate change; Energy; our Compliance, Monitoring and Inspections folks; our Forest Management branch; Geothermal and Petroleum Resources branch; Mineral Resources branch; Land Planning; and Land Management. I am so impressed with the work that the department is doing in support of Yukoners and our natural resources, and I just want to make sure that they hear that we really thank them for the work that they are doing.

It doesn't mean that we won't ask for more here and there, but I just really appreciate the work that they have been doing.

Mr. Kent: I would like to welcome the officials here today to support the minister during Committee of the Whole debate and thank them for their briefings on the supplementary estimates and the main estimates and then the other briefing that the minister referred to with respect to the situation at the Minto mine.

So, I guess just to get the minister on the record then, we have been told at two briefings that we are \$20 million short for the overall remediation of the Minto mine. I just want to make sure that number is accurate. That is what we heard at two separate briefings, so I just want to have the minister confirm that for us here today.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, the security that we have totals roughly \$75 million. I think there was \$3 million in cash and \$72 million and change maybe that was in a bond — a surety bond. We now have — I will call it an "early estimate" around the remediation cost. We think that cost is between \$90 million and \$95 million. The difference is in the order of \$20 million. That estimate that we have now on the cost of remediation is very close to the estimate that we had when we first indicated to Minto Metals that we were increasing the level of the bond for the project.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for confirming for us what we heard at the briefing — that the cost estimates to remediate Minto — we are about \$20 million short with what we are holding in bonding and cash security versus what those early cost estimates are at this point.

I'm going to come back to the Minto mine, but I wanted to just ask a few questions with respect to the mandate letter that the minister has. On page 3, it says that — in the Premier's mandate letter, the updated one to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is instructed to work with Natural Resources Canada on the implementation of Canada's Critical Minerals Strategy and consider other made-in-Yukon solutions to expediting the development of the Yukon's critical mineral inventory.

I'm just wondering if the minister can identify the made-in-Yukon solutions that he is considering and when we can expect to see those made public.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There would be a few ways that we're looking at critical minerals. I will start with some specific ones and then I'll move to some more general ones.

Under our Yukon mineral exploration program — the dollars that we use to support exploration — we have a stream that is identified now focusing on critical minerals. I think that we always look at infrastructure that would be necessary for some of these projects, so one of the priorities that we have identified with Canada is energy and grid connect. We also have the Gateway program, which has more on the road side of things, let's say. But those are big moves that we are trying to do in order to improve the access to critical minerals.

I spoke about this in Question Period I think last week, talking about just the more general things that we are doing. For example, we are redoing our minerals legislation in

collaboration with First Nations, trying to modernize the whole system.

There are a few other things that we are working on. Many of them would be general for mining, but some of them are initiated because we see the importance of critical minerals.

Mr. Kent: The minister referenced the Yukon mineral exploration program, or YMEP. Can he tell us if the amount of money is more than it was in last year's budget, or is it the same amount? Was the most recent application process for that program fully subscribed?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The overall amount of the Yukon mineral exploration program is \$1.4 million. It is the same as last year. I will ask the department to get me a sense of the subscription rates. I seem to recall from my notes from last year that it was fully subscribed, but I will check on that.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that. I look forward to getting that information from the minister.

Jumping down — I am now on page 4 of the minister's mandate letter. One of the bullets here says: "Ensure the lines of communication between the Yukon Water Board and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources as the two key regulators are coordinated in a way that reduces redundancy and duplication in the process while also respecting each other's jurisdiction."

I think it was last week that I brought forward some questions in Question Period regarding a Fraser Institute online article that I was reading. In that, it says that investors took a dim view of Yukon's taxation regime and also noted its regulatory duplication. Obviously, this is something that the companies that are surveyed for the Fraser Institute are concerned about. I am just curious if the minister can tell us what work he is doing between the Yukon Water Board and EMR to reduce the redundancy and duplication in the process.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There is work that has been happening across government — Energy, Mines and Resources and the Water Board and also the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board — sort of the three bodies that do assessment work. It's called the "approvals coordination project" and it is to look at where we can find improvements in streamlining, where we can seek to reduce redundancy, and how we can make sure that, if there are requests for information, they are coordinated and they don't have to be duplicated. That group has been meeting to do that work.

Mr. Kent: With respect to that work that the minister just referenced, is there any industry engagement, or is that internal to government? Obviously, the minister mentioned the YESA board as one of the parties. I am just trying to get a sense of who is conducting this work. Has there been any industry engagement on it? I want a sense of where we are at and the timing for when it may be made public, available, or enacted.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I think it has been feedback from industry and First Nations — long-standing feedback that we have had where we have undertaken this work. We haven't been out there engaging on it specifically, but it is as a result of broad engagement that we have done. I would say that in many of my meetings that I have with industry — whether we are talking about specific mines, whether we are

talking about the Chamber of Mines, Klondike Placer Miners' Association, when we are at Roundup, when we are at the Geoscience Forum — this is a topic that we hear about from industry. They have concerns about if there are competing issues on systems and if they are being asked to do things multiple times. This is a fairly consistent concern that is raised, and this is one of those ways in which we are working to try to improve the system. This would not be looking at the legislated side of it but rather at the policy and practice side of it to try to see what we can do directly.

I would think that it is fair to say that I have also had conversations with the Minerals Advisory Board where they have talked about this issue. I am pretty sure — I don't have it off the top of my head, but I am confident that, if I look back at the mineral development strategy, I would have specific recommendations there as well. They come through a range of feedback that we've had from industry, and this is the action as a result of that.

Mr. Kent: So, just to follow up on that a little bit, the minister mentioned that it is not legislative changes that are required for this; it would be — I think that he mentioned "regulatory" — perhaps "policy" changes. I am just trying to get a sense of when we can see some of this work enacted that will reduce redundancy and duplication in the process, and that process is between, of course, the Water Board and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources as the two key regulators.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will just clarify language a bit — sorry, just trying to get the name of it again. The approvals coordination project is really about policy and practice; it is not regulatory; it is not legislative. So, it is just about solutions that they can come up with. The group I think is going to share their findings shortly with I think me and the Premier as Minister of the Executive Council Office. My hope is that we get actionable items this summer or certainly this year.

I also want to indicate that we are working on other fronts as well — under sort of the legislative side of things — to try to get improvements in place, but for the ones that are more of a policy nature, we are hopeful to get at those more quickly.

Mr. Kent: The minister mentioned the involvement of the YESA board — the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. When we were in supplementary debate with the Executive Council Office, the Premier mentioned to me at the time, as I was questioning him about some proposed amendments coming forward from the federal government — I am wondering if the minister is aware of those, and when can we expect to see them out for some sort of industry engagement or a public engagement?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: If I can just back up to the mineral exploration program, it was fully subscribed last year. The applications are closing today, I think, for this coming year. Last year, we awarded 43 projects. We have had just under 60 projects submitted so far, but we haven't hit the end of the day, so maybe there will be a couple more. Anyway, that's sort of the overview of the mineral exploration program.

Yes — on to the question about the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment oversight group — I will just call it “the oversight group” here for Hansard.

We have, of course, been working with the First Nations on this. I know we did some consultations about a year and a half ago about this. I think the main lead on this is the Executive Council Office, but I could check in with the Premier about the intentions of further engagement.

Just in terms of the timing, this is the sort of thing that comes before federal Parliament. That’s where the legislation sits — even though it is a tripartite piece of legislation developed with the Yukon government, First Nation governments, and the federal government, it is the federal government that will bring that forward.

Mr. Kent: We will follow up with the Premier when we get to Executive Council Office in the mains just to get a sense if there is any more information on that particular issue.

The minister just responded that the Yukon mineral exploration program was fully subscribed and closing today. It sounds like there will be more applications available. Just hearing from a number of people in the industry, the markets are pretty tough right now for raising money, so I’m just kind of curious why the minister wouldn’t have increased the funding for that particular program. That is one of the levers that the government has to increase mineral exploration, so I’m just curious why they have decided to freeze the money at last year’s levels in this current fiscal year.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I have asked the department to just give me a sense, once we get those applications, of what we’re looking at in terms of asks.

You know, if I saw that there was an opportunity to meet higher demand that was out there, you know, I could obviously take that back to Cabinet to reconsider the dollar amount, but it looks like it is sort of matching the demand roughly in terms of the application that we get. This year, the number of applications that we have had is very similar to the number that we had last year.

I will make one comment. I remember that I was at the Geoscience Forum when we were giving out some of the awards — we were not giving them out; I just happened to be there as the awards were being given out, but I do recall the comments made around the exploration program. They gave a big shout-out to the Yukon mineral exploration program — sorry, the exploration award was being given out. There was praise given toward this exploration program — of course, I’m sure it’s fair to say that every program would like to get more funding all of the time, but, of course, we are always balancing that out with priorities of the government. As we laid out in the budget speech, the main priorities for Yukoners were around our health care system, education, housing — those were the main priorities. So, the budget for Energy, Mines and Resources is not significantly increased. There are some differences, of course, because of things like Minto, but generally, the project has been doing well.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, I believe that at the Geoscience banquet, it was the individual who won Prospector of the Year who remarked on how important that program is —

the YMIP program — and we agree. It has been around for a long time. I think it goes back to the NDP government of the late 1990s. It has been changed, of course. It has undergone some changes since then and a name change, I think, but it has been a very successful program over the years and has led to some significant discoveries that we are seeing advanced and potentially becoming mines.

I guess — I mean, the concern that I have — and I mentioned it in Question Period last week — is that, in this calendar year, according to Natural Resources Canada, the Yukon’s share of the national expenditures on exploration will be 3.6 percent, and that is down from 7.7 percent in 2017 — again, trying to find ways for the government to use the levers that they have.

That’s why I asked why this amount of funding for this program was frozen at the same level as last year, as this is one of the ways we could perhaps address that significant decline in the share of overall expenditures in the country. That said, the minister I believe said that if there are additional resources required, he may go to his Cabinet or Management Board colleagues and seek those resources once he gets a better handle on what the applications are looking like for the program.

I want to jump down with one more question regarding the mandate letter. Again, I’m still on page 4, and the minister has been asked by the Premier to research potential models to establish a made-in-Yukon carbon credit program. I am curious if the minister can comment on the support work that Energy, Mines and Resources is providing to Executive Council Office on that and maybe explain what potential models we are looking at to establish this program.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, first off, I know that there has been some analysis work done. I am looking at my mandate letter as well. The lead is the Executive Council Office, and we are supporting and so is the Department of Finance, for that matter.

I have talked to some of the researchers about this and heard their thoughts about it. I would have to check with the Premier about when we anticipate starting to share back — or when there will be something that is reportable back to the Yukon, but I know that work has been underway — let’s say that.

With respect to mining expenditures — I just want to note again that what the member opposite is talking about is a projection. It is not yet something that has come to pass, so I want to be a little bit careful about this. When I heard about — saw — the Natural Resources Canada projection, I did ask the department to give me their sense about what they project or their sense around exploration expenditures for the Yukon. We will see. I note for us that, over the past several years, our average in expenditures — so, 2021 was \$124 million; in exploration, 2022, \$125 million; last year, 2023, it was \$147 million. So, we are averaging a little over \$130 million a year. That has been pretty good.

I note for the record that under the member opposite, under their government, in their final three years, exploration expenditures were \$125 million, \$91 million, and \$100 million — so, averaging around \$105 million or something like that.

It has been good here in the territory. We will, of course, keep looking to support exploration, but I don't have information yet in front of me that is giving me a sense of what the issues are around exploration, so I will continue to talk to the department to see what they feel the situation is looking like and, for that matter, ask them to talk to Natural Resources Canada to assess how they came up with their assessment or their projection.

Mr. Kent: Just to clarify, the numbers aren't the overall numbers; it is the percentage share of the entire envelope of exploration dollars being spent in Canada that I was talking about. The numbers that we have from NRCan show that number is down to 3.6 percent of overall expenditures, and in 2017, it was 7.7 percent. So, we are losing ground on exploration expenditures compared to the rest of the country, and I think that was one of the concerns that was flagged to me by an individual who works in the industry. When I asked those questions of the minister last week, he mentioned that, when he saw the NRCan numbers, he did ask the department what their sense is for this year, so I am not sure if he provided — or if he is still waiting for that response, but maybe I will give him a chance to answer. What did the department say their sense is for the exploration expenditures this year?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, Madam Chair, still waiting for that response, and I will also say that — at least what I saw from NRCan, whether it is as a percentage of an overall pie or not, it is still a projection. It is not numbers that have happened; it is what they are estimating will happen.

In terms of overall expenditures, if I look back to 2017, our expenditure or what we measured the expenditure to be on exploration here in the territory was \$149 million. Last year, in 2023, it was \$147 million. That looks pretty steady to me.

It may be that other places are doing different things; that is always possible, and power to them if they are looking at more work around mineral exploration and/or critical minerals. I think that's important. We are continuing to support exploration here in the territory. We feel that we have a very strong geologic regime and lots of opportunity. I think that we have a different perspective than the members of the Yukon Party about what that looks like, but I think that we both agree that mining is an important part of our economy, and I think that we both agree that mining is an important part of the transition away from fossil fuels, because we will need critical minerals for that.

One more thing I'll add is that the Minister of Finance flagged for me that late last week the feds announced that the 15-percent mineral exploration tax credit is being extended another year to March 31, 2025. I anticipate that this will be received as a positive piece of news for the industry.

Mr. Kent: I guess just for the minister, going back to 2017, our overall share of exploration expenditures in the country was 7.7 percent, and then it has trended downward. I will get the numbers for the minister — the number that I mentioned of 3.6 for this year is, as the minister said, an estimate at this point. He's not able to give me an answer yet as to what the department's sense is for this year, so we'll have to wait and see when we get that.

I guess the easiest way to explain it is that the exploration expenditure pie in the country is getting bigger and our slice of that pie is getting smaller. That's where we are seeing concerns and what we have heard from industry representatives, and I think that it is reflected in the Fraser Institute's online article that I referenced last week as well.

I do want to jump over to an issue surrounding mining within municipal boundaries. I am going to reference a CBC article dated January 8, 2024 in which the minister said that, on December 2, he met with members of the Association of Yukon Communities to discuss territorial legislation being developed to address mining within municipalities. The article goes on to say that: "Over the past few years, the Yukon government has been engaging with both residents and municipal leaders on the issue. The aim is to find ways to preemptively address land use conflicts and incorporate community values into the permit decision-making process."

Now, in the fall of 2022, the Yukon government went out and engaged Yukoners on a framework for mining within municipalities. I haven't seen any documents since that engagement closed, so I'm wondering if the minister can give us a sense of when we will have an opportunity to see the results of that engagement with Yukoners on mining within municipalities and whether or not he is waiting, as he mentioned to members of AYC, for the territorial legislation — the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act* — to make changes that will address mining within municipal boundaries.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will just try to make sure to set the record straight. The Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and I did meet with the Association of Yukon Communities and did talk to them directly about this issue, so I am not sure about the news article, but I will just say that the things we talked about were tools that we could work with right now and are at our disposal to assist municipalities in how they would like to do planning and zoning within their communities. We talked about being supportive of municipalities if they wished to look at, for example, exclusion zones — because that is what is reflected under their official community plan — and how we could work with them. I think that our plans are to be reaching back out to them again, I am hopeful, over the summer. I am well aware that the Association of Yukon Communities will have its annual general meeting coming up around Mother's Day, so I am cognizant of that time frame. If we can make that time frame, that would be great, because it is always a good time to meet with communities when we are there.

When I was with the Association of Yukon Communities, I did give them an update on new minerals legislation. I explained that it was also happening and, as it unfolded, we would seek ways in which to get municipal feedback into that process, but the work that we were talking about — the mining and municipalities piece — could proceed ahead of that new minerals legislation work. That was the discussion that I had with communities.

There were several questions and answers that went back and forth with members of the Association of Yukon Communities. I am not sure that I am going to be able to

recollect all things, but I could go back and try to check our notes just to see, but that is the gist of the conversation that we had.

Mr. Kent: I just sent the article that I was referencing over to the minister for his reference. It did mention that the minister talked to AYC on December 2 about how legislation could help to address mining within municipalities. If that article is incorrect, perhaps the minister can let us know that. But the other issue that I'm hoping that the minister can address is the consultation on the framework for mining in municipalities that took place in 2022. When can we expect to see any results or a "what we heard" document or some sort of documentation on the results of that consultation that took place a year and a half ago?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I thank the member for sharing the article with me; I've just had a quick read of it. I agree with everything that is in that article. The timing for the framework — my hope is, as I just said, this summer. That is my hope, but my next step is to turn back to Cabinet to get permission. That step is being worked on right now. Yes, I am hopeful that I can get back to municipalities this summer.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, just to clarify — so, the minister is seeking permission from his Cabinet colleagues to release a "what we heard" document with respect to this framework?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: No, it's not a "what we heard" document per se; it's around next steps with the whole of the framework and engagement with municipalities. There is a Cabinet table called the Cabinet Committee on Priorities and Planning, and before I go and engage broadly with municipalities, I would need to turn to that group first.

Mr. Kent: I'm just curious: Is there is a "what we heard" document available for that framework that was consulted on through Engage Yukon? Does that exist? If so, I haven't seen it in a public sphere anywhere, but if it does exist, I would be happy if the minister could direct me to it so I can direct constituents and other interested parties to it.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I haven't seen a "what we heard"; I will check in with the department as to whether there is an intention to have one.

Mr. Kent: I will look forward to hearing back from the minister with respect to that type of documentation. As I mentioned, the engagement closed in October 2022, and we haven't really seen or heard anything with respect to that engagement since that time.

I do want to jump back to the Minto mine for a moment or two. I am just curious: Of the \$21.5 million, I believe, that has been budgeted for that in these main estimates, can the minister give us a breakdown of the contracts that have been awarded so far and how the procurement process worked for those contracts?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The constituent components of the budget for this year are tenders for site operations, environmental monitoring. We did some direct-award remediation for earthworks. There is a purchase of fuel. Those are the key elements of the budget.

Mr. Kent: I mentioned this to officials at the Minto mine briefing that was provided to us — that there are a number of concerns by contractors in the community with respect to the procurement process for some of the larger contracts at Minto mine. I'm just wondering if the minister can tell us how those larger contracts were procured and why the decision to procure them in that manner was made.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Really, it's about timing. Some of the work we need to get started, for example, this month. If we didn't have the appropriate preparation time in order to get a competitive bid tender package in place, then we did consider direct awards. Some of these are competitive tenders — for example, the site operations and environmental monitoring. We are working to get them all toward competitive tenders, but there have been challenges in the timeline, effectively.

The fuel was also a competitive tender. The earthworks was not. I don't know what I said when I rose last, but that was with the Selkirk First Nation development corporation, and they subcontracted some of that work out. I will just note as well that this work is happening on category A land, so our sense is that, if we were going to direct award, I would ask that we talk with the development corporation of Selkirk.

I have indicated to the department that they need to move toward competitive bid contracts. That is a goal that we all agree with. It was just a question of timing for this spring.

Mr. Kent: Again, we are hearing concerns from contractors who weren't invited to put forward a proposal or a bid. Some of the ones are around the earthworks. The minister mentioned that contract was managed by the Selkirk Development Corporation.

We have heard that there was direction given to the development corporation from EMR officials with respect to the awarding of that contract. I am just curious if the minister can tell us if there was any direction given to the Selkirk Development Corporation with respect to the earthworks contract on who should or should not be awarded the contract.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am not aware of any direction that came from the Yukon government. Certainly, I did not ask for any direction to be given. The type of direction that I have given is around the question of protecting the environment — that's basically it. It's how to make sure that we move ahead with remediation in such a way as to ensure that there isn't environmental degradation on-site or there at the Minto mine site and that we work to use the bond to do that remediation work.

I have asked that we be in contact at all times with the First Nation to keep them apprised of our intentions and our activity. I have asked them to flag if we hear any concerns. I have done my best to stay in touch with the Chief of the Selkirk First Nation, and so, I reach out occasionally just to make sure that we are on the same page.

Mr. Kent: Just to be clear with the minister, there was no direction from him or officials with respect to the creditors list as far as awarding contracts when they were talking with the Selkirk Development Corporation? He has indicated that there wasn't any direction, so I just wanted to make sure, because we are hearing conflicting reports from some of the

individuals in the industry. I just wanted to give the minister an opportunity to clarify that.

He has mentioned as well that he is now going forward. The plan is to go to competitive tender, so I'm curious as to how he will deal with the competitive advantage that the contractor that has their equipment on-site will inherently get as they are bidding for future contracts on earthworks.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, first of all, when we started the very initial work on-site, we did sort of list out a series of ways in which we were considering projects, and at that point, we did talk about if there was a creditor who had been affected by the closure of the mine, if there was a way to support them, then that was a consideration.

Again, I am not aware of any direction that was given — sorry, specifically on the earthworks direct award to the Selkirk First Nation development corporation, I am not aware of any direction that was given by the department to the Selkirk First Nation development corporation, but I will — I have just asked the deputy minister that we check in and just look deeper to see if there was anything said or how that unfolded.

Finally, I will give an example. When we made our first direct-award contract as we took over the site, it was to JDS engineering because they had been on-site, so there was an advantage to them in familiarity of the site, and we needed to get moving quickly.

Then, after there was some time — and this was still a direct award — we went with another company, Boreal Engineering. That's an example where, even though there was a company that was there and which did have some — you could say — advantage — although it could also be advantage to the Yukon in the sense that they have that experience — there is an example where it didn't continue in that path.

I think that we are doing our best to balance the need for a competitive and fair process. There is a way in which we will try to do that as we transition to a more competitive process. We do always try to consider the fairness question, but really, our goal has to be to get to a competitive process in order to ensure that the field is as level as possible for all potential contractors.

Mr. Kent: I guess we will see what happens with the process as we move further into the fiscal year. Again, as I mentioned, these are questions that are coming to us from the contracting community.

I did want to ask the minister quickly about an issue I raised in Question Period today, and that is the receivership. When the receiver, PricewaterhouseCoopers, went through the initial process, there were a number of bids submitted. They believed that there was one bidder that met the criteria, so they were focusing in on a term sheet, but as I mentioned, a document that I found on their website has them preparing just because of irreconcilable differences with the stakeholders — which I assume are Selkirk First Nation and Yukon government — and that they are moving toward liquidating all of the assets at the site. I believe they are going to court this Friday seeking approval.

I asked the minister during Question Period if the government is working at all with the receiver and the Selkirk

First Nation, and if so, what are they doing with respect to trying to avoid this situation — where we don't have to liquidate all of the assets, where the possibility that a potential buyer is emerging is considered?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I want to be really careful here. This is a process, a receivership process. It is underway. It is being led — the receiver is PricewaterhouseCoopers. They are the ones holding the mine licences right now — the quartz mining licence and the water licence. I have been informed that they have indicated that they will be back in court I think for sharing some information this coming Friday. I don't want to prejudge what they are doing, and I'm not even sure that it's my place to speak about it. We have always — when we have talked with the receiver — indicated that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is seeking to do this remediation work and wants to be careful to protect the bond that is in place to do that remediation work — so effectively making sure that the environment is safe, that we care about the Selkirk First Nation and we think that they should be listened to as this is category A land, and that we care about creditors. Other than that, I don't want to get into the process that is before the court at the moment other than to give the high-level sense of, yes, we have been in dialogue with the receiver, but it is not a process that we are leading.

Mr. Kent: The document that I was referencing is publicly available on the receiver's website and that is why I referenced it. They talk about the challenges they are seeing with respect to the process of perhaps selling the assets to a third party but mention that there are challenges with the stakeholders. I don't want to belabour it, but I will let the minister have a look at the document that I referenced today in Question Period and again now so that he can get a sense of some of the urgency around this. Obviously, he has mentioned that, at this point with cost estimates, we are \$20 million short for what is owed. We don't want to jeopardize the bonding or the remediation, but we are going to have to come up with at least \$20 million, I would suggest, depending on when the activity is undertaken, to cover off the remediation at that mine site.

I did just want to ask one quick question. I brought it up at the Minto briefing, so this is where I will raise it — with respect to a contribution agreement to the Ross River Dena Council to support a contractor who ended up being the CEO of the development corporation, Dena Nezziddi Development Corporation, in Ross River. The contribution agreement was signed on February 7, 2021, I think. The minister provided me with a copy of it last week in a letter. This previous fiscal year, 2023-24, would have been the last year of the contribution agreement. I am just wondering if it has been renewed. Then, a question that I asked at the Minto briefing was — this is funding for a CEO of a First Nation development corporation. Was that funding offer extended to other First Nations to support the wages for the CEOs of their development corporations? If it wasn't, I am just curious why that was an exclusive offer for Ross River Dena Council and the Dena Nezziddi CEO.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: My understanding is that this was about capacity building, and the nation talked to us and

identified where they could be supported around capacity building. We issued these contracts. There is no intention to renew the contract, as I understand it, at this time.

If other nations came to us and presented a case where they were looking for support from a capacity perspective, I think that we would always consider those.

Every nation is on their own journey, and I think that there are different things that they would identify as being their priorities. I think that work is always ongoing.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that from the minister. Perhaps as MLAs we will have a chance to reach out to First Nations that we represent and see if they want some assistance from the government, similar to the assistance provided to the Ross River Dena Council for capacity for their development corporation. I appreciate the minister agreeing to consider those other First Nations that are looking at getting similar funding agreements for their development corporations.

I do want to ask the minister about successor mining legislation — the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act*. The rewrites have been underway. It was part of the original 2021 confidence and supply agreement. I know that the work has continued. I'm just wondering if the minister can comment on where we're at with respect to the mineral legislation. Does he have a date when he is anticipating seeing it come to the floor of the House or a date when he is anticipating further public consultation on the legislation?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite if he is interested to talk to First Nations and to mention that we are in support of capacity building. I didn't say that it would be this exact contract or not; what I said was that if there are ways in which we can support capacity, I think that we are always interested in having those conversations directly with nations. It is not typically going to be Energy, Mines and Resources; it is going to be Aboriginal Relations that does that work.

With respect to new minerals legislation, we are in the thick of it, for sure. There have been steering committee meetings — and when I reference the “steering committee”, I am talking about governments across the board sitting down and, at the request of nations, we are dealing with the toughest of the issues. We are trying to tackle the hard ones: remediation, mineral disposition, and securities — questions like that.

I know that the team tells me that they are good conversations or productive conversations, but I also know that these are hard topics and that we are working heavily through it. That is the current situation — sorry if I missed a question — well, I'm sure that the member will just remind me, but that is where we are at right now.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, yes, it was just a timing question with respect to when we can anticipate the rewrites to be, first of all, available for further public consultation and then, of course, tabled in the Legislature.

I want to take the minister to page 9-11 of the main estimates. Under “Operation and Maintenance,” the Yukon Geological Survey for this year — the estimate is \$6.583 million. Comparing mains to mains, last year, it was \$7.294 million, so I'm just wondering if the minister can explain that mains-to-mains decrease for the Yukon Geological

Survey, as that is another important organization that can provide some geological information when helping the private sector or, of course, a bunch of work around land use planning and other initiatives that are underway.

Sorry — just to jump back to that contribution agreement for the Ross River Dena Council to support the CEO of their development corporation, the minister mentioned when he was on feet that, of course, that would be through Aboriginal Relations. I'm just curious: Then why was this specific contract done through Energy, Mines and Resources? I recognize that the minister wasn't the minister; it was about a month prior to the last election when this was signed off on. I'm just curious why that one went through EMR, but future ones would have to go to ECO and Aboriginal Relations.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, the reason for EMR being the ones to lead on this contract was because it had to do — earlier on, when we still had responsibility for the Faro site, I think that was the starting point. Then afterward, it was around the Vangorda site, so they were things that had specifically to do with Energy, Mines and Resources. I think that is the “why”.

Again, I will just indicate to the members opposite that this was at the request of the nation themselves. That's what they gave us as a request. Second of all, in terms of timing with respect to the new minerals legislation — I know that we hoped to have another “what we heard” report out this year at some point. As indications say, the folks are working hard on the framework of the legislation. It is a tough, robust conversation that is underway right now.

Then, with respect to the mains over mains from this year compared to last year for the Geological Survey, there was time-limited funding from Natural Resources Canada on geothermal and permafrost research work that ended last year. That work has been completed, so that's why the change. Although I will note that the Geological Survey is looking to see if they can get further federal funds for other research initiatives coming up. So, I may be back if we get any further research under Natural Resources Canada's programs.

Mr. Kent: I guess when we are reaching out to First Nations about potential contribution agreements, we will let them know that, if it is specific to mining issues, they can go to Energy, Mines and Resources, as the minister mentioned in his comments.

I have a couple of questions on energy-related issues. The minister did a ministerial statement recently with respect to electrification. Looking at the most recent annual report for *Our Clean Future*, it looks like our overall non-mining emissions in 2021 have ticked up one percent over the 2010 levels. Of course, the target as set out in the *Clean Energy Act* is a 45-percent reduction by 2030.

The minister has some fairly aggressive goals in the document. One of them is — and again, looking at a graph, it doesn't say the numbers, but I think that we are supposed to be close to 1,000 electric vehicles on the road by this year. I think that right now we are just a little bit over 300, so I am trying to get a sense for how many more vehicles the minister is targeting for this year to get to that overall 4,800 goal, what the budget is

for the subsidies to reach that goal in this calendar year, and where I can find that within the budget documents.

Then, finally, I know that we have 19 level 2 chargers — I think the minister mentioned during his statement — and the goal is for 200 by 2030, but the budget documents show a decrease of \$1.5 million for *Our Clean Future* initiatives, and it says that it is mainly due to time-limited funding being removed — CIRNAC, which is a federal funding organization, their allocation and Yukon level 2 electric vehicle charging station deployment.

I guess the question for the minister is: Are we on track to meet the goals for this fiscal year with respect to level 2 charging stations, and are we on track to — again, it is not a specific number, but the graph certainly suggests that we are looking at about 1,000 electric vehicles on the road, so another 650 to go, I would assume, in this calendar year. And then where can we find the line item to subsidize those 650 vehicles? I believe that the subsidy is \$5,000 per vehicle, so I am just curious where in the budget that we can find that.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There were a few questions in there. If I miss any, I would encourage the member opposite to get back up.

In 2023, electric vehicle sales were 6.1 percent of overall sales, so I think that is moving toward our goal of 10 percent by 2025.

Second of all, we are at 63 level 2 chargers that are in. We have just under 20 level 3 chargers. The 63 — our target is 200. I am trying to get a sense of that timeline. We are trying to get that done by the end of this fiscal year, so we have a year to do that work, but we have a program out there incentivizing them, so we will see how we do there. The department is indicating to me that we have a bunch of them in the planning works right now.

Where is this all in the budget? I will have to grab the budget document, but it would be found under Energy, Mines and Resources and Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships. Then it's under the line Operation and Maintenance, Vote 53-1, under Energy. Our estimate for this year is \$16.7 million, so that's the place where that sits.

Finally, just a comment on greenhouse gas emissions. Yes, they are up one percent over last year, but the population of the territory grew much more than one percent. Our GDP grew much more than one percent. Those are strong indications that we're starting to have GDP growth without having emissions growth. I believe that's what I said when the Minister of Environment and I met with the media to announce the *Our Clean Future* next round of work.

I will just indicate back — as we talk about capacity-building for nations, if there are issues around mining, yes, of course, I do wish for First Nations to talk to us, Energy, Mines and Resources. It's great if they talk to us as a government. That is great.

Faro itself is — I don't know — a \$1-billion cleanup. There is a lot of activity that is going to be happening there. Yes, the nation did ask us for a bit of support and, yes, we agreed to provide that support.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, just before the break, I just wanted to clarify something with the minister. He referenced that he and the Environment minister, at their briefing with respect to the *Our Clean Future* annual report, referenced per capita amounts with respect to the greenhouse gas emissions. I just want to make sure that, when it comes to the *Clean Energy Act*, it is an overall 45-percent reduction — there is no “per capita”. The legislation that we passed in this Legislature, which the governing Liberals and the New Democrats voted in favour of, re-set the target from 30 percent to 45 percent, but that is an overall target. I want to make sure that the minister can confirm for us that it is a straight target and nothing to do with per capita emissions.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I will respond to the question, but I want to back up for a second. Earlier, I had been discussing where in the budget we can find the level 2 chargers, and I gave incorrect information. The actual line item is on budget page 9-17, and it is under the energy rebate program — various recipients — for \$6.4 million. So, that is the line item where the level 2 chargers are coming from.

Yes, the target for the Yukon is an absolute target, meaning that it's not based on per capita. I wasn't actually referencing per capita. What I was saying is that, when you're looking to see how your greenhouse gas reduction programs are being effective or not, one of the first places you look is to try to see whether you have growth without a growth in emissions. Growth in this case could be both that the territory is growing and/or that our GDP — gross domestic product — is growing, and we have been seeing that. That is a positive indication that we're starting to decouple the growth of the economy with the emissions of the Yukon.

The member is correct; these are absolute targets for the whole of the Yukon except for our mining intensity targets.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, and I appreciate that. I will look back at the Blues, because I thought the minister was referencing the per capita emissions before the break. I stand to be corrected if that is not the case, but again, I will review the Blues.

I just want to jump over to a couple of other issues. The first is a constituency issue for me with respect to the Golden Horn area development regulations. The government is out for a second time right now consulting on minimum lot sizes. I heard from a constituent last week and again over the weekend with the methodology of those consultations. I just wanted to make sure that — you know, there are a number of individuals who might be renting properties in there, but I wanted to make

sure that, first, the owners of those properties would be weighted higher when analyzing the data. The second issue is: If there is a renter on a property, I wanted to make sure that the survey was going out to the registered owner as well — so if the minister can confirm that for me, that would be great.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, I will just make a note for folks here that the deputy minister has offered to recuse herself on this specific topic given that it's one of her family members who has been alerting me to the fact that there have been some concerns regarding how we were talking with the residents of Golden Horn.

First of all, I want to note that when we did the engagement last time — basically, it was a 50/50 split, so I asked the department to go back and redo that work. I am interested to hear what renters think, but what I really think we need to know is what the people who live there and who own properties think, because this is a question about their properties and what it will look like as a community. When I received those concerns, I definitely flagged them right away — that moment — to the department to express that this needed to be done well to make sure that we heard from the residents of Golden Horn. At first, I didn't realize that I had been passing across comments from a family member to the deputy minister, so it was afterward that it was pointed out to me that it was the situation, so we pulled the deputy minister out of that comment.

We definitely want to hear from the property owners in Golden Horn.

Mr. Kent: I'm just wondering if the minister can tell us when he anticipates the survey results to be finalized and some sort of indication if the government has a threshold in mind. He mentioned that it was pretty much an even split last time, so is there a threshold in mind for moving forward with what was requested, I believe, in a petition that I tabled here in the Legislature a while back and then was the subject of the consultation?

I did want to jump over to an agriculture question. In late August — August 30, 2021 — the Government of Yukon put out a press release saying that they were increasing their purchases of locally produced food. In the facts section of that news release, it says that the Government of Yukon spends approximately \$3 million annually on groceries, food, and associated food preparation and serving supplies through various services such as continuing care facilities, correctional facilities, education and school programs, wildfire camps, and more.

I'm not sure if the minister is aware of the amount spent on local food products this year by the Government of Yukon. I spoke to one individual who told me that it was around \$30,000, which is only one percent of the \$3 million that the government spends annually. I'm just wondering if the minister is concerned about this. This has been a program that has been in place for three years. This is the final year of the three-year pilot project, it says, so I'm just curious why we haven't been able to do better when it comes to purchases of locally produced food for government facilities — if the minister could shine some light on that with respect to those very low numbers that we're hearing about.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will provide a few comments here and then we will see if there are more questions. I am endeavouring to get a little bit more information for the member opposite.

First of all, I have met directly with the members of the Yukon Agricultural Association and we have flagged this as a concern. We tried to dig in to see what the barriers are that are there and why we are not able to get more uptake. What I drew from that conversation is that it can be very specific to — I won't belabour it here, but there was a detailed conversation about what was happening within the places where the food was going. We felt that it was right down to the level of the head chef and things like that, so we talked about solutions to try to find ways to get over those barriers.

Second, we identified a couple of other opportunities around, for example, being supportive of other large purchasers. In this case, the suggestion was that I talk to mines, so I have reached out to a couple of groups to talk about the potential of them considering local purchase in their procurement. So, we will be supportive on that front, but that wouldn't change this number because this number has to do with government procurement.

Then, finally, going back to the earlier question on Golden Horn and the zoning regulations there, we haven't indicated a threshold. What I said when I met with — I attended an evening session when our land use planning folks met with members of the community — that if things come back again where it is split — and I think basically that what we should say as a government is that you need to have a clear indication that you should change something. So, we shouldn't go changing it if it is still a 50/50 split, but if it does come back again where it is divided, I think that we need to put things to a decision to allow the committee to move on, but we will always remain open if people can present a sense that there is interest to change things.

Right now, what I have asked is that we make sure to get the outreach around that engagement — that survey, that opportunity for residents — corrected so that we hear back from residents directly.

Mr. Kent: Again, on the local food purchasing, the quote from the minister in August of 2021 was that supporting local food is a win-win for our health, our environment, and our economy by encouraging Government Services to source more of their food from local farms, producers, and businesses: "... we are increasing market opportunities for local producers, improving our food security, contributing to our local economy and reducing our reliance on food shipped into the territory."

Again, that was the quote from the press release by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I was shocked to hear that the number is \$30,000 — I think just over \$30,000 — of \$3 million in annual expenditures. So, I am curious what the minister thinks of this pilot program, if it has been a success, because all indications are that it hasn't up to this point, and now, it sounds like he's going out to other businesses — the mining sector — and trying to convince them to buy local food when essentially the minister's own house isn't really in order with respect to these purchases.

That said, Madam Chair, I do want to turn the floor over to my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King, the Leader of the NDP, to ask questions. I do have a number of other questions. If we don't get a chance to get back to Energy, Mines and Resources, I will submit a letter or a written question to the minister at the end of the current Sitting.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I apologize because I missed the very last thing that the member said, so if I have missed something, I will just ask.

The note that I have right now — and what I am asking the department just to run to ground — is that, to date, our initiative has us at \$325,000 in purchasing commitments. The member opposite has a different number, so I am asking the department to please confirm that. I am also asking Highways and Public Works to confirm it.

I will run it to ground, and all of those things that the member just stood up and said about the wins that we get from local food production — I completely agree with all of those. It is important to do this, and that's why this is an ongoing dialogue with the Yukon Agricultural Association.

By the way, work around working with industry is not instead of this; it's as well as this. These should be seen as compatible actions — not a replacement action.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for carrying the afternoon so far, and I am delighted to be here, of course, with the minister and his officials today to discuss Energy, Mines and Resources.

I just want to jump right into the battery project. I did some access to information requests, and you often get interesting information, and sometimes you don't get any information at all.

In ATIPP 23-388 — and it was about the battery bidder matrix — the successful bidder had the lowest scoring product across the board. It was lowest in energy storage solution; it was lowest — actually, no, it was equivalent to another one on power plant control system. It was the lowest in the “balance of plant”. Schedule A, it met suitability, and it was the lowest, but then they were the highest in the lowest cost, so they came forward with the lowest cost. So, lower in everything else, including — well, I guess they scored lower in everything else, and I guess they were also lower in cost, because they had the lowest cost at the time.

One of the questions I have is: With that cheaper price, is that one of the reasons for the delay? Is it because it was being sourced in such a way to keep that price low?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will work to get a bit of an answer for the member opposite today, but this is really pushing me into the Yukon Development Corporation folks, so I will do my best to get an answer today. I will also turn back to the Development Corporation to confirm.

I do believe that the price was a big part of that project, and what I can say is that the longer supply time has been the case with almost every energy project that I've seen — windmills, solar, normal transformers on our regular system, diesels. There is a lot of movement happening around electricity generation nationally, and that is elongating timelines. So, that is my biggest understanding about what contributed to the delay, but

I will turn back to the Energy Corporation and the Development Corporation to ask them for some more specific details.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that and look forward to getting some clarity. Perhaps when he is asking that question, he can find out in the schedule what it means by “schedule of suitability”. The company that got the contract scored the lowest mark across in the schedule of suitability, so if he could bring back an answer as to what that is, I would appreciate it.

Another one — ATIPP 23-261, on page 626, talks about geothermal legislation. It talks about consultation with First Nations. I believe that there is a possibility that my colleague touched on it, but I'm wondering what is going on right now with consultation with First Nations around geothermal legislation as per ATIPP 23-261 on page 626.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I thank the member opposite for the specific question about the battery project. I will try to get that. You know, I just have to say that I don't see — I'm not provided with ATIPPs that are provided to opposition parties, so you know, that reference is not a reference that I'm able to look up. But that's okay; I'm happy to get the questions that are here and share the information that I can and have.

With respect to geothermal, we have been doing sort of the starting steps of it, for example, policy research and jurisdictional scan on geothermal. We have had initial meetings with First Nations and committed to working with them on it. It wasn't listed under the devolution transfer agreement as one of the pieces of successor legislation, but we see it as very related because it is a piece of natural resources legislation.

Of course, we are well underway on both successor minerals legislation, which will be both for the placer and quartz mining acts, and we are underway on lands legislation. So, it is in a busy queue — let's say that. The work that I was talking about earlier when we were discussing the Yukon Geological Survey was done in collaboration with several First Nations on their traditional territories — Liard First Nation, Klucane First Nation, Teslin Tlingit Council, and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

The initial steps have been undertaken, and if nations came to us and said that, yes, this is our priority, then we would certainly take that into consideration. We are working with the same group of people typically — it's the lands folks across nations — so we already have quite a bit on their plates right now.

Ms. White: I guess I look forward to more information about geothermal. When we talk about hitting *Our Clean Future* targets and looking at alternatives to heating — I think the minister might have actually been on city council at the time, but Whistle Bend won a design neighbourhood award for their geothermal district heating model that they never used. It didn't go anywhere.

So, there was an opportunity to have the biggest neighbourhood in Whitehorse heated in a sustainable way; it would have kept costs down; it would have been very, very green. People could argue with me and say that it's electric and that's green, but I will say that we're having a hard time keeping

up with generation. So, it's green, but it could be greener, and it could have been through geothermal. I think that there is real potential there. I mean, the Eclipse Nordic Hot Springs is just an example — as are other hot springs in the territory — that geothermal exists and we should have access to it. I look forward to more information about that.

My colleague asked about zero-emission cars, but I'm more curious about how many medium- and heavy-duty vehicles so far have been registered in the territory and how many of those belong to the Yukon government.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will work to get the numbers. I know that I have just seen it recently and we are trying to find them within all of our paperwork.

I do have some information because Highways and Public Works has been doing some of this for its own fleet vehicles: In 2022, a dozen plug-in hybrid SUVs; last year, 13 gas hybrid pickup trucks; two full-battery/electric pickup trucks were delivered and are in use; three battery/electric cargo vans; and 15 full battery/electric compact SUVs. There are a bunch within our own fleet.

So, 16 medium- and heavy-duty zero-emission vehicles are registered in the Yukon. That is the number so far, but we just put out the announcement for rebates for more of those, so we think that this will incentivize.

The other thing I want to talk about is around geothermal legislation. Geothermal — I don't think we would have needed it for the type of geothermal that we were talking about for Whistle Bend.

That type of geothermal — think of it as ground-source heat pumps, so shallow types of geothermal. In that case with the City of Whitehorse, we were considering the possibility of taking solar power and then using it to heat a field. Think of it like a bathtub that is buried under the ground — a big, big bathtub. You heat up that ground, and then later on in the winter, you pull that heat energy back off and distribute it as heat. That is not really what we are thinking about with geothermal; it's more of that high-heat, deep geothermal, which would take drilling and would have a footprint and more land considerations. I will check in with the department, but my sense is that the ground-source heat pumps are currently anticipated or allowed. What we don't have, though, is something that would tell us how we should deal with things that are much deeper in the earth.

Ms. White: Some of the concerns that have been brought forth by folks in the territory, as an example, is that Ford makes a fully electric pickup truck and there are multiple models. Even a model with the less-trim package and fewer bells and whistles but bigger batteries is not covered by any kind of federal grants because it is viewed as a luxury vehicle. One would say that living in a northern climate where the distances are greater, bigger batteries aren't actually a luxury. Bigger batteries are how you get between rural Yukon and urban Yukon — you need to be able to go.

Are there conversations between YG and the federal government around what vehicles are covered and what vehicles are not? Keeping in mind, of course, that luxury for the City of Toronto is not necessarily luxury in a Yukon context —

and I say this in terms of battery size. We want bigger batteries with a longer distance and the ability to go farther. So, are there conversations between the minister and his counterpart around which qualify and which don't qualify for rebates?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, I agree with the member opposite and I am happy to have these conversations with my counterpart. I have not as of yet, but I am interested to get to more vehicles that Yukoners use. Trucks are a very typical vehicle for the north and, let's say, even for rural Canadians. It is important for us to incentivize them, which is why, just recently, we announced our rebate system — we increased that just in the last couple of weeks, I think. I commit to talking to my federal counterpart about whether they would consider that change as well.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I appreciate that it would be good for the rest of Canada that is not in those urban centres, but really, my concern more is the Yukon context. If the minister was able to make a case for anything outside of urban centres, I would highlight that I don't consider us an urban centre in the same way that I would consider Toronto to be. It's just about making sure that the rebates make sense for our context. A bigger battery isn't a luxury; a bigger battery is a necessity.

One of the things that we spoke about last fall actually has to do with charging stations. One of the concerns with charging stations — for example, if we were to talk about Mendenhall — type 2, I believe, is the slower charger, but it means that if someone is driving from Haines Junction in a luxury pickup truck with a bigger battery towing a trailer and they need to stop to charge, instead of being 30 minutes, it's two hours. Then when you get to the City of Whitehorse, there are currently no charging stations that you can pull into when towing a trailer. You have to drop the trailer in, for example, the Walmart parking lot and then go to a charging station.

I'm hoping that I can just put this on the map for the minister that when we're looking at doing some of those installations, it takes into context what type of vehicle might use them. Years ago, my colleague Jim Tredger, who was the MLA for Mayo-Tatchun, and Elizabeth Hanson, who was the Member for Whitehorse Centre, and I talked about a dream of an electric Alaska Highway. We talked about how it would be great if, in all these places where small gas stations exist all along the highway, they would become charging stations.

I even think of the fact that, in 12 years, we would say, now that you can just about comfortably — maybe not quite comfortably — drive an electric vehicle down the Alaska Highway is critically important, but as we expand, it means that we would probably expect to start seeing people with motorhomes, like vehicles towing motorhomes. And I can't imagine that someone who is coming from far would want to leave their home behind at a Walmart parking lot and go off to charge, and that would probably be a little bit uncomfortable — so, making sure that, when we look at some of those future locations for charging stations, that we look at drive-through spots, making sure that a vehicle towing can also get in without having to drop that.

I will look at the minister to see if he has anything to add to that, but I would really like to see drive-through spots for charging.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, first of all, I agree that we are going to need charging stations in a variety of formats that are going to allow for the range of possibilities for Yukoners. We do have a level 3 charger at Mendenhall now; however, it is slightly smaller than other level 3 fast chargers, and it is because of the electricity supply in Mendenhall, so we are matching that. Will we upgrade that when we upgrade the system? The answer is yes. Should we consider vehicles that are going to be towing something — motorhomes? The answer is yes.

I agree that we need an Alaska Highway that is electrified, and while I always acknowledge that there is more to do, I am so impressed that we now have chargers running from Beaver Creek to Watson Lake, and what we are also working on is talking to the British Columbia government about the Stewart-Cassiar Highway and the Alaska Highway south from here — because it is great if you have it within the territory, but it doesn't mean that you are connected completely.

The other thing that I will just add for us is that we have also had conversations with the Government of the Northwest Territories because they are interested in us electrifying up the Dempster at some point, right? When our counterparts from Alaska were here, we certainly were in conversation with them as well.

We recognize that it's a network and it has to work across a range of needs. I am encouraged by where we have gotten to. There's more to come.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

I know at one point in time we were waiting for the ability to have those charging stations actually charge people. Obviously, in other jurisdictions, when you go up to an electric charging station, it's not for free. You are paying for your fuel, which is electricity. I just wanted to know from the minister where we are at with charging at the Yukon government EV chargers.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am just going to indicate some new stations that EMR and Highways and Public Works are looking to put in place. The intersection of the South Canol — so, Johnsons Crossing in 2024 — so, these are ones that we are trying to get done this year: Drury Creek on the Robert Campbell; Braeburn; Dempster Corner; Jakes Corner; and the Stewart-Cassiar intersection with the Alaska Highway — so Highway 37 near Watson Lake.

Then, in 2025, we have another one planned for Swift River, then, in 2026, another one along the north Klondike Highway at Gravel Lake. So, there are a whole bunch more coming, which is really good news.

Then, the question about timing for when we start charging all of us for the use of charging stations — so far, it has been an incentive. There are some regulatory steps to get in place, and we are working to try to get this done this calendar year, but my team advises me that there is a lot of work to get done, so they are asking me to be a little bit cautious with declared timing. It's now in process, and they are doing the hard work to

try to make that a reality. Originally, I think the timeline had us somewhere in 2025. I have asked them to accelerate that if at all possible.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Again, I would suggest at this point in time that EVs are luxury vehicles, and so, someone who can afford an EV — my hope is that at one point in time they will appreciate that they are paying for their charge as opposed to how it is right now. Lots of folks are charging on government EV charging stations and not at home because it can save them money that way, which is very thrifty and stuff but does not necessarily allow for the actual cost of what it costs to run one of those things.

Back during the ATCO rate hearing, it was brought forward that there is currently an arrangement that allows ATCO to charge O&M costs for some of the IPP projects to ratepayers. An example would be the Kluane wind connection — \$4,204,000. This is something that is going to be tied on to ratepayers. My question is: Does the minister feel that those costs should be borne by, for example, the proponent instead of ratepayers across the territory, and are changes being considered at all?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: A few points. The first one is that I will have to turn back to the Yukon Development Corporation to find out what we have already invested in the Kluane wind project.

It's called the Kluane N'tsi wind project. I know that we have invested in it. When I say "we", I am referring now to government investment, and that will help to keep the overall cost of the project down so that when the pieces of it do go to rate, at least we are subsidizing that cost. It is not Energy, Mines and Resources that is dealing with this one. Anyway, I will leave that there.

Then we are talking about how ATCO goes to rate and what is appropriate for them. Yes, I do think that if there are costs that a utility incurs, they will seek to approach the Utilities Board to see that those costs go to rate. One of the unique things about the Yukon is that, in most other provinces and territories, rates are different across the jurisdiction; they are not uniform. Here they are uniform. What that means is that, even though costs to supply energy in Kluane or Old Crow or Watson Lake are likely higher than they are on the Whitehorse grid, we still make sure that everybody pays the same rate. So, that is a thing that is different for us here than in other provinces and territories, but I think it's actually a really good thing.

This is an important project because Burwash, Destruction Bay, Beaver Creek, Watson Lake, and Old Crow are all diesel communities, so the more that we can bring on a renewable — in this case, wind — then it's great because it's going straight against that diesel which would otherwise be used to provide that energy. So, it is different from projects on the grid.

I would have to try to dig in to try to get some numbers for the member opposite. But if the principle that is being asked about is whether the private sector utility which is spending money should have a right to go to rate, we will work to try to offset costs so that there is less impact to rate. They have a right, I think, to go in front of the Utilities Board to judge what is a fair amount to charge back to ratepayers.

Ms. White: Just to expand a bit on what the minister is saying — as an example, I am going to build a wind turbine, so I am going to access the independent power producer ability. I am going to build a wind turbine and go into a relationship with ATCO, which is going to purchase the energy from me, but I am the person who is investing in installing the turbine. But if ATCO requires things to connect to my turbine to be able to purchase that energy to go into the grid — and therefore they are in a relationship with me by purchasing the power — my question is: Is it not somewhat the responsibility of the organization — the entity doing the IPP — to bear the cost of that connection? Why is it ATCO and then why is it the ratepayers?

A real base comparison is — which is still a thorn in my side — that when I upgraded my electrical system in order to be able to use an air-source heat pump, I had to pay to install a pole. I am married to ATCO for the rest of my existence because my house is now 100-percent electric, but I also had to pay for the pole. Similarly, if I was installing a wind turbine, it seems weird that everyone in this room should have to pay for that connection as opposed to the person who is going to benefit from selling that power in the future. My question was about that. The individual — the entity with the IPP — who stands to benefit in perpetuity for that investment — I'm asking if the minister believes that they should pay some of that cost, or is the minister saying that he believes that ratepayers should pay?

I'm not disagreeing with the fact that the rate is the same across the territory. I think that is really important. I don't think that people in Old Crow should pay the true cost of power there. That should be amortized, but my point is that if there is an entity that will benefit from a long-term business agreement of selling energy, do they not also have a responsibility to ensure that all the pieces are in play and that ATCO and therefore the ratepayers are not paying for them?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The basic answer is yes. Whenever there is an independent power producer project and they come forward, they have to talk with the utility about what the costs are for them to connect their project.

Even in this case, if we are talking about Burwash and a wind project there, you still have a small grid. For example, when the solar project went into Old Crow, you still had to talk to the utility about connecting that up, and there are some costs to do that — like power poles and things like that and transformers — so there are costs. I think that generally those are part of the project costs by the proponent who is bringing the project forward, but there is an energy purchase agreement, and that agreement is negotiated. So, in some ways, the energy purchase agreement will reflect some of the costs of the project to get off the ground. It can still come back somehow to rate in some ways.

One of the things that we instituted that is different was that, in the past, the energy purchase agreement needed to be better than the price of diesel here in Whitehorse. We argued that we should really be looking at it being better than the price of diesel in that community, because, of course, diesel in Old Crow is very expensive because you have had to fly it in. Diesel in Burwash is not as expensive as Old Crow, but it is much

more expensive than Whitehorse. So, when we get those differences, then it's important to think about that energy purchase agreement.

The basic answer is yes, and yet in order for the project to be viable, the proponent will need to consider all of those costs going into the project and the energy that they will sell over time and how they will be able to also earn a small rate of return.

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

Moving to *Our Clean Future* commitment E1: "... develop legislation by 2023 that will require at least 93 per cent of the electricity generated on the Yukon Integrated System to come from renewable sources, calculated as a long-term rolling average." So, I want to know: Where is that work? Has it been drafted, and when will it be brought forward? If not, what are the barriers to bringing it forward, keeping in mind, of course, that the target was 2023 and here we are in 2024?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The folks sent me a note on page 8 of our independent power producer policy. Under section 6, it states — and I quote: "IPPs will be responsible for interconnection costs and necessary interconnection upgrades, as well as maintenance of their electrical infrastructure."

That is what I was trying to refer to as "yes" in my last answer.

The amendments to the *Clean Energy Act* — we are still targeting for the fall session. I understand that the current work that is being done right now is a load-forecast economic analysis. That work is happening as we speak. I haven't checked in on the progress of it lately, but I am still anticipating that we get those amendments back here in the Fall Sitting.

Ms. White: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I appreciate that. Looking at it with the assumption that it is one of the top three actions that could impact GHG emissions, it's important. When you look at some of those commitments in *Our Clean Future*, it's an important one, as is the next one. Commitment T9: "Require all diesel fuel sold in Yukon for transportation to align with the percentage of biodiesel and renewable diesel by volume in leading Canadian jurisdictions beginning in 2025..." I am guessing that this will probably require legislation. Is it on track? The minister is shaking his head no, but he can tell me. Is it on track for 2025?

If it requires legislation, is it being drafted? If it doesn't require legislation, is it regulations? If that's the case, when can we expect to see those? Is there work happening with companies right now that supply diesel to the Yukon to get them ready to meet this goal?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I was not aware that it requires legislation, but now I'm being told that it may well do and that the timeline for that is 2025, but the department is doing the policy work right now, and some of that policy work is where you finalize what you need or don't need in terms of legislation and regulations.

Have we been in conversation with industry? Absolutely, and that is I guess on a couple of levels. First of all, we have been in conversation with local suppliers, and I have sat down

in a couple of those meetings, and then we also had engagement with the producers.

It is more for the renewable diesel than it is for the biodiesel — well, it's that way for a couple of reasons. First of all, renewable diesel is better in terms of lower emissions and better in terms of its behaviour or its performance as a diesel complement. We have also had some conversations with the users of diesel here in the territory — for example, with industry and Yukon Energy, which is a big user. That dialogue is underway, and this is a very important action under *Our Clean Future*. It's one of the ones that has a very significant impact on emissions.

Ms. White: I thank the minister and, of course, his officials. I did appreciate that there was a policy person listening online and they got back about the IPP, so that is the indication of what happens when you have incredibly dedicated people paying attention. I thank them.

E2 requires that some of the diesel used to generate electricity on the Yukon integrated system and in off-grid communities be substituted with clean diesel alternatives like biodiesel and renewable diesel beginning in 2025, aiming for around a 20-percent usage or reduction. If that is going to start next year, is there work happening this year to prepare — as an example, sourcing the biodiesel and renewable diesel, testing it at different temperatures? Of course, we have very different temperatures here at different times of the year. What is being done right now to meet E2?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Really, the answer here is the same answer that I just gave because these are effectively the same approach. Like, when we bring diesel into the territory, it will be used in different ways.

Let me give a little bit of detail, because I think the member hit on some of it, and it's really around whether it's summer diesel or winter diesel. Right now, producers are supplying summer diesel — or diesel that works at temperatures we don't see in our winter. That's the way to think of it.

If that is the supply chain question — so, we are trying to tackle it from a couple of ways. If that is the supply chain that we have access to, then what do you do in terms of storage? You can't just turn it off and on over time; it's not so simple.

So, there is a storage question. Working with suppliers here in the territory around those questions — but we also will look at the question of production. Sooner or later, the producers that are making the renewable diesel will be asked the same question we are asking, because most Canadian cities — for example, Edmonton, Winnipeg, or Saskatoon — will all require winter diesel. So, it depends on when those supply lines or those production lines will come onstream.

We are trying to investigate that to see if there is purchasing power that can work by working with neighbouring jurisdictions that may be asking for the same thing as us.

There is a whole lot of work that is being done on the technical side of this. Then there is another group that is working on the policy side of this that will indicate what will be required from us from a legislative regulatory framework.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that, but honestly, at this point, if we were just concentrating on warmer temperature bio-

diesels or renewable diesels, that would at least be part of the year. It might not be the whole year, but it would definitely be a portion of the year, and I think that is an important step.

So, this also feeds into T31: "Initiate a set of pilot projects by 2025..." — so not necessarily starting in 2025 but by 2025, so here we are leading up to 2025 — "... to test the use of renewable fuels for transportation, electricity generation, and heating in private and Government of Yukon assets."

This is one of those examples when the Yukon government can really be part of the pilot project — and, again, going toward 2025, not necessarily starting.

Where are we at right now? If it's an issue of procurement, is the Yukon government right now working with those in the renewable diesel manufacturing world about setting up contracts? Because in one case, we would want to make sure that it was available and it was constantly available. So, where are we at for T31?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Again, this action is very related to the earlier actions and it is part of the analysis that we are doing. Will we as a government do some testing? Well, yes, and we've also been working with Yukon University around what that will look like. Again, suppliers are involved. I think we will have Yukon Energy Corporation involved because they run diesel gensets, so we are hoping to do some testing with them.

When I was talking with the mining industry over this long weekend, we had a conversation about this issue and we were talking about needing to see what happens — you can have applications where the diesel is used on a pretty regular basis, so things are running fairly frequently, but if you have a situation where something sits for several months, does the renewable diesel work in the way it's intended or does it work in the way some ethanols have worked, which is that sometimes they can congeal? So, we need to do tests around a range of applications, a range of temperatures, and a range of timelines. We are working to initiate those and be part of them.

Ms. White: I have so many other questions that I haven't even touched on, like the budgetary items that we got during the briefing, but I do recognize the time.

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

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:24 p.m.