



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, April 10, 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
<b>Hon. Ranj Pillai</b>	Porter Creek South	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
<b>Hon. Jeanie McLean</b>	Mountainview	Deputy Premier Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate
<b>Hon. Nils Clarke</b>	Riverdale North	Minister of Environment; Highways and Public Works
<b>Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee</b>	Riverdale South	Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
<b>Hon. Richard Mostyn</b>	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board
<b>Hon. John Streicker</b>	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
<b>Hon. Sandy Silver</b>	Klondike	Minister of Finance; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Wednesday, April 10, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, for the National Wildlife Week tribute, please welcome to the Assembly Bryce Bekar, the president of the Yukon Fish and Game Association. Welcome.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of International Day of Pink

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to International Day of Pink. This day, observed annually on the second Wednesday of April, is a call to action to stand up against bullying and discrimination disproportionately affecting the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

This year's theme is "Visibility". As a part of this year's theme of International Day of Pink, we celebrate the anniversaries of three major milestones on the road to gender equity. Twenty-five years ago, a transgender activist, Monica Helms, designed the transgender pride flag. The flag represents gender not as a binary but as a spectrum where every member of the transgender community can see themselves represented.

On the International Day of Pink, we are also marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Brunswick Four standing up to unjust treatment by the police. In 1974, four gay women — Adrienne Potts, Pat Murphy, Sue Wells, and Lamar Van Dyke — were thrown out of a Toronto bar for changing the words of a song during the open mic night from *I Enjoy Being a Girl* to *I Enjoy Being a Dyke*. Their performance was a response to getting unsolicited attention from an intoxicated man in the bar. The women were taken into custody and were denied legal defence. At the police station, they were verbally and physically harassed and later faced disturbance charges. Their case received a lot of media attention and helped raise awareness about homophobia and harassment in Canada.

The third significant milestone that we are celebrating today is the removal of homosexuality as a mental disorder from the diagnostic and statistical manual by the American Psychiatric Association in 1973. Following that change, in 1974, the Canadian government recognized that homosexuality was no longer identified as a mental health issue.

International Day of Pink should remind us all of the urgent need to address equality in all forms. Together with the LGBTQ2S+ *Inclusion Action Plan* as a guide, we are making our workplaces more safe, our communities more safe, and our Yukon a place for everyone.

*Applause*

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize April 10 as the International Day of Pink. Pink shirts will be worn across the country today as people join together to raise awareness about bullying and discrimination based on sexual preference and gender identity. This global event started as a small gesture of solidarity by two ninth grade students in 2007 who stood up for a classmate who was bullied for wearing pink on the first day of school in Nova Scotia. They bought and distributed pink shirts and tank tops to protest the discrimination and stand by their friend. This small act grew into a larger movement as the entire school showed up, some in pink from head to toe, in response to an e-mail request from the students.

Jer's Vision, a small grass-roots organization that later evolved into the Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity, took notice of this initiative and founded the International Day of Pink to take place annually on April 10. The theme of this year's International Day of Pink is "Visibility".

Today, here in the Legislature and throughout schools and workplaces, we wear pink to show our support and spread the message of visibility. We stand against bullying, harassment, discrimination, and violence in all forms and ask that all Yukoners stand with us today and every day.

Thank you to all of our incredible local organizations that tackle issues like violence and discrimination within our schools, workplaces, and in our community.

*[Member spoke in Tagalog. Text unavailable.]*

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to commemorate International Day of Pink. Today, millions of people worldwide are standing together against bullying, discrimination, homophobia, transphobia, and transmisogyny. Today, we celebrate empowerment, authenticity, and unity. Whether it is in the Yukon, Canada, or beyond, we must stand together against hateful beliefs.

We need to keep the clock from turning backward on efforts toward establishing equality for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and continue to push the fight for equality and acceptance forward. It's time to educate the future generation to not repeat history and to teach the older generation to unlearn the hate that they were taught and to continue to advocate and push for change. As leaders, this day marks an important reminder that in order to bring forward change, we must ensure that 2SLGBTQIA+ voices are represented at all levels of policy and decision-making.

International Day of Pink has one purpose: to create a more inclusive and diverse world. This day encourages us all to challenge social norms and to stand up against hate, bullying,

and discrimination toward the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Today, we celebrate visibility in all of its forms — being seen, respected, acknowledged, and listened to. It's about standing tall and embracing our true selves today and every day because, Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more beautiful than being who we truly are.

*Applause*

### In recognition of National Wildlife Week

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to National Wildlife Week. This annual event celebrates the unique and interesting animals that we share our home with. It is also an opportunity to raise awareness about climate change, habitat loss, and protection of species at risk and the necessity of environmental conservation.

Wildlife can be found everywhere in the Yukon — low in the valleys, high in the mountain ranges, up in the Arctic, and in our own backyards. Animals play a vital role in our northern ecosystem and our northern lifestyle. They are a significant local food source, culturally important to Yukon First Nations, and provide viewing opportunities both for Yukoners and visitors to the territory.

A key component of conservation advocacy for wildlife is awareness and education. The Department of Environment, alongside environmental partners, works to foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat across the territory through several activities. This year, it will be the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Celebration of Swans, a festival organized by the department that brings together Yukoners and visitors to welcome spring and to witness the mass migration of swans to their northern nesting grounds. We will host a series of events to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> annual festival, including a sunset swan walk that is being held tonight at 7:30 p.m., a keychain beading workshop held by Vuntut Gwitchin jewellery makers being held tomorrow at 5:30 p.m., a spiritual celebration of swans being held on Saturday at 10:00 a.m., and the Tagish Dancers will perform on Saturday as well at 1:30 p.m.

These are just a few of the events planned for this year's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary Celebration of Swans. I encourage Yukoners and visitors to visit [yukon.ca/swans](http://yukon.ca/swans) to view the full list of events.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment is committed to ensuring the success of our territory's wildlife. We do that work by serving wildlife populations, mitigating wildlife conflicts, monitoring sensitive ecosystems, as well as working to address climate change and its impacts. We do that work hand in hand with land claim bodies, our community partners, and agencies including the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, renewable resources councils, the Wildlife Management Advisory Council for Yukon's North Slope, the Yukon Fish and Game Association, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Yukon Wildlife Preserve, the Yukon Conservation Society, and the Yukon Wild Sheep Foundation.

I thank all of our partners that contribute to this very important work. Together, we are protecting habitat and ensuring that wildlife continues to thrive in our territory and is preserved for future generations. I encourage Yukoners this

week to take a moment to appreciate and celebrate all of the life that surrounds us. We are fortunate to experience the best the Yukon has to offer and we have a responsibility to ensure that we share that passion and environmental stewardship with the next generation.

I would just note that this tribute was also on behalf of the Yukon NDP.

*Applause*

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize National Wildlife Week, taking place from April 7 to 13 this year, and biodiversity month, which celebrates the different species of animals living in different habitats across our country and here in the Yukon. We celebrate the biological diversity of the territory's living things and the role they play in keeping our environment healthy.

This national observance was proclaimed in 1947 to take place annually on the week of April 10, the birthday of the late Jack Miner, who is credited with helping to save the Canada goose from risk of extinction. The Canada goose is just one of the many migratory birds that grace the Yukon's wilderness each year. Approximately 87 percent of our birds here are considered migrants. Geese, ducks, and swans make up the early water bird migrations in April, and later come the sandhill cranes, the shorebirds, the warblers, and the sparrows. We may not always notice them as they arrive, but hundreds of species migrate each year to take advantage of the nesting locations and the abundant food sources.

Of course, being made up primarily of boreal forest, the Yukon is home to an incredibly diverse range of animals. We are fortunate to be steps away from nature and able to view our wildlife almost at leisure and to harvest in a healthy and responsible manner.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight the two-week muskrat camp that just wrapped up last week out in my area. The St. Elias Community School, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, and other partners hosted the camp at Kloo Lake. Shane Oakley, Marcel and Elodie Dulac, and others taught muskrat trapping and many other things related to fish and wildlife, educating on our nature of traditions.

I want to thank Angie Nassiopoulos from Champagne and Aishihik First Nations who organized it and took part in the camp, and Friday's wind-up barbecue at Kloo Lake — there were a lot of people there in a tight area — was awesome. The barbecue was good, and if you haven't tried muskrat, you should.

Let us celebrate all the amphibians, birds, fish, and mammals that cohabitate here with us in this northern paradise and thank you to all governments, councils, and organizations that contribute to conservation, research, and management efforts of Yukon wildlife and to all individuals who maintain respect and sustainable harvesting practices and stewardship of our lands and animals.

*Applause*

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Speaker:** Under Tabling Returns and Documents, the Chair has for tabling a special report from the Yukon Ombudsman regarding recommendations for amendments to the *Ombudsman Act* dated April 10, 2024.

**Speaker:** Are there any further 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

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to provide a public update on the timelines, process, and next steps for the development of Shallow Bay zoning regulations and to have letters sent to property owners with that information.

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

THAT this House urges the Canada Border Services Agency to work with its counterparts in Alaska to ensure that the Yukon-Alaska border on the Top of the World Highway is opened as early as possible in the spring and closed as late as possible in the fall.

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

THAT this House encourages manufacturers of personal protective equipment to produce a range of personal protective equipment that properly fits a range of body sizes and types.

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

THAT this House supports Bill C-277, *An Act to establish a national strategy on brain injuries*, to:

- (1) improve brain injury awareness, prevention, and treatment; and
- (2) improve the rehabilitation and recovery of persons living with a brain injury.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Atlin hydro expansion project

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has always made clear that the Atlin hydro project is a top priority and a central plank in the Liberal's energy strategy. They committed \$50 million to the project because — to quote the energy minister: "... we need to know the funds are in place. We wouldn't want to invest in a project that we didn't know was secure. So I think it is important to make sure that there is

a path forward on the funding." He went on to say, Mr. Speaker — quote: "... we totally believe in this project."

However, in February, the Liberals changed course. They pulled the \$50 million from the five-year capital plan and now seem to admit that the project is not moving ahead.

What message does the minister think that pulling the \$50 million that the Yukon government had committed to the Atlin hydro project sends about their level of commitment to that project?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, the first thing is that we remain committed to the Atlin project. I have spoken with the spokesperson, Tom, of the Taku River Tlingit. I know that the Development Corporation and the Energy Corporation have been in conversation with THELP, Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership, and we remain committed. However, we also need to be able to maximize our capital spending, and so what we have done is that we have continued to keep that commitment of the \$50 million in place should there be a pathway to close the funding gap. We will continue to work on other renewable energy solutions for Yukoners in the meantime.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, the minister confirmed in debate that some of the money allocated in that \$50 million would be redistributed to other projects, so it seems that they are certainly less committed than they were last year.

Last spring, the Premier and the energy minister travelled to Ottawa to meet with the federal government about this project. Following that meeting, the Premier told local media that he had — quote: "... secured a strong commitment..." for the Atlin hydro project, but then less than a year later, the territorial Liberals announced that they were pulling their portion of the funding for the project.

So, if the Premier secured such a strong commitment for the project from Ottawa, why did they decide to pull their \$50 million and delay this project even further?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I do want to acknowledge that Canada does have a strong commitment to the project. They have \$100 million committed to the project. I think there's another \$80 million through the Canada Infrastructure Bank. That is serious commitment.

I would also like to acknowledge the BC government for their commitment, and I would like to acknowledge Taku River Tlingit for their commitment to the project.

Our \$50 million is still committed. However, what we're doing this year — we could see that there was no pathway to get there this year, so I let the nation know that what we were going to do was move those dollars to keep them working for Yukoners around our very strong and impressive infrastructure budget, but the commitment remains.

So, I understand that the member opposite wants to frame it like we have softened our commitment. Our commitment remains to the \$50 million.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, the government softened its commitment when they removed this project from the five-year capital plan. They could have easily pushed the investment to a future year, but they chose instead to remove it altogether from the five-year capital plan.

I think that Yukon can be forgiven for being confused about the Yukon government's position on this project. At one point, they were investing \$50 million and telling us that the Atlin hydro was going to come into service in 2024, and then they said that it was a priority, that they believed in it, and that they had secured a strong commitment from the federal government to close the massive funding gap that still existed last year.

Now, today, they have said that they are pulling their own funding, and we do not have any tangible result of the Premier's so-called "strong commitment" from the federal government that he committed to last May.

So, why would the federal government provide any further investment in this project if the Yukon government is clearly backing away from it?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Again, Mr. Speaker, we're not backing away, but we are adding more initiatives to work on because we know how critical energy infrastructure is.

I understand that the Yukon Party's solution is to build diesel plants. That is their idea for how we should address the growth of the territory, the needs of the territory, and the future of the territory. But when we look at the legacy of the Yukon around energy, it has been these big investments in renewable energy that have really done us well for the long term.

We are going to continue to keep our support for the Atlin project in place, and we are going to continue to look at other alternatives for renewable energy, in particular for wind/battery backup because that will give us winter power. That is exactly what we need. I would like to thank the federal government for their commitment, and our commitment stands that if — when — there is the ability for Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership to close the funding gap, we are there to support them.

#### **Question re: Energy strategy effect on electricity rates**

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on his greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

On December 20 last year, the Liberal government issued a news release that states that, in 2021, greenhouse gas emissions, not including mining emissions, were one percent above 2010 levels. We know that the legislated target for reductions is 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030. In a briefing prior to the start of this Sitting, Yukon Energy told us that, for the next five years, the only additional reliable electricity generation will come from renting diesel generators.

How will an expanded fleet of rented diesels for the next five years help the minister to meet his emission targets?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, let's just start by talking about the Haeckel Hill Thay T'aw wind project. It's turning; it's putting energy back into our system. This fall, we look to have our grid-scale battery project online. As we have those two projects working together, we will start to provide dependable winter energy here in the Yukon.

So, I disagree with the member opposite and I disagree with the Yukon Party's position that we should build diesel

plants. I just fundamentally disagree with that direction for the Yukon. I think it is just a stark difference. We believe that we should invest in renewables; we will continue to invest in renewables.

By the way, in the first question, the Leader of the Official Opposition was asking about the Atlin project. My recollection of the Yukon Party is that they disagree with the Atlin project, so I don't know which way they want it. But all I hear from them is to build a diesel plant.

What we hear from Yukoners is that we should invest in renewables for the long term.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, for the minister, it was Yukon Energy in a briefing that told us that, for at least the next five years, the primary generation will be through renting diesels. So, when it comes to electric vehicle charging infrastructure, we welcome the opportunity that the Yukon government is giving the private sector to install these stations and charge for their use.

CBC Yukon reported that, in December, a VP with ATCO indicated that the fast chargers represent significant electrical loads on the grid. He said — quote: "There's going to be cost to the system." Of course, the only way utilities can recoup those costs are from the ratepayer.

When will the Yukon government stop providing free power at their charging stations so that the private sector can compete? Has the government done any work to understand the cost impacts of meeting the overall target of 4,800 electric vehicles on Yukon roads by 2030?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, we get a minute and a half to respond on this super important subject, so the first thing I will say is that 90 percent of our energy comes from hydro here in the Yukon — our electricity. Can we just clarify that?

Roughly seven percent of our electricity comes from the LNG plant, roughly one percent comes from our diesel plant, and roughly one percent of our energy comes from the rented diesels. That is what we're talking about — that one percent of energy.

I agree that we should seek to start charging a fee at the recharging stations. I have asked the department to bring that forward as quickly as possible. They are working on that. I think that under *Our Clean Future*, the target date for that is 2025. I have asked them to try to accelerate that to this year. I agree that we should start charging Yukoners when they charge their vehicles. That is the way this is going to go over time and it will support the private sector as they bring on charging stations.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, the second part of that question was with respect to the cost implications for the grid. As I have mentioned, the overall target for the Yukon government is to have 4,800 electric vehicles on Yukon roads by 2030. Again, CBC Yukon reported in December that a vice-president with ATCO Yukon indicated that those fast chargers represent significant electrical loads on the grid. He said — and I will quote again: "There's going to be cost to the system."

I'm going to ask the minister again: Has the government done any work to understand the cost impacts of upgrading the

grid to meet their overall target of 4,800 electric vehicles on Yukon roads by 2030?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Only in the Yukon Party world would there be some sense that we shouldn't modernize the grid because they think what we ought to do is just bring on diesels. I disagree with them and I think Yukoners disagree with them. We do want to modernize our grid. Of course, there's work that has been ongoing. In fact, we were here under Committee of the Whole with the Yukon Development Corporation where we talked about that in questions from the members opposite — about all of the work that they are doing around modernizing the grid and around assessing variable penetration. All of that work is happening, and we have this planned to transition away from fossil fuels.

What I understand from the Yukon Party is that they would throw that all away; they would move us backward in time and just say: Hey, let's lock into fossil fuels for the future.

I think that is a mistake for the Yukon and I think that's a mistake for Yukoners, and we will work to modernize our grid.

#### **Question re: Pregnancy tests**

**MLA Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, for years now, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon — or FASSY — has been providing pregnancy tests to those who need them. They fund this project entirely through donations. If FASSY had funding for this work, they could distribute pregnancy tests on a broader scale. They used to distribute these tests in communities across the Yukon in health centres and at university campuses. That's important because buying a single pregnancy test at Shoppers costs anywhere from \$12 to \$40. That is a significant barrier for a lot of people.

If FASSY had enough money to buy pregnancy tests in bulk, they could get tests as cheaply as \$1.50 each and distribute them for free throughout the territory. FASSY has determined that they could provide this much-needed service for just \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year. On the scale of government budgets, that's nothing.

Will this government commit to funding FASSY to provide free pregnancy tests to Yukoners?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, we certainly recognize the essential role that NGOs — or non-governmental organizations — play in the delivery of health and social services across the Yukon. We're absolutely committed to supporting our NGOs and other partners to provide Yukoners with access to services and supports and timely access to care.

I always appreciate the opportunity to meet with NGOs, particularly those that deliver so many of the services for community members with respect to health and social services, and the importance of the support from those organizations is critical.

Our government recognizes that some partners have identified additional pressures resulting from the cost-of-living increases and the services that they wish to provide, and we remain committed to working with our partners to assess funding needs and programming opportunities. I certainly recognize that the particular request here is an important one

for individuals to have access to such tests. I will consider how we can resolve that in further discussions with the NGO.

**MLA Tredger:** One of FASSY's great strengths is the connections that they have made in communities outside of Whitehorse. In some rural communities, you can't just buy a pregnancy test at the store. This creates a barrier for people in small communities where confidentiality and anonymity are of high concern. In these situations, this often means that testing is delayed. Imagine being a teenager trying to figure out if you're pregnant. People need to be able to access pregnancy tests quickly and discreetly. FASSY has the community connections to make that happen. If this government cares about reproductive health in communities, then it must provide resources to those communities.

The minister said that she will talk to FASSY about this. When she does, will she offer them funding to make pregnancy tests available across the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** We recognize that organizations across the Yukon have questions and are reviewing their core funding in relation to cost-of-living adjustments very carefully, and representatives from the Department of Health and Social Services meet regularly with non-governmental organizations to understand their questions and concerns, including the impacts on their budgets and the services that they wish to provide. Those are incredibly important for us to determine that, for instance, they are being supported properly by the department and that they are filling a community need.

The department continuously reviews all of our agreements and the work plans for providing services through NGOs for the Department of Health and Social Services and for Yukoners generally. The Premier has a meeting scheduled with FASSY on May 3. I too hope to attend. We will have a briefing before that on the current state of the requests that have come. I am not aware of the specific request other than the one coming from the member opposite of particular funds, but I hope that there is such a document or a letter coming so that we can assess it properly.

**MLA Tredger:** Despite the lack of funding, FASSY has been doing such a good job with the distribution of pregnancy tests that there are actually Yukon government programs that get their pregnancy tests from FASSY. They are forced to do so because they do not have their own budgets for pregnancy tests. This lack of funding is quite surprising given the importance of knowing as soon as possible about a pregnancy. It is shocking that the Yukon government is relying on donations to a non-profit to fill the gaps in the health care they themselves provide.

Since they are not funding their own programs to provide pregnancy tests, at their meeting on May 3, will they offer funding to FASSY to keep this service going?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think it's important for Yukoners to know that our government recognizes the important role played by non-governmental organizations in our communities. They do very often provide services that are not provided by government for specific communities, but they are certainly supported by government because government funds NGOs for a great amount of service for Yukoners, because that is often

the more appropriate way in which communities can feel safe in receiving those services and can feel supported in doing so.

We remain committed to working with our partners to assess their needs and the program opportunities that are available. It's not a matter of NGOs providing services that are not supported by our government. Of course, they are. NGOs play a vital role in Yukon's response to health care and response to opportunities for Yukoners to have services.

I will commit that we will look at any requests from FASSY with respect to this particular project or program. We will determine what is the question from them and what is the proper review of that question and how we can support their work.

#### **Question re: 5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers site development**

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, I have some questions about the sale of the 5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers lot for \$1.

During the press conference, the Premier told local media that there would be shovels in the ground this summer. Can he confirm that Yukoners should expect to see development work on this site this summer, and if not, when would development begin?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** There are a number of things that have to take place on the 5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers site. Right now, the commitment that has been made by the syndicate of organizations that have done the purchase is, in this calendar year, to begin work on-site. That is the conversation that has been had with the Yukon Housing Corporation and Energy, Mines and Resources.

I think there is some other demolition work that has to be done on-site and a bit of reclamation work that has to be done. I know that there is a conversation that is happening directly between the group and the City of Whitehorse around permitting and I believe some further discussion concerning connection to the horizontal services that are going to be required for the development on that particular site.

**Mr. Istchenko:** According to the public information about the sale of this property, the purchaser is responsible for the remediation and cleanup of the site, and the Premier has said that he expects the development to yield at least 300 units.

Does the minister expect that the Yukon government will pay for the development of any of these units, or will the company that purchased the site be responsible for all of the construction costs?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I think there is an opportunity at some point for the Yukon Housing Corporation to potentially partner with organizations, but I think what we really have to focus on is the downtown south plan which was put in place a number of years ago. What it really focuses on is the reduction of social housing in that part of the downtown area, and it's really looking at market rental.

We don't — Yukon Housing — provide funding for market rental. That is really something that would be the sole responsibility of the private sector. I'm also aware that, through the zoning, there is an obligation for amenities to be built on-site, especially with that level of density. So, you are looking at commercial — at least on one to two floors of those buildings

— and then you are looking at market rental and potentially some strata title, which, of course, would help cash-flow the project.

I think there is going to be a real mix of development on that site. Is there an opportunity through CMHC or Yukon Housing? Potentially, but no. I think that the majority of the work that is going to be there and the majority of the project capital costs are going to be driven by the private sector and their relationships with other organizations that want to be positioned in this very specific place in downtown Whitehorse.

#### **Question re: Big Creek bridge replacement**

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Liberals made a commitment back in 2016 that all seasonally dependent contracts would be issued prior to March 31 each year. Since then, they have broken that promise each and every year, so we are not surprised to see what is happening with the ongoing saga of the Big Creek bridge.

The first contractor has been removed from the job, and the government is in court with them. The Yukon government recently issued an RFQ for another new bridge, which saw three companies qualified to do the work. Now, as we know, an RFQ is a long way from actually getting boots on the ground. The Liberals have \$6 million in this year's budget for this project.

So, when will the actual construction contract be awarded and work begin on Big Creek bridge 2.0?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the member opposite. It is always a great opportunity to stand to speak about all the significant infrastructure work that is being done in the territory.

The Government of Yukon is planning to complete the Big Creek project in 2024. This is being done through two separate tender processes to procure a contractor to repair the bridge's concrete deck and to complete the outstanding bridge work. A request for qualification closed on March 25. The three qualified contractors will be invited to participate in a request for bids. This tender will be issued in late April of 2024. A separate request for bids will be issued in April 2024 to secure a contractor to complete the roadwork component of the project and to demolish the existing bridge once the new bridge is open to the public. Roadwork will include excavation, ditching, construction of sub-base and base-course aggregates, supplied installation of a structural plate, corrugated steel pipe, paving, supply and installation of guardrails, and demolition of the existing bridge.

We anticipate that the work on the bridge and road will start in June by the two separate contractors and will be completed before the end of the construction season.

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have \$9 million assigned to this project over the next two years. The federal government provided a significant contribution to the first failed project. We are not sure if they made a commitment to fund the next one, so how much money, if any, is Canada prepared to spend on this project?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, as this is remediation work with respect to work that was terminated due to poor

performance and quality control issues, this project will be largely funded, if not fully funded, by the Yukon government. I can certainly get back to the member opposite to confirm same, but that is the situation with respect to this project.

**Question re: Canada housing infrastructure fund**

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, Yukon communities have been eagerly awaiting more details on the next generation of infrastructure funding here in Canada. On April 2, the Prime Minister of Canada announced the Canada housing infrastructure fund.

The fund is divided into two separate streams. The first is \$5 billion for agreements with provinces and territories to support long-term priorities. Unfortunately, this \$5 billion is meant for the entire country, which means that provinces and territories will be forced to scrape by and it is much less than is required to address infrastructure deficits throughout Canadian communities.

Can the minister confirm how much of the \$5 billion will actually be allocated to the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I think there are a few things that we're keeping an eye on when it comes to new infrastructure funding. The first thing is the URN program, which is the urban, rural, and northern housing program. We have just received a letter from the minister of infrastructure and housing, Mr. Fraser, that there's going to be an allotment specifically just for the north for all three territories.

I want to get finer details about what the distribution is going to be between the three territories to see if it's going to be equally distributed, but that's really going to be driven by organizations within the three territories versus government spending. We have an opportunity to support that, but that's outside of the dollars in the program that the member opposite is speaking of today.

I want to wait until April 16 and get an understanding, exactly in detail, of how this is going to flow. I heard the same announcement and have had our team looking to dig into details about the distribution about what's going to be horizontal services and infrastructure and what's going to be able to be used for housing. But I think I'll be better prepared to speak to this after April 16 when we all have those details, because there's still a lack of details for us on how this is going to roll out and how it's going to be distributed across the country.

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities confirmed that the \$5 billion will be spread out over 10 years. That means that this new infrastructure fund will actually only be \$500 million per year for the entire country. So, put this in perspective: Earlier this week, the Mayor of the City of Whitehorse said that the infrastructure deficit for Whitehorse alone is \$250 million, so this new federal infrastructure fund is woefully small to deal with the realities in Yukon communities.

How much of that \$500 million per year is coming to the Yukon, and does the minister think that this is adequate?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, no, I don't think it's adequate. Actually, last year in June, I built consensus with the western premiers and the northern premiers on this specific

topic. The Yukon tabled an intervention — where we felt that it was important to look at climate adaptation infrastructure — and exactly in line with the words of Mayor Cabott today.

That concept then moved to the COF table, and at the Council of the Federation, we got an endorsement from all premiers across the country. That then led to communication to the federal government saying exactly that: that we felt it was appropriate. We actually felt that the money should have been in place in the fall of this year, because we know what fires and floods looked like across Canada last year. I think that, for our government, we would have loved to have been deploying some of that capital after the fall economic update. The federal government did not move on that. We are happy to see some new money, but no, I agree with the member opposite and with municipal leaders across the country. We are really going to have to make some bigger investments here, and we're going to look at this April 16 budget. As well, I think we are going to probably see a significant spend this year and as well in budget 2025.

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, aside from this new infrastructure fund being too small to deal with the infrastructure needs in Yukon communities, it comes with a number of strings attached. According to the Prime Minister, the Yukon government can only access this funding if they force Yukon municipalities to change their zoning laws to eliminate single detached housing and require every lot in a community to allow a fourplex as of right, meaning that these changes would be allowed without a public hearing process or votes from municipal councils.

Will the Liberal government force Yukon municipalities to change their zoning laws to eliminate single detached housing and require every lot in a community to allow fourplexes?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** No, our practice has been to work hand-in-hand with municipalities in the Yukon. We worked closely with the Association of Yukon Communities last year. There was a callout for funding. The president of the Association of Yukon Communities, which members opposite know very well, worked very closely with us to communicate back to the minister of infrastructure and housing and just let them know about the uniqueness here in the Yukon.

There was a constricted timeline on submitting proposals. When you take into consideration the municipalities and the capacity that exists, we felt that it was unfair. So, then it was a conversation where we helped lobby on behalf of the Association of Yukon Communities. That would be the exact same thing that we would approach. We will take a look at the fine details of the proposed TPA and what this proposal looks like and make sure that we listen closely to municipal leaders to understand how that would impact them, but if it's something that is inappropriate for the north, we would always make sure that we amplify their voice and speak with the federal ministers.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** 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

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

**MLA Tredger:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

#### Department of Economic Development

**MLA Tredger:** Is there any general debate?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Deputy Chair and honourable members, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the Department of Economic Development operation and maintenance and capital budgets for the 2024-25 fiscal year. I would like to welcome our officials who are here with us today: our Deputy Minister, Deborah Lemaire, and our director of finance, Jamie McAllister. As well, thank you to those in the Department of Economic Development who are following these proceedings today. Thank you for your continued commitment, and again, I appreciated senior management taking time just a few weeks ago for us to have a discussion about budget preparation but also the activities for the next year.

At the Department of Economic Development, staff administer a wide variety of programs and tools to support businesses, community organizations, workers, and other levels of government to foster growth across the territory's economy. This includes funding businesses to take on new projects that benefit the Yukon and its economy, connecting individuals with training to reach their professional goals, and pairing foreign nationals with employment opportunities to address labour shortages.

There are many projects taking place that support economic growth and diversification which are enabled by this main estimates budget of \$27,184,000 for the 2024-25 fiscal year. In addition to a capital budget of just over \$1 million, the bulk of the funding is allocated to operation and maintenance — a total of \$26,171,000. This includes \$5,264,000 for our new branch, which is Innovation, Industry and Business Development. This branch combines our business and industry development team and our technology and innovation team and will enhance service efficiency and embed a focus on innovation into the department's core operations.

This budget includes an increase of \$325,000 from last year as part of our increased support for the technology and innovation ecosystem under the Yukon's innovation strategy *Innovation Yukon — Bringing Northern Ingenuity to the World*.

With this budget, the department will continue to support and collaborate with a variety of organizations across all sectors. This includes maintaining close relationships with chambers of commerce to address the needs of businesses, the Yukon Mining Alliance, and the Yukon Chamber of Mines to promote the territory to investors and growing our technology and innovation sector by working with the Yukon Society, Yukon University, Tech Yukon, and other innovation stakeholders to provide training and resources to entrepreneurs.

A budget allocation of \$859,000 will enable the Immigration branch to continue connecting Yukon employers with foreign nationals, bringing unique skill sets to our territory where local and national labour gaps persist. The main economic immigration program utilized to help tackle these labour shortages is the Yukon nominee program, which also provides support to nominees to help ensure that they can integrate into the community. Again, I continue to be encouraged by the success of our programs and am glad that we can continue to work to support businesses in need of staff and foreign nationals.

Moving on to how the department supports the Yukon film and sound industry, Economic Development has identified \$2,354,000 this fiscal year for the Media Development unit. This budget includes four funding programs that support the production of professional film, television, and digital media projects. Supporting film projects ensures that the territory is in an attractive spot for both budding and experienced filmmakers. The team also administers the performing musicians fund to help Yukon artists to grow their craft and take on new marketing and training opportunities. This funding is important to Yukon musicians, and our music industry creates local jobs by contributing to performance venues and purchasing equipment while enabling artists to develop and sustain their professional craft. We are proud of the work that the department is doing to help our territory's musicians and filmmakers meet their full potential, and these funds will allow this important work to continue.

Moving on to Regional Economic Development, this unit is the main point of contact for organizations and individuals looking to improve their communities through unique and innovative projects. For the 2024-25 fiscal year, the Regional Economic Development branch is allocating a budget of

\$4,460,000. Of the total, \$2,950,000 will be directed toward the well-renowned community development fund.

The community development fund is again — I think we are all very well aware that it's an extremely popular program, supporting events and initiatives that provide long-term, sustainable economic and social benefits to communities across the Yukon. The fund remains heavily used, and Yukoners continue to find new ways to build up their communities. This budget allocation will enable staff to continue empowering communities across the Yukon to reach new heights.

The Labour Market branch has been allocated \$6,285,000 this year, and this budget supports adult learners and job seekers to build up their capacity to enter or remain in the workforce and supports employers to staff up their businesses to remain sustainable and successful. The Yukon, along with the majority of Canada, is experiencing an acute labour shortage, and this work is more important now than ever.

We know that the labour market landscape continues to evolve from what it once was. This is an ideal time to look at new ways of addressing the challenges and realities of Yukon's labour market. In response to this, the department will begin consultation on the new labour market strategy to guide our investments in the workforce. The strategy will guide how we work together in the territory to prepare for the labour landscape of the future.

In parallel, initiatives aimed at removing barriers for labour mobility are important tools to address human resource needs. One example of how we are working to improve labour mobility is the recently announced foreign credential recognition project. This project is supported by \$3.6 million in funding from the federal government over the next four years. This project will investigate and test ways to streamline the recognition of credentials for internationally educated health care professionals.

The final portion of the operations budget is the assistant deputy minister's office, which is allocated just over \$3 million, and that includes just under \$2 million for the economic development fund. This fund supports projects across the territory that provide long-term, sustainable economic benefits to Yukoners. The economic development fund has only been available since 2021 but has already been accessed by a wide variety of businesses and organizations to offer new services and expand their operations. It is always great to see success stories in our business community, and at Economic Development, we want to encourage ambitious and sustainable ideas.

The final portion of the operation and maintenance budget is just under \$4 million for Corporate Services. This includes the Deputy Minister's office, Finance and Information Management, Human Resources, and Policy, Planning and Communications. Together, these teams ensure that the department serves clients and the territory efficiently, transparently, and responsibly.

The capital budget remains largely unchanged from last year at just over \$1 million. This budget primarily supports the business incentive program, which provides rebates to contractors when they hire eligible Yukon workers or use

eligible Yukon goods. Under this program, we have seen an increase in applications late in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

The Department of Economic Development remains focused on economic diversification and fostering an economy where all Yukoners have a place, be that through meaningful employment, entrepreneurial opportunities, or a wide variety of other avenues to personal and collective prosperity.

I look forward to the discussions today with members opposite and the opportunity to provide further details on the work of the department.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I also would like to welcome and thank the officials for being here today to support the minister.

I am going to begin with the topic of the Asia trade mission that happened last year. That mission was to promote Yukon to businesses and various entities such as universities, et cetera, overseas. Now, I understand that the mission was to obtain direct foreign investment as well as to encourage health care workers to come to the Yukon.

Can the minister tell me if this trip has produced what he expected, and what are the direct benefits that have come to Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think the member opposite characterized the goals of the trip very well. I will start by maybe talking about the business opportunities, really focusing on two areas. One was the portion of the trip where we spent a couple of days in Japan, then there was the subsequent time spent in southern India for a couple of days, and then a couple of days in Delhi and more central India. I think that, in the Japan portion, we focused on conversations around critical minerals. We talked about research and academia. We had an opportunity to talk about tourism. Right away, I would say that we signed an agreement while we were there on tourism, and what we heard from Japanese tourism leaders was that the Yukon bounced back as an area of interest and an area of focus for the tourism market in Japan quicker than any other province or territory, so really tangible deliverables while we were there.

There has been a consistent conversation that has continued to happen between Mitsubishi Materials, which has been partnered with Rio Tinto on early investment in the Western Copper project Casino — that continues on. I spoke with the new CEO of Western Copper on Friday, and there is continued visitation coming from the Japanese organization — again, what we believe to be solid opportunities.

I think that we will see more of the conversation happen on the academia piece. There has been a lot of research done by Japanese academics as well as diplomats, with a focus toward the north. I did have an opportunity to meet with the Consul General of Japan just a couple of weeks ago, and, of course, we had a tribute here in the House, and there was further dialogue. I think I'll wait — there's a bit more to come this summer, but there are other organizations that will be involved in that announcement, and I think that, again, it will show some of the opportunities that are going to be in place because of that work with Japan.

Now, pivoting to the India trip — southern India really focused on the film industry, as one item. We brought folks

from the film industry there — the one producer who is currently doing some work here — and they were really scoping out opportunities for post-production. Some of that capacity we don't have here, but the post-production opportunities and the costing for post-production in that area is really significant. We did go to a tech campus in Kochi, and there were 70,000 people on-site. We brought Tech Yukon with us, and we had an opportunity for them to look at — whether it be recruitment or opportunities for partnership that have played out in those discussions.

Tourism is something that we touched on in talent attraction. Hospitality talent attraction is something that has been a difficult undertaking across the country, and there are very highly qualified individuals whom we had a chance to talk to, but again, we are leaving it to the private sector to take those contacts and information, and then I will let them work through the existing programs to be able to recruit — as we see a new hotel being built here and we see some other infrastructure and we hope to see some support from the federal government on the new convention centre.

In Delhi, there was some conversation around critical minerals — there is some interest. We've invited the mining department at the national level to meet with the Yukon Geological Survey. I don't believe — I haven't heard that there has been any engagement at this point. We have had debate in the House around the challenges between the bilateral relationship between Canada and India. Yes, we were on the front lines to see that in place. What we are seeing now, through the business community in both Canada and India, is a renewed flow of investment. There is a tremendous amount of investment by pension funds and other large players in Canada into India. I think what you will see is a renewed focus between relationships, but that will be driven on a B-to-B basis versus a G-to-G basis.

The other thing I would touch on is the second part of that question, which was the medical recruitment. I will leave it to the Department of Health and Social Services, but I think that there are two streams in place right now. I think there are some partnerships that they're looking at with the University of New Brunswick as well as a university in India. Part of that is that, later on in this 2024 calendar year, they are looking to have some folks that they're looking to recruit. Then, we have another organization that we met with in New Delhi, and there is an ongoing conversation with them as well. Because they are so highly sought after, they now have representation in Seattle, but, of course, colleagues across the country in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and different jurisdictions are now also looking to the same areas to recruit.

On follow-up, we had a trade mission that we supported. It was really the Canadian government, but we had a lot of organizations from the Yukon go to Japan. They felt that it was something that was highly successful for them. There were folks from Da Daghay Development through the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce as well as some other organizations. I think that the lesson for Japan is that you have to continue to consistently nurture the relationship. Our job was

to open it up, and now we will leave it to the business organizations to continue to do that work.

All in all, I feel that, for the days that we were on the ground, the number of people who were there, and the funds that were spent, the return on investment has been strong. But to be fair and open to the House, we have to continue to see some of this evolve over the rest of the calendar year, understanding that at least a portion of the trip slowed our opportunity to really seek that return because of things outside of our control — the relationships between the countries and things that have happened that folks are well aware of from the news cycles.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I thank the minister for that answer. He also answered my next question, which was about the mineral development and if there had been possible ventures and anything happening on either side of the ocean.

I noticed some coverage of the minister's meeting with Indian Minister Pralhad Joshi, the minister for coal. The Indian government release said — and I quote: "H. E. Ranj Pillai invited a delegation from India to Yukon and assured his full cooperation to the delegation for exploring investment opportunities and acquisition of minerals."

Can the Premier tell us if that delegation has come to the Yukon yet, and if not, when is the Premier planning to host this delegation?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** No, the delegation has not come yet. Like we do with folks in the international community as well as major mining companies — their very first stop is to have them, from a government perspective, meet with the Yukon Geological Survey because they just have all of the information about what the opportunities are.

The focus in that meeting was really the strong interest, of course, in critical minerals. We would then help facilitate some conversations with some of the junior mining companies that exist and are currently operating here in the Yukon — that are looking at different projects and focusing, for the most part, on critical minerals.

The other area we could help facilitate — what we tend to do is make sure that they are connected directly with the private sector and the Yukon Chamber of Mines. I think folks can understand, coming out of that meeting — that meeting was at 4:00 in the afternoon. The announcement by the Prime Minister of Canada was at 12:00 that night. We felt that it was a successful meeting, but we are just starting to see that activity begin to happen again between India and Canada. If they have interest in coming over to have those discussions with our industry — fantastic. I think it's important to say on the floor of the House today that this wasn't a primary focus. It was something that we felt was an important meeting, but it was really around talent attraction. It was around tourism. It was around a knowledge-based economy. It was around tech. Those were the other really important things at that portion of the journey that we really focused on.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** On to Labour Market Development, there is a budget of \$6.285 million in this section. This is down almost \$2 million from last year and previous budgets.

Can the minister explain the decrease and provide a breakdown of this funding?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The first item that we have seen a decrease in is — we had the Skills for Success. We had a two-year funding agreement in place with the federal government. It was just about \$1.4 million. The federal government has not renewed that fund, so that has been part of our decrease. Skills for Success was a funding program that was time-limited. It was actually \$1.48 million.

So, both the labour market development agreement and the workforce development agreement — collectively known as the “labour market transfer agreements” — include top-ups to the base funding established in 2017. Again, these top-ups expired on March 31, 2024, and provinces and territories are again looking to see what is going to be in the April 16 budget.

That was part of the funding, but we also had a decrease — give me just one second and I will pull my notes up right here. We also had a \$600,000 decrease and that was in our labour market transfer agreement overall. So, if you combine both of those, you will see that this was the challenge going into this year that we saw. Our deputy minister attended the FPT on this. There has been a lot of discussion across the country. We have voiced our concern with these decreases. Of course, with the labour market transfer — just stating the fact that we think it is a really important time to have those funds in place to help skill up Yukoners who are not part of the workforce and especially as we start to renew the labour market strategy, which now needs to be redone. It was done a number of years ago when the Labour Market Unit was in the Department of Education and now we have to start to do that work. We will be going out to have very significant discussions with Yukoners and organizations in the Yukon to understand what a modern strategy should look like. We want to be able to have the right tools to back up that work to get as many folks who are not part of our labour force into the labour force, and folks who are in the labour force who want to skill up to have more significant opportunities for themselves to be able to train them.

Again, we are keeping a close eye on the budget on April 16, but those were the significant changes and that is why you see a decrease in our labour market budget for this year.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Deputy Chair, the minister had mentioned new ways of addressing labour development, and I was looking through some of the fall briefing notes, and there seemed to have been quite a few lofty goals. I’m just going to quote a few of them: 11 organizations were to train 1,000 First Nation members to employment services and obtain workplace opportunities; 15 service providers were to provide 3,000 Yukoners to help them to develop fundamental skills to find work; and nine organizations were to provide employment assistance services to help 7,000 individuals to find and get employment. So, that is a total of 10,000 Yukoners — First Nation and others.

Were any of these goals achieved? Who were the organizations? How were they chosen? Who recruited members or people to come? I am just curious about this notation.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First, we would say that a lot of organizations have been leaders in the Yukon for a long time. We support organizations — the Warrior program is a great example and some of the other NGOs that are well known.

Part of that question was: Are you meeting your goals or have many of these goals been met? A tremendous amount of work has been done and a lot of the goals have been met. But what we normally do — we are finishing the year-end right now, and all of these organizations have an obligation to come back and just do their final reporting, reconciling what they spent and reconciling with the goals that are laid out in the appendices of their TPA. To be fair, I will be better prepared in the fall to let you know how this fiscal year has worked out, but I do feel that the organizations that we have partnered with have done a great job.

How do we pick them? Most of these organizations directly come to the department. There has been a long relationship of many years — a very long relationship. From time to time, depending on what funds we have available, we want to see new innovative ways to meet our goals and to get more people into the labour market, but we have been working with many of these organizations for a long period of time.

If, before the end of the session, we have any more updated information, I will do my best to bring that back, but we will have the final numbers for this year by the time we get to the fall and when we have all the final reports in from these organizations.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thank you for that answer. I look forward to seeing those numbers.

One other portion of that note stated that there were four organizations to support the trades and apprenticeship and provide subsidies to them to provide work experience and on-the-job training for 30 Yukoners. To me, this is the most important component that should be in the thousands — or hundreds, anyway. I think that to provide apprenticeship and on-the-job training is far more important than achieving another level of upgrading somewhere else.

Can the minister tell us if this program was fulfilled?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I am just asking officials to make sure that we can identify exactly which organizations. I am sure that before we get through our questions today, I will be able to come right back with an answer and we will have a sense of the four organizations.

I just want to make sure. I know who a couple of them are, but I want to make sure we have the right information for you and then I will just give you a sense of how — if we were fully subscribed — those numbers looked on the participation for those four programs.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I will also look forward to the uptake on providing more spots for the on-the-job training.

The Yukon nominee program — what is the Yukon’s current allocation of Yukon nominee applications, and how many will we be receiving this year?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Our current allocation for this year is 430.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** We continue to hear concerns from businesses about the wait times for some Yukon nominee

applications. Can the Premier assure local businesses that all businesses are treated equally and that all businesses have the same standard and policies applied in the review of their applications?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Just to give a little background on the application process, after we receive a complete application, the standard processing time by the Government of Yukon is 12 to 14 weeks. Processing times may vary with the volume of applications received and the complexity of the applications.

Following the Yukon nominee program approval, a nominee may need to apply to IRCC — the federal government — for a work permit. As of February 21, 2024, overseas nominees are subject to the processing times of the local visa office, which varies greatly by location, present capacity, or priorities, taking from as little as four weeks to 67 weeks, pending that process.

The overall processing of work permit applications from inside Canada is about 101 days. A permanent resident's application review by IRCC at the federal level — for the provincial or territorial nominees — is 13 months and seven months for express entries. As you can see, we can move the applications very quickly — just around three months for us — but then it goes into potentially a federal process. We have seen really long wait times when it comes to that.

We have worked over the years on a first-come, first-served basis when it comes to our nominee applications, but I will add a few things today. I have asked the department to look at the potential of prioritizing health care workers. We have not used that stream before for that purpose.

We want to make sure that we are onside when it comes to the organized labour. It is not something that the Yukon government has used previously; it was always from the private sector. We are looking into what our opportunities are there but also the fact that, if we are going to be seeing some of the opportunities come forward in a fruitful way from those trips last year and if we do need to recruit any international health care workers, this is an opportunity for us to be able to use some of our allotment.

At this time, we are keeping a close eye on how the allotments go out. To be fair, there is huge interest in those 430 spots. Where we are at right now is that we are continuing to see where we are on housing, we are continuing to see where we are on services, and we are really taking a look at those 430 spots right now as we go into the year. Are we actually going to fill those 430? There is interest to fill the 430, but we are really watching right now to see how we can keep up in other areas and ensure that the goals here will support our immigration strategy, which we will be releasing a little bit later in this calendar year.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** There has been a lot of development recently in Canada around the whole appropriate level of immigration that is coming in, so it is great to hear the Premier say that they are looking at all the other options — looking at services available locally, such as housing and our health care system — all these things get into crisis.

Does the Premier have to work with Canada to ensure that our levels are — even though we have been promised 430, could that be cut back?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think I understood the last part of it. They have allotted 430. Last year, they came back and gave more allotments to us. The position that we are in this year is that we have our 430. I am not writing any letters, as I did last year, requesting more spots. We want to work with the 430 and we are closely watching this.

We are very well aware of the national conversation that is happening and the conversation in the Yukon, and we want to be very aware of the pressures that are there.

We don't have to use all of those allotments. We can make those decisions inside the department. One of the things we do is that we will prioritize who has work permits. That's something that we can work through.

I have to say for the House that there is going to be pressure on us. As members of the opposition, you are going to get phone calls because certain businesses are going to say: Make sure you push the department and the minister responsible, because we want to see those applications going through.

We know that the entire structure and ecosystem in the Yukon is all driven by business. That's how it's set up, and it has been with an economic immigration focus. Our strategy work continues to be that, but we know — we want to make sure that we don't get to a place where Yukoners start to resent the immigration programs. We want to make sure that the immigration programs, which have been very well received — but I think that, for all of us in the House right now, whether you want to speak to this openly or not, there is a conversation happening out there around this and people have some concerns. We are listening to that and continuing to take a look at where we are on housing. We are continuing to listen to the medical sector, making sure that we listen to them and understand how our systems overall can support this. That is some of the key work that we're doing now.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Moving to another international agreement, the Filipino MOU was signed on March 18, 2022 with great fanfare. This was part of the Yukon nominee program and was meant to reduce costs and again cut red tape so that immigrants from the Philippines could come to the Yukon to work or join their families. Now, as I was witness to the amazing CFAY AGM last year, they are a vibrant and community-minded group of people who work.

Can the minister tell me where this MOU stands today? Have the guidelines been completed, and are there terms of reference to review?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** To walk back, I think that you are absolutely correct. I think that there was a lot of fanfare. The Philippine government and federal officials — at that point, we had a labour minister who attended and an ambassador call in. We were very excited about this opportunity. It was covered by media in Vancouver — some cultural, like Omni and others, that followed it.

We then went into a process where we started to work through the details of the agreement, which brought us into the next year, which was the federal election. So, there was a

federal election. I have spoken about this quite a bit, but I think it's important to go back. There was a federal election in the Philippines; there was a change in leadership and change in government. The first thing that happened was that the department that was in charge of negotiating with us — the responsibility moved to a different federal department in Manila. That was the first challenge.

Then we went through a process where there was a new individual in charge and that was getting delayed. Then last summer, we were in a position where the person who was in charge ended up passing on in August. I mean, this has been one thing after another. So, the actual individual in charge of the department passed away — again, a further delay. We have continued to have dialogue with, at that time, the ambassador as well as the consul general in Vancouver. The consul general in Vancouver ended up moving to the new role, and the new role was to be the ambassador. So, I think it was last spring when I had an opportunity to have discussions — again, it has been a good dialogue. But they are frustrated as well. They want to get this in place.

This is today — the team here just shared with me. This is from the very experienced diplomat for the Philippines who is the consul general in Vancouver, just saying basically: I'm sorry — we have both been following up regularly and consistently with the office.

Again, we are waiting on the Philippine government.

The comments that the member opposite made earlier about the vibrant community — absolutely. An incredible undertaking on the weekend and the population continuing to grow — again, so many folks coming from the Philippines. I think it's important to just again put on the record — we are still seeing a tremendous number of individuals coming from the Philippines to the Yukon.

Some of the things that we really wanted to do, which I think are important and are in line with the thinking of the department, include: How do we provide the appropriate orientation so that individuals can start to prepare before they leave the Philippines to come here? That is something that we want to have in place and that was part of the work that we were doing within the MOU.

There was a fee that was charged to individuals and the business community here, and individuals brought it to our attention that it was a fee, and I hope that I can characterize this appropriately, but it was about \$2,000 I think. There are probably other members of the House here who can speak to this better than I can.

That was collected in the Philippines, but they were funds that would normally be held so that if an individual was going back after working, it could be used to facilitate and administer some of that. Most individuals who were coming here through the nominee program were then making Yukon their home. We voiced that and said: Look, let's remove this fee. That was part of the work as well that was discussed and that we wanted to get done.

Reflecting on your research, you would see that Air North was with us that day and they were signing an agreement, which we helped to facilitate, with Philippine Airlines. That has been

extremely successful. That is what we have heard from the chief operating officer for Air North — that it has really worked out well. That is giving individuals that interline agreement — so, flying from the Philippines and then getting on an Air North flight, coming here, and being able to do some of that booking in their home language.

Again, there's some great stuff coming out of that, but — we really are — we have to wait for the federal government in the Philippines to be able to make that decision if they want to continue to finish off the work that is required for the MOU, but we will still continue to support the community and continue to be in a position where we see lots of folks coming over to meet with either their family or extended family or to start a new and exciting adventure here in the Yukon. We all know that this community is going to continue to be vibrant and grow and use the programs that we have in place.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** On the \$2,000 fee, was that a fee in the Philippines or in Canada? Is that federal or territorial?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** In the Philippines.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thank you for the clarification.

Now, going to the international health workers — in February, the minister announced federal funding for a new program related to internationally educated health professionals becoming accredited more quickly in Canada. At the briefing, the department provided us with some information, but I would like to ask the minister for a bit more.

The announcement suggested that this would help 150 people get accredited. Is that a correct number?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, over four years.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Has the first applicant been able to apply, or is this an upcoming event that is to happen?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Right now, we are structuring the team that will oversee and coordinate this. I think, in the briefing, there was some information shared about there being a couple of hires that we will be undertaking as well as a coordinator — some of that key work — and as well making sure that we are in line with the *Health Human Resources Strategy* work that has been done, which really encompasses all of the major leaders in this field from the university to the organized labour to the hospital to Health and Social Services to the trade organizations that represent nurses and the Yukon Medical Association.

That group will continue to do its work, and we are just making sure that we get ready to stand up. As you know, the announcement was made and funds will be coming into place. Now we are just putting the structure in place to ensure that we can do that work.

I know that there has been outreach done through Health and Social Services to the community to understand how many folks we can help, who some of those folks are, what their early training was in their home country, and how we can better understand how to help them.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Is the Yukon looking at making any regulatory changes to accommodate quicker accreditation of internationally educated professionals, or is this program strictly funding to help them get through the current system that we have in place?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We passed legislation here — all of us — last fall, so we did actually do that here in the House. That gave us some of the framework that will speed up the process, and then this will help us define other ways to officially help.

In some cases, we will use these funds to offset some of the expenditures that an individual will have. We have over 20 nurses whom we met with. Some of them are working in the health care sector, but they are really underemployed. They might be a health support worker, but they spent years as a registered nurse and they worked in the OR and they worked in other areas. Again, these are individuals whom we think we can help to offset costs. They might have to go through a testing protocol and do some bridging programs, but I think we will be able to better define that.

The real focus here that I am speaking about today is nursing, but we are going to be able to extend that out to other areas of expertise. Any folks who are here with us today will have an opportunity to — please, if you are listening or you hear this and you are in the health field, reach out to Health and Social Services or Economic Development.

We will continue to work with Community Services, which really handles all of the regulatory components of this work. They work with organizations like the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, as an example, and with Health and Social Services. As you remember, we signed an agreement with Nova Scotia last year. That agreement was a focus on trying to look at streamlining the credentialing of both — potentially for nurses or doctors. We have had discussions with the Government of Ontario as well and are having some good dialogue and agreement work there.

So, we are going to look at best practices across Canada. We're going to look at this new framework and the legislation that we passed here in the House. We're going to make sure that we also look at some existing processes that get us to new opportunities for folks to be credentialed and fully employed here in the Yukon.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I will move on to the temporary landlord and tenant program. This was a program that was put in place to bridge the gap that was created between the CASA rent cap agreement between the Liberals and the NDP, a five-percent-allowable rent increase. But the inflation rate was higher — 6.8 — so this process was meant to cover the difference.

As an incentive to keep landlords in the rental market, was there a way to monitor if this program was successful?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, I feel that it was successful. We ended up supporting 2,534 units: In the condo and apartment sector, which was about 46 percent of this, we did 1,169 units; for mobile homes, it was about 25 percent, for 627; for multiplexes and houses, 604 units; garden units and basement suites, 133 units. We heard from many folks that they appreciate it. I spoke with a landlord this week who had multiple properties and is continuing to look to investing, and they felt very strongly about this. So, I do think it was successful.

Of course, now we are in that position where — 4.9 percent was the number for inflation and the cap was five percent, so it

is well within the opportunity to absorb all of what we would see in inflation and 0.1 percent more. So, at this point, we didn't have to deploy this program this year.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** If this spread should happen in upcoming years, is the minister considering doing this program again?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** No, we're not.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I'm sorry, Deputy Chair. I was distracted; I didn't hear.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** No problem. No, we are not.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Is the government still accepting applications, or has it timed out?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, it was the last fiscal year, so it has timed out at this point.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Is the minister aware of any human rights complaints against the department by current or former employees? If so, what are they and what is the status of these complaints?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will make sure that I go back and speak to officials, and if there is anything that should be brought to the House, we will bring it to the House.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I would like to thank the minister and the officials for some good dialogue today. I would like to turn it over to the Third Party.

**Ms. White:** I thank my colleague for Porter Creek North for the questions and, of course, say hello to the officials and the minister today as we have a conversation around the Department of Economic Development.

I know that we touched on the Skagway marine platform in the supplementary, so I will probably stay away from that; although, in large part, there are a lot of reasons to go back into it.

One of the things, when we had the briefing on the mains, was the memorandum of understanding with the Philippines, and there was a discussion about being supplied with terms of reference, what its purpose was, how we were going to action it, and what we could expect the effects to be — so if the minister could share about that.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Sure. When we looked at the MOU, we heard from the community. I touched on this earlier in debate today. There was a cost that was being applied by the Philippine government that, we heard from the community, we really should be able to negotiate having it removed. We wanted to make sure that individuals had an opportunity to go through orientation before they came here. We wanted them to have an understanding of the program that they were using here. I will just go through some very detailed information here.

We were looking at improving the ability for folks to be identified in recruiting through the nominee process; supports and safety for Filipino nominees coming to the Yukon through requirements for Yukon employers under the Yukon nominee program; formalizing the Yukon-Philippines cooperation on labour mobility and the Yukon nominee program through the creation of a joint committee; waives existing fees applied to Filipino-Yukon nominee applicants and clarifies the interaction between the Yukon nominee program and the Philippines' pre-screened and vetted pool of qualified Philippine workers. The

department, again — we started that process in 2021. As I shared today during debate, we would love to have that concluded, but it is really in the hands of the Filipino government, and it is important to note again that the department that we originally started this work with — the responsibilities moved to a different federal department, and then we had an individual who was in charge of that federal department pass on last year.

I spoke today about the e-mail that we received this morning from the consul general in Vancouver stating that they are still waiting to get approval so that we can conclude that work.

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

Just as we think about departments as a whole — so, the whole — we talk about things like *Our Clean Future*, and we talk about a whole-of-government approach and such. One of the things that I have been asking in each department, because I think that it is an important one, is that I am interested to know what the carbon footprint of the department is so, when we look at that, we can talk about office space, we can talk about vehicles, and we can talk about travel out of office, et cetera, et cetera.

First of all, I am interested in what the carbon footprint of the department is, and then I want to know what the plans are to reduce that. If we have an all-of-government or territory approach to reduce by 45 percent, I want to know how the Department of Economic Development is going to do that with their own department.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The department's building — of course, we are housed in one building. It is leased, and therefore, the Yukon Bureau of Statistics — we don't have access to the data for the building, but look, I think that this question has been asked across departments, and I think that it has really triggered even more due diligence from department to department.

The department — we don't have dedicated fleet vehicles for work use; therefore, there is no current traceable emissions for this kind of transportation, but from 2010 to 2019, the department had between four to eight tonnes of emissions from fleet vehicles per year. The average annual emissions for the years that we have data for was 5.6 tonnes.

What we try to do is make sure that we're using modern technology as much as we can, where we are actually having folks on different platforms versus what we saw in the past where there was a lot of driving out to communities by some of our team. I will say that it is a fine line, because we do feel that there are important times for us to be meeting face-to-face on these particular topics. Again, that is some of the work. The department works in collaboration with all other Yukon government departments and entities toward the goals of the *Our Clean Future* strategy. The department is directly responsible for and working toward three actions under the strategy. The department also incorporates considerations of greenhouse gas emissions into decision-making through its funding programs and other supports, such as through the economic development fund.

There is a little more information on those three. So, action 13 from *Our Clean Future*: identify and develop options to address potential regulatory and policy barriers to the growth of green businesses in the Yukon by 2023. The department is working to complete action 13 but has deferred an item in order to conduct additional research. Completion of action 13 will be informed in part by work the department is doing on two new OCF actions for 2024, and those are due in 2025. Action 17 from *Our Clean Future* is to undertake a needs assessment and related analysis to include the green labour market in the Yukon labour market development strategy. We are very excited that we are right now going out in the first stage of building our new labour market strategy. That gives us an opportunity to include and consider action 17. Action C22: develop terms and conditions for business support programs, as well as departmental operating procedures, ready to be used in the event of a climate change natural disaster in the Yukon. So, there are a number of pieces there.

Under action item 13 — a bit of background — in early 2022, the department conducted a survey of 276 Yukon businesses and not-for-profits to determine whether they had made specific efforts to reduce their carbon footprint and what the major barriers were to these key findings. Not surprisingly, cost was the main barrier at about 54 percent, and 23 percent stated that the lack of time to research and decide on options was a major barrier. Other barriers included: insufficient subsidies, 19 percent; lack of knowledge in government, 15 percent; and rules and regulations. Again, it was good for us to be able to garner that information.

A follow-up focus group was held to explore the issues in greater depth, and key findings were: a bit of challenges with the audits, especially in the communities; and audits and upgrades, the pricing on that, and the time consumed to justify; and the time, risk, and cash outlay compared to the value for rebates.

Just a few things there that are an education for us on how we need to figure out, as we move forward, how to better support those organizations to undertake some of that work — some key work that we will be doing this year — and, again, working across government on the overall strategy.

**Ms. White:** Understanding that the Department of Economic Development does not have its own cars but uses fleet vehicles, again, my suggestion, going into the future, is logging kilometres and understanding where departmental officials and employees are going, the amount of time travelled in the car — the difference between travelling with one person or three people in a vehicle. I ask this 100 percent knowing that, within our own offices, very rarely do we drive more than one vehicle to any one place. So, it is often loaded up, and off we go.

I guess I am looking into the future and, in large part, after a conversation that I had with a friend of mine who put a different spin on it for me, which is: Instead of talking about it as a whole, how does each piece within government do that reduction? Knowing that some departments will be able to reduce very quickly by changing some actions that they do but

others may not — but just to see how each of them is responsible.

There is a document in the minister's portfolio called the "Yukon nominee program policy", and its effective date is May 5, 2021. I am just highlighting that right now in hopes that his officials can pull it up, because I have questions specifically about some of those lists. Again, it is called the "Yukon nominee program policy", and its date is May 5, 2021. I will leave that for a second in the hope that someone can pull it up electronically, and then we can have an informed conversation about that.

Within the nominee program and any other immigration program that the Yukon government does, are those programs ever audited either for their efficiency, their efficacy, whether or not — you know, having interviews with businesses and individuals who were brought over on the nominee program? Has that ever been audited?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I know that, at least during my time in this role with responsibility, there have been discussions that have happened, and they have been with clients. We had that discussion where we felt it was appropriate to go out and get feedback from clients as well as from businesses which are also clients of ours.

I can come back. I don't have, at my fingertips, findings, but yes, there have been discussions to see where there can be improvements, making sure that clients are well-supported. There have been times, because processing times have been delayed, which has happened here before. We are making sure that we have an opportunity to look at improvements on those processing times.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I have been adamant in my time here. Initially, the nominee program and the immigration programs were in Education — years ago. It has moved.

I understand, from the perspective of Yukon, that it is viewed as an economic program, but after having conversations with many folks who have come over as nominees, honestly, it's an immigration program. It's a way to get a foot in the door in Canada. It's a way to become a permanent resident, and it's a way to be able to set down roots here. I think it's incredibly important, and it means that, as representatives of the Yukon government, we have a responsibility to make sure that people are not being taken advantage of, that they are being treated with the respect that they deserve — the dignity that they deserve — and that the program is not being abused.

I am always going to ask if we have audited, if we have looked, if we have done that research. I know, at one point in time, three wasn't, for example, the random business checks. They weren't just going to where employees were to see how things were, and it was just a complaint-driven process, which puts people in very vulnerable spots. The reason why I ask is because I think it is important.

I am just going to ask the minister if we have the Yukon nominee policy available.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, we will do our very best to speak to this. I think it's important to identify the fact that there is a tripartite agreement as well which identifies responsibilities.

Again, that is between the client and the government. It is also important to note, when you are talking about immigration in Canada, that the IRCC — the federal government — plays a very, very important role. We have a bilateral agreement between Canada and the Yukon, and that really gives us this ability to use the Yukon nominee program, but again, Canada plays a very key role in this work. I just want to table that, but we'll do our best to answer any specific questions on the policy that you may have today.

**Ms. White:** So, looking at the Yukon nominee program policy with an effective date of May 5, 2021, I just have some questions about eligible employers. Under "Employers", it says: "To be eligible to make an application under the YNP, an employer must meet the following criteria...", must be a permanent resident of Canada and must have owned and operated in the Yukon. Within that, 1.1.2.3 says: "... a municipal, First Nation or territorial government for at least one year prior to the application to the [Yukon nominee program]". I'm looking for clarification for that clause, 1.1.2.3.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'm going to just go back again just to clarify exactly what the question is as it pertains to the policy on that last piece. I know it was around the First Nation and municipality, but I just want to make sure I understand it exactly as stated.

**Ms. White:** I'm happy to clarify. So, 1.1.2.3 says: "... a municipal, First Nation or territorial government for at least one year prior to the application to the YNP..." That is under the section that says: "To be eligible to make an application under the YNP, an employer must meet the following criteria..."

I'm looking — I'm trying to understand if the territorial government is able to have nominees.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, we have gone to the Public Service Commission, we've gone through our agreement, and the understanding is that, yes, we are.

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

Are there currently any Yukon nominees working within Yukon government?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Not that I'm aware of. I'll go back to take a look with our team. The reason we investigate this is that, as I spoke to earlier, we're looking to make sure that we have some pathways available to us if we look to the recruitment of health care professionals from foreign destinations.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. It was mostly a point of interest and curiosity, but I am happy to know that clarity has been sought on that.

I would like to move to the paid sick leave program and to talk about — well, just to talk about the paid sick leave program. I think that it is something that the minister can highlight. I am interested to know how many people applied, for example, previously and how much money is budgeted for that program this year.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The paid sick leave rebate program — a bit of broader information — supports eligible Yukon workers, employees and self-employed, who earn less than the average private sector wage at \$33.94 per hour. The program provides 40 hours of leave per 12-month period. It includes all

illnesses and injuries not covered by the act. As of April 3, 2024, \$491,732 in rebates had been approved for the 2023-24 fiscal year. Of that amount, \$423,682, or 86 percent, has been paid to workers.

I will just jump ahead a little bit. I'm going back through some of the preparation in the budget work that we did — budget preparation — with opposition. As of April 3, 2024, 949 workers at 160 businesses had been approved for rebates. As of April 3, 2024, the breakdown for approved rebates was: retail trade, 45 percent; accommodation and food services, 17 percent; health and social assistance, 12 percent; construction, six percent; manufacturing, three percent; other sectors, 13 percent; and unidentified sectors at this time, five percent.

**Ms. White:** Deputy Chair, I appreciate that. In all of the notes that I took, I didn't put the date down of the Economic Development briefing, so it's interesting to know that between the briefing and April 3, it went from — at the briefing, it was 135 businesses — to know that it went up to 160 businesses. So, I believe that it's showing that it's effective. When we give people the ability to stay home when they're sick, it makes sense.

What is the minister's plan going forward? Is this going to be made permanent in the way that it is, or what's the plan going forward?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Well, we have \$750,000 in the budget that we're debating today. Our goal was to run this for two years and be able to analyze the program and be able to hear from the individuals using it, so part of that work is to really run it as a pilot and understand if it's being well-used. It looks like it is.

We're getting mixed information on it. I think the individuals who are using it deserve to have it. I think it's a strong program. I think the department should have had more accolades on the work that they have done. We debated in the House; we debated it. One of your colleagues had an opportunity, Deputy Chair, to discuss some changes and we moved to make those changes, which I thought did make the program stronger.

We have had some feedback from the business community — a couple of businesses that feel that it might be abused, but again, we think that it's important for folks, especially the ones we're trying to support here, that they have it. I think right now that we'll continue, as we go through this year, to look at the uptake, understand how many folks were supporting it, see if there's greater uptake, and I think that will give us a sense about how we look at preparing for next year's budget and if there are any specific changes that we have to make to the program.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister. I just got a note that said the briefing for Economic Development was March 15, so just knowing that change between March 15 and April 3 — not a surprise with spring cold season, spring illness season, and there's a pretty nasty flu going around, so I'm glad that all those folks were able to stay home and didn't take it out into the general public.

There was a comment made in the supplementary about using rail infrastructure for both tourism and industry and that the department is looking at re-engaging with the company that

owns White Pass. Could the minister just expand on that, please?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, I believe it was identified in the 2020-21 platform in the election, and part of the follow-up was to meet with White Pass. They have come under new ownership, and there are also discussions with the infrastructure group that owns White Pass.

We requested that they partner with the Yukon government to do a feasibility study around the use of the existing rail line from Carcross — there's still an easement in place that they have access to that would be able to bring the rail line closer to Whitehorse — and also looking at the potential for moving goods on that line over and above the tourism traffic that we're seeing today. I met with the department just a couple of weeks ago. We had our senior team meeting and went through the list of things that we've been able to undertake and accomplish since 2021, and this was one that we still want to put some focus on. Our senior team is just looking to figure out how we can continue to engage.

There has been a commitment from White Pass on this, and it's really just putting the dollars in place and looking at the scope of work to be able to see this. It's high level because there is a high-level technical study. We have had folks in the mining sector as well who have an interest in that opportunity. You can imagine — Skagway right now is moving toward 1.4 million visitors this summer. It is going to be the 18<sup>th</sup> busiest of all cruise ship destinations in the entire world. The downtown core has a tremendous amount of traffic, and I think it's prudent for us to work with the local community and White Pass to understand if there is a way to move goods in and out of Skagway without disrupting the tremendous amount of traffic that's happening during the summer season. That is just some of the work that we will be able to talk about later in the fall, but, again, it's a narrow-gauge track. They have very specific cars that they're using for tourism traffic, and we have to look to see what the options are now.

The organization that owns White Pass is the Carrix group. Carrix is owned by Blackstone. Blackstone is the largest infrastructure company in the entire world. They have a trillion dollars in assets, so if there is any organization that would have the ability to look at something like this — if there was a good, feasible opportunity — they probably would have the backing. It was a positive meeting. It was the previous deputy minister and me who met with Blackstone. They just want to see what's going to happen within this jurisdiction to drive their priority and interest.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

During the briefing, we were told that between January 1 and December 31, 2023, there were nine business concepts assessed for the business nominee program, but none were accepted yet.

Can the minister help me understand — of course, without divulging anything that can't be — the types of businesses that were brought forward and then what the process is for approving or not approving? Because if nine applied and none were accepted, what do we see going into 2024?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I am going to come back to the member opposite because I'm not aware — I don't know what the businesses are. It's not something that gets shared with our office. I do know that there is — from my understanding, and the officials can correct me if I am wrong, there are a number of individuals who sit on a committee that assesses those, and that has been the process for a number of years. I believe there are folks from the Yukon government, and there is independent of that. If we do have a note on it, I will share it today before we finish, but I will endeavour to get back.

I also need to understand if I am allowed to share this information, because I don't have it myself. I can give you a little bit of background, some of the information the officials have today: Since 2001, 52 candidates have been nominated for the permanent residency through the Yukon business nominee program, establishing 32 businesses and investing \$25.3 million into their businesses in the Yukon.

The YBNP participants are required to contribute a minimum of \$300,000 to their business in the Yukon and have a minimum verifiable net worth of \$500,000 to ensure that their businesses are viable. Again, although immigration may be a factor in resolving some of our shortages, again, there are other challenges, such as we have to take into consideration community retention and some of the constraints that we have for seasonal workers.

Once a nominee has received their permanent resident status, they are no longer part of the Yukon nominee program, and the Yukon does not actively collect any information on folks after they have been out of our program.

Specifically to this, the YBNP aims to attract and retain skilled international entrepreneurs who inject new capital and business expertise into the Yukon economy, creating jobs and opportunities and enhancing economic diversification and growth within the territory.

The program has successfully attracted entrepreneurs to the hospitality sector, the service sector, tourism, arts, and agricultural sectors in Dawson City, Mayo, Faro, Haines Junction, and Whitehorse. Between January 1 and December 31, 2023, nine business concepts were assessed under the program, while no new business owners were welcomed to the program in 2023.

Economic Development continues to support foreign nationals who are interested in starting. I will just try to get back to you about what I can share about what happened with the applications and why they weren't there. Also, I think we will just try to get a little bit of information — I remember that there is a committee that does some work, so if we have any information on that, I will just let you know before we finish questions today.

**Ms. White:** Deputy Chair, I thank the minister for that. If there is the ability to share information about that, I'm happy for it. Yes, in all honesty, there are other departments that I would like to talk about, so I am going to take my seat and help us move on.

**Mr. Dixon:** I will be fairly brief, but I wanted to return to the issue of the port with the Premier. When we left off at

supplementary debate, I had a few questions that I would like to follow up on.

The Premier had said that he had consulted with industry prior to the decision to remove the money from this year's budget for the port — or from the 2023-24 budget for the port — and push that into future years in an unnamed line item at some point in the near future. Can the minister tell us with whom he consulted in industry about that decision and at what point that happened?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Over the last year, coming up to the budget decisions, there was a — you know, a consistent dialogue. You know, my understanding from our officials is that there was — because I checked to see if we were meeting and consulting with folks around this decision — not around this decision but just even around the project — and they had been continuing to have a dialogue throughout this time. As we moved up toward this project, my understanding — if I'm wrong and the member opposite knows something that I have missed — is that we talked to industry. A lot of the work has been through the infrastructure committee, and that's my sense — that a senior advisor was having a dialogue as well as some of our officials. In some cases, the former deputy minister — I know from my briefings — said that he was reaching out and speaking with industry directly. You know, that would be some of the organizations that represent the sector as well as specific companies that have a great interest in this potential new infrastructure. That is the dialogue that was happening.

You know, did I sit down directly, pre-budget, to say: This money, are we going to move it to one particular group? I don't recall that, but what I can say is that we have tried to make sure that we have spoken to industry through the whole process — even to the process of what the options were that we were looking at from the marine services platform right through to the conversation around container bulkhauling versus conveyor. We heard loud and clear as well from industry that they really felt that the conveyor system was something that would be more appropriate for them, but that also led to a conversation around what the state of affairs was in Skagway, in the borough, which was that there is a newly elected official — a new mayor, I should say. The new mayor and council had more questions for industry, which we then had an opportunity to make sure that they connected to have those conversations.

Right now, we are watching what is happening with Minto and that project to see if it is going to go right into a reclamation process or continue a reclamation process or if there is going to be the potential of operations resuming. That puts a little more pressure on a timeline to understand if you need that option right away, coming out of Skagway. Then there are other organizations, like Western Copper, which have an interest in the long-term investment. I know that they just had conversations last week with the organization.

I think that there is good dialogue happening between industry. I know that there is a commitment from industry to continue to have a dialogue there. I don't believe that we have missed communication that caused any challenges. I think that we are just going to continue to make sure that industry,

government, and the borough of Skagway have continuing conversations about where we are going.

I can even pre-empt some questions and say that, for this year, what we are really working on is that we have a non-binding agreement we want to continue to work over this year. Our officials are looking at — every two weeks, right now — continuing that negotiation, continuing to be active in that dialogue. We also had offered up to industry and to the officials there to maybe look at some modernized infrastructure with a conveyor system in another part of the world. So, the budget for this would come out of our own operational budget to offset that cost, if it's something that comes to fruition. This year is really focused on making sure that we can get this agreement in place so that, next year, we can go through a tendering process again, and that is why we have pushed those dollars out to next year.

**Mr. Dixon:** I believe that the minister just said that he had pushed those dollars off to next year. Can he just clarify: In what year is the funding for the Skagway port actually sitting currently?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It's in the five-year capital plan. I think what we will do is let Highways and Public Works hold those dollars, and when they come in to negotiate or to budget or debate the mains, they will have an opportunity to speak to that and the five-year capital budget where those funds sit.

**Mr. Dixon:** Last year, the funds were put in Economic Development's capital budget. What was the reason for this switch from Economic Development to highways for the capital money?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It's identified in the overall capital budget for Highways and Public Works. Whether we look at a different process where highways, in the future of this project, looks to continue to hold that or we just, as we come into next year's budget, look to move it and reallocate it over to Economic Development — that will be depending on what happens with the negotiations of the agreement this year.

**Mr. Dixon:** Can the minister tell us a little bit more about the timeline for the negotiation of that binding agreement? He said that they are meeting every two weeks. When do they anticipate completing that agreement? Are there any milestones that we should be looking to in the next little while that would represent progress?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Right now, our goal is to continue negotiations throughout the spring and summer, hopefully being in a position to conclude negotiations as we get into the fall of this calendar year. We believe that will give us an opportunity to really be in a position to look at some of the tendering work.

What I can share with the House is that the conversation with the mayor and council — specifically the mayor — the direction is to really focus on — they really want to focus on the binding agreement. I don't want to predetermine a timeline to put extra pressure on that table and negotiation. Why? Because I think it's important — as the member opposite says: What are your goals, and what are your milestones? We have an obligation to move this forward, and we're watching what is

happening within the whole mining sector, understanding how it will be important for us to do our work efficiently.

Also, there is so much sensitivity. Right now, we are in a position where the community has directly said to industry: We want you to spend more time with us, and we want you to provide accurate data on what we think there's going to be — for instance, how many trucks are going through our community? When are those trucks going to come through our community? What is the timeline on those? All of those conversations inevitably will affect what is happening at the table as we look to have the binding agreement in place.

As another member opposite who was asking questions earlier asked: Where are you at on rail? I think we are going to be in a position at some point where people in Skagway are going to ask: What are these other options? Is there a rail option? Why? Well, because, depending on how many trucks are coming through and if there are two or three operating projects in the future and then you take the potential congestion into consideration as well as where we are on border crossings — all of those things are going to have an effect on the conversation. Our goal right now is to look to conclude the binding agreement later this year. We have had a bit of discussion, looking at it in the fall.

Again, the department anticipates completing negotiations in the remainder of the calendar year. Based on that, the department has set a notional target end date for April or May of 2026 for negotiations and construction. So, we are looking to be able to go into a tendering process with next year's mains budget.

**Mr. Dixon:** Could the minister just repeat that last piece? He said that they are shooting for May in 2026. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yeah, that was for completion of construction of the project, so we are looking at having the negotiation done later in this calendar year. We are looking to have funds in next year's spring budget dedicated toward this and then going out through a tendering process.

It is important to say how it worked. The municipality has overseen the tendering. Also, there were some concerns at the municipal level about some of the data they wanted, but there were also some concerns around the pricing that did come back at that time when the borough finished the process.

**Mr. Dixon:** Earlier today, the Premier was discussing the White Pass & Yukon Route rail and he mentioned that he met with Blackstone. I am wondering if he can tell us where and when that meeting occurred.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It occurred — I can go back and look at the exact dates, but I believe it was June of 2022. I have to go back and take a look. I think it was June of 2022, and it was in New York and it was one day. We flew into New Jersey in an evening, got up the next day, had our meeting, and flew out the following day. We had an opportunity to meet with them at their headquarters to discuss this project. It was June — it might have been the end of May but June of 2022, I think — spring of 2022.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, that meeting occurred either in spring or June of 2022? I'm sure we can find out the details there. And the Premier said it was to discuss — quote: “this project”, so which project was he referring to when he said “this project”? Was he referring to the port or was he referring to some other project?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The potential for working with the organization to look at retrofitting or potentially expanding the activity on the rail.

For the record, June 15, 2022 is the date that the meeting occurred on this particular topic.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development?

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

**Ms. White:** Deputy Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried**

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures***

***Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$26,171,000 agreed to***

***On Capital Expenditures***

***Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$1,013,000 agreed to***

***Total Expenditures in the amount of \$27,184,000 agreed to***

***Department of Economic Development agreed to***

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

**Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole**

**Deputy Chair:** At this time, I will ask if any private member wishes to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole, as I would like to take part in the debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment.

*Member for Takhini-Kopper King rises*

**Department of Environment**

**Acting Chair (Ms. White):** Is there any general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Madam Acting Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce officials to my right and to my far right. To my immediate right is Deputy Minister Michael Prochazka, and to his right is Assistant Deputy Minister Briar Young from the Department of Environment. I look forward to the main estimates debate on Environment this afternoon.

I stand today as Yukon's Minister of Environment to provide an overview of the work that our government is doing to protect the Yukon's vibrant environment and to build a stronger and more resilient territory.

Before I continue, I want to acknowledge that we are all here on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and we recognize all 14 Yukon First Nations. Yukon First Nations have been stewards of the Yukon's natural environment since time immemorial.

The success of the Yukon is dependent on the success of the natural health of the Yukon. For generations, Yukon First Nations and Yukoners have depended on our territory's environment for their livelihood and quality of life. It is critical that our government continues to work every day to ensure that our environment is healthy, sustainable, and resilient to change.

The Yukon's Department of Environment is doing critical work now to ensure that future generations of Yukoners inherit a territory that is healthy and values our fish and waters, wildlife and their habitats, our air, lands, and climate. I am proud to say that the Yukon continues to be a leader in Canada at advancing climate change action, nature protection, and resource management. This is due in large part to the work of the many hydrologists, parks staff, conservation officers, scientists, and biologists who make up the department.

We tend to speak of the expansive, impressive work that government does without recognizing that it is truly the work of a group of dedicated public servants who are passionate about creating stronger, more inclusive, and sustainable communities. I want to take a moment to touch on how the Government of Yukon Department of Environment is supporting the work of those people.

Today, I present to the Yukon Legislative Assembly the Department of Environment main estimates, which include a capital and operation and maintenance budget of \$62.23 million for the 2024-25 fiscal year. Overall, this budget represents an increase of approximately \$770,000 over the 2023-24 estimates — a 1.3-percent increase since last year. The operation and maintenance budget for 2025 is approximately \$55.6 million, which includes \$11.8 million that is fully

recoverable through our partnership with the Government of Canada.

The capital estimate is just over \$6.6 million for the 2024-25 fiscal year, with \$975,000 of this being fully recoverable. This is an increase of \$2.58 million from the capital estimates for the 2023-24 fiscal year. In 2024-25, the Department of Environment expects to collect over \$15.4 million in recoveries and revenue. This includes over \$12.6 million in recoverable funds through our partnerships with the Government of Canada.

Through the efforts of the Department of Environment, the Yukon is seeing more funds brought to our territory in order to advance critical environmental initiatives, while reducing the impact on the Yukon's fiscal framework. The department's ability to secure funding is allowing our territory to be an environmental leader in the country. I thank the department for their work in advocating at a national level to secure these funds for the Yukon.

I would like to now talk about how that money is being spent and how it will improve the lives of Yukoners while creating a more sustainable territory. We continue to live in a rapidly changing world. We are experiencing the effects of climate change first-hand not only in the Yukon but throughout Canada and across the world. Last year, we welcomed our neighbours fleeing from devastating forest fires in Yellowknife while also supporting evacuees from the communities of Mayo and Old Crow here at home.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing the Yukon for the effects of climate change is a priority for our government and needs to be at the forefront of every decision we make as leaders. *Our Clean Future*, the Yukon's climate change, energy, and green economy strategy, represents an adaptive, ever-evolving approach to tackling climate change. We knew that we would need to strengthen our approach year over year as we considered new research, new technology, assessed our progress, and received input from others.

In December 2023, we introduced 42 new *Our Clean Future* actions to embolden climate action. The new actions will strengthen our efforts on two key fronts. First, they will allow our territory to adapt and build our resilience to climate change impacts, and second, they will further reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to slow climate change and better protect our environment.

Alongside the announcement of new ambitious climate actions, we also launched a new *Our Clean Future* website. The website provides a central location for Yukoners to learn about how climate change is impacting our territory, see the progress that we are making to implement actions under *Our Clean Future*, and learn about the steps that we can all take to address climate change. *Our Clean Future* actions aim to not only empower Yukoners in reducing their emissions in their daily lives but also support the Government of Yukon in creating better environmental practices and reducing our emissions as a government.

In our most recent report on greenhouse gas emissions, we reported that the Government of Yukon's total greenhouse gas emissions were 49.9 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent,

most of which comes from heating buildings and transportation. Of this, government departments emitted about three-quarters of this amount, with the remaining portion attributable to Crown corporations and Yukon University.

Of this amount, the Department of Environment's emissions were a very small portion, accounting for 0.97 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. The Government of Yukon continues to take action to further reduce our emissions, such as adding electric vehicles to our fleet and investing in renewable electricity and low-carbon heating. For example, the Tombstone Interpretive Centre now generates most of its electricity from solar panels and is primarily heated by wood.

We know that addressing climate change cannot be accomplished by the one government acting alone. It will take the collective effort of us all to reduce the impact of climate change and to ensure that we develop sustainable communities for future generations of our shared global community.

The 2024-25 main estimates include \$1.25 million in additional funds to keep up the momentum on climate change preparedness in the Yukon. This money includes \$500,000 in core funding for the Climate Change Secretariat to ensure that their team can continue to advance critical climate change actions across the territory. We are also investing \$438,000 for a mobile incident response team that will support upgrades to aging emergency response infrastructure in Carmacks and develop tools and guidance to ensure that climate hazards are reflected in the planning on and the maintenance of Government of Yukon buildings.

The investments we are making now to ensure that our buildings and infrastructure are resilient to climate change will frankly pay dividends in ensuring that we do not have to invest large sums of money to deal with it in the future. All this funding is fully recoverable through agreements with the Government of Canada.

We will continue to build on our adaptation commitments like this and others in *Our Clean Future* while working with the federal government, stakeholders, experts, and knowledge-holders to advance climate resilience in the Yukon. Through both big and small steps, we continue to take swift action in adapting to and reducing the rate of climate change.

The science on climate change is clear: We will face more and more extreme weather events like wildfires, flooding, poor air quality, landslides, and highway washouts as our climate continues to change. It is now more important than ever that we plan ahead to prepare for and reduce the impacts of future climate events that could jeopardize our health, safety, and way of life in the Yukon.

One of the ways that we are planning ahead to prepare and reduce climate change impacts is working to better understand exactly what those impacts might be. Over the next nine years, the Government of Yukon is producing flood hazard maps for 14 flood-prone communities across the Yukon. These communities include Carcross, Tagish, Marsh Lake, Lake Laberge, Teslin, Old Crow, Ross River, Dawson City, Klondike Valley, Mayo, Upper Liard, Pelly Crossing, and Whitehorse.

This past winter, the Department of Environment released draft flood hazard maps for the Southern Lakes communities and Carmacks for public input. Flood hazard maps will provide many different scenarios of potential flooding and will allow the Government of Yukon, communities, and homeowners to better understand flooding in the territory and to build safer and more resilient Yukon communities.

In the coming months, we will be releasing a “what we heard” report outlining the feedback that we received from Yukoners and Yukon First Nations on draft flood hazard maps for the Southern Lakes area and Carmacks. I anticipate that final flood hazard maps for these communities will be made publicly available this spring. These maps, once complete, will ensure that everyone is informed of the potential flood risk to their properties and allow governments and residents to take action to mitigate and respond to the increasing flooding we are seeing in the territory due to climate change.

In the coming months, we will be reaching out to Yukoners and Yukon First Nations to receive their feedback on the flood hazard maps developed for Teslin. The Department of Environment will invest an additional \$316,000 to continue flood-mapping work in multiple Yukon communities in fiscal 2024-25, funding that is 100-percent recoverable through our partnership with the Government of Canada.

The next communities scheduled to receive flood-mapping studies will be Old Crow, Dawson City, and the Klondike Valley, with work occurring in 2024 and 2025. As official flood maps continue to be developed, the Department of Environment will work with all levels of government and Yukon’s Emergency Measures Organization to support flood preparation, mitigation, and response.

It’s no secret that Yukon’s waste management and recycling systems have been facing challenges. We know that Yukoners want to do their part in reducing their waste and building greener communities. The Government of Yukon has committed to increasing waste diversion to 40 percent by 2030, and we are making substantial progress in reaching that target. In 2022, the diversion rate was 30 percent, compared to 25 percent in 2020.

The Government of Yukon is working with partners across the territory, including industry, the City of Whitehorse, communities, and other government departments, in order to develop an efficient and cost-effective waste diversion system. A piece of this is working toward implementing an extended producer responsibility framework in the territory. *Our Clean Future* commits the Yukon to implement extended producer responsibility, also known as EPR, by 2025 as part of an effort to increase waste diversion to 40 percent by 2030. EPR shifts the cost of recycling from taxpayers and communities to the producers of packaging and hazardous waste.

In January of this year, Yukon’s extended producer responsibility regulation came into force, making it an important milestone in our territory’s journey to a stable and successful waste diversion system. While every province in Canada has established — or is in the process of establishing — an EPR program, the Yukon is the first of the northern territories to adopt EPR. EPR will provide a long-lasting

solution to the underlying issues facing the Yukon’s recycling system and will reduce the cost of recycling to Yukon taxpayers and municipalities.

Over the next two years, the Government of Yukon will transition responsibility for managing non-refundable recyclables and a range of hazardous and special products to the producers of these materials. Once implemented, large producers and the manufacturers of residential packaging and household hazardous waste will be tasked with funding and managing the collection, handling, and recovery of those materials. While the specific details of the Yukon’s new waste management approach are in the process of being determined, during the stewardship plan development period, Yukoners can expect the same or better access to waste collection and recovery services as they have now.

I am proud of the progress made on this file to date and look forward to the next steps of implementation with producer responsibility organizations, industry, and the business community. I certainly have a lot more material to cover, but perhaps at this time it would be an opportune time for me to conclude my opening comments and to start to answer questions from the members opposite.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Thank you, Madam Acting Chair, and I do want to thank the minister for his opening remarks and thank the staff in the House here today assisting the minister and all those listening on — I can’t remember the channel, but with their phones ready to go to Hansard.

I will jump right in here. I asked a question in Question Period the other day about outfitter quotas. I just want to follow up on that.

Can the minister confirm that he is unwilling or unable to share the legal opinion that he has received that says that the multi-year quotas are inconsistent with the *Wildlife Act*? If he is unwilling to do so, can he at least tell us if the legal opinion was an internal one from Yukon government lawyers, or was it sourced externally from outside government?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Establishing quotas for all big game species for all outfitters is a complex process that requires balancing the sustainability of wildlife populations with the rights of Yukon First Nations, the needs of Yukon residents, and the commercial interests of outfitters. It is the Government of Yukon’s position that there is no authority to issue multi-year quotas on an annual operating certificate under section 54 of the *Wildlife Act*. Recognizing the certainty that multi-year quotas brought to the outfitting industry, the Department of Environment developed an interim process to establish outfitter quotas on an annual basis that provides outfitters with certainty, flexibility, and predictability.

To implement the interim process, the Deputy Minister of Environment sent a letter to all outfitters stating that their annual quotas will remain the same in 2022 and subsequent years until a new process is in place. The letter clarified that unless legal, environmental, or socio-economic factors necessitated change, the outfitter quotas can be expected to remain the same.

I acknowledge that the question of multi-year quotas continues to be a topic of great interest for the outfitting

industry. I am committed to working toward a durable solution to the question of multi-year quotas that is science-based and meets the needs of the outfitting industry, First Nations, and all Yukoners.

Officials in the Department of Environment have since been seeking alternative solutions to allow the issuance of multi-year quotas, including the possibility of using section 50 of the *Wildlife Act*.

We understand that legal advice can differ, which is why the Department of Environment provided the Outfitter Quota Appeal Committee with funding to seek an independent legal opinion.

In March 2024 — just last month — the Department of Environment received a copy of the independent legal opinion on multi-year outfitting quotas that was sought by the Yukon Outfitter Quota Appeal Committee. Department of Environment officials are currently reviewing this independent opinion. As the Department of Environment was not the client for the independent legal opinion, it is not our information to share. We recognize the value that multi-year quotas provide to outfitters, and we remain committed to seeking a resolution to this issue.

The Department of Environment officials meet regularly with the Yukon Outfitters Association and Yukon outfitters to understand and address their concerns. In order to promote mutual understanding and resolve issues as they arise, the Yukon outfitter liaison committee was established. This committee is co-chaired by the Deputy Minister of Environment and a nominee from the Yukon Outfitters Association executive. The Yukon outfitter liaison committee will meet later this month.

That's the most up-to-date information I have right now. The legal opinion, for which funding was provided by the Yukon government, has been received and it is in the process of being reviewed.

**Mr. Istchenko:** The minister actually didn't answer the question. The question that I asked was this: Can he confirm that he is unwilling or unable to share his legal opinion that he received that says that multi-year quotas are inconsistent with the *Wildlife Act*? If he is unwilling to do so, can he at least tell me if the legal opinion was an internal one from YG lawyers, or was it sourced externally from outside government? That was my question.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** There are two components to the question. The first answer is that the opinion was written by in-house Department of Justice lawyers. The second answer to the question is that a summary of the opinion is capable of being shared. I will leave it at that. I can certainly receive additional legal advice as to whether the entire legal opinion can be shared.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. It sounds like the minister is now willing to at least share part of that, so it would be nice if he could share it sooner than later before the end of session, because hopefully I can get back into questioning on that.

The other question that I would have, then — the minister also did say that the government provided the funding for the outfitters to get their opinion. How much was that funding?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** \$10,000.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that.

I have some hunting questions now. The minister will remember that he committed to new hunting opportunities at the Yukon Fish and Game Association annual banquet a few years ago for Yukon hunters. So, for Yukon hunters, I am wondering what the new opportunities were in the past hunting season, and then what is coming up for the next year's season for new opportunities?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Yes, I certainly did have the honour and privilege of attending the Yukon Fish and Game Association annual banquet this year and I believe the year before. The Member for Kluane, the Leader of the Official Opposition, and I believe the Deputy Premier were present. Many thanks to the president, executive director, and all the organizers of that event. It was extremely well-attended and chef Chris Irving did an amazing job, I would say, with sheep, grizzly, and other wild meat. It was absolutely delicious. Thanks so much to chef Chris Irving and to the assistants he had for a memorable evening.

I have some information with respect to hunting opportunities. I certainly have met with the Fish and Game Association on a number of occasions and heard them loud and clear that, where at all possible and where supported by appropriate data, surveys, and advice being provided to me — I will certainly encourage there to be more opportunities.

I will see if there is other information that can be provided as well, but eight new permits for hunting elk in the Takhini Valley were made available in 2022 and 2023 and are once again being offered in 2024. These *Wildlife Act* elk permits are restricted to the harvest of bull elk with five-point antlers or fewer. These additional permits are part of a two-year pilot project in order to reduce conflict between elk and agricultural land owners in the Takhini Valley.

The bison technical team, which includes all governments and organizations with a role in bison management, is involved in speaking to and liaising with government. There is a recommendation that bison-hunting season be shortened by one week and we are reviewing that; however, the Government of Yukon is consulting with Yukon First Nations and wildlife co-management partners on this recommendation. Currently, there are no changes for the 2024-25 bison-hunting season. Discussions with co-management partners are ongoing and this recommendation is being considered for the 2025-26 season.

With respect to deer — and I have heard from various stakeholders, including the Yukon Fish and Game, that there is a perception that there are — anecdotally at least — a lot of deer in and around Whitehorse. I have heard that at a number of meetings. The Government of Yukon currently offers 12 deer permits per year through the permit hunt authorization process. In the 2023-24 hunting season, six deer were harvested in the Yukon. The Yukon's first-ever deer project is currently underway, utilizing trail cameras and collaring. Collaring started this past February, and we plan on collaring 20 deer this

year. We are also working toward partnering with Yukon University on a research project to better understand the movement patterns and range extent of deer in southern Yukon. An aerial drone survey to count deer in the Takhini Valley along the Takhini Hot Springs Road and the north Klondike Highway to Grizzly Valley is planned in 2024. I know that there are at least potentially opportunities there. Let's see if I can report on anything else right now.

The member opposite will also likely know that there are active discussions with respect to Southern Lakes moose. Our results for moose surveys conducted in November 2021 show that the numbers of moose have increased in the Fish Lake, Mount Lorne, and Wheaton River moose management units since surveys were last conducted in 2010. Licensed harvest has been restricted in these areas for the past 35 years following the implementation of a permit hunt authorization system in 1989. Survey results show that collective conservation actions have been effective in supporting the recovery of these populations. Kudos to licensed hunters who have been engaged in that conservation process for 35 years — or observing that conservation effort for 35 years.

Survey results show that collective conservation actions have been effective in supporting the recovery of these populations. In January 2024, the Department of Environment initiated consultation with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, the Taku River Tlingit First Nation, and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board on a proposal to increase the number of permit hunt authorizations available in these areas. The department has also notified the Laberge, Carcross/Tagish, and Alesk renewable resources councils on this proposal. There certainly are prospects there for further discussion to provide additional opportunities, once again, in the Fish Lake, Mount Lorne, and Wheaton River moose management units.

Just before I sit down, the Government of Yukon is committed to managing the Yukon's wildlife sustainably to ensure populations remain healthy and resilient now and in the future. We are continuously evaluating harvest sustainability to identify areas where increased licensed hunting opportunities can occur while ensuring sustainable wildlife populations.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. It sounds like the department is working on a lot of stuff — absolutely.

The minister spoke about elk and bison, but we have always been able to hunt elk and bison in one or another. I did ask about new opportunities that there were during last fall's hunting season and this season coming up. I don't believe that there will be anything substantially new, but it does sound like there is a whole bunch of work, and if the minister wants to correct me on that, he can.

I will move on here. What were the total bison harvested this year and the total elk harvested this year?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I am advised that, just to be accurate here and up to date — I have some information but certainly will endeavour to get the most accurate and up-to-date information for the House and the member opposite, but bison harvest reports are still coming in. Hunters have until April 10,

which is today, to report. Elk harvest reports will be received until April 15, so I may indeed have some additional information prior to the end of the Spring Sitting. However, for 2022-23, there were five permit hunt authorizations, which were successful, for elk. Two were in Braeburn, three in Takhini, and four of the adaptive permits were successful in Takhini, for a total of seven elk harvested in Takhini — four adaptive permits and three permit hunt authorizations for elk in 2022-23.

I am just waiting to see if there is any additional late-breaking information that I might have, but as indicated previously, bison harvest reports have to be entered or reported by April 10, and elk harvest reports have to be received by April 15.

Perhaps I won't spend additional time here in the Assembly, and the member opposite will well-know this, but the 2022-23 licensed big game harvest statistics are found within the Yukon hunting regulations summary for 2023-24, but what I suspect is that the member opposite is looking for more up-to-date information, because this is publicly available.

Just for persons listening at home or reading Hansard afterward, it is on page 72 of the Yukon hunting regulations summary for 2023-24, which includes the licensed big game harvest statistics for moose, caribou, wood bison, sheep, goats, deer, elk, grizzly bears, black bears, and wolves. As I indicated, I hope to have some more information — perhaps before the end of the Spring Sitting, but in any event — published in the 2024-25 document by the middle of the summer.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I find it very hard to believe that the minister does not know that today is the last day for bison. People get — they report; they report; they report. He could probably be out three or four numbers. I can tell him what the number is — but he can't tell me what the number is?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the confidence that the Member for Kluane has in the very hard-working officials in the Department of Environment who do excellent work. The preliminary number that I have is in the 200 range for this season.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for actually giving me a number.

I have a question from the last time — every year, I ask about bison totals and every year I talk about wildlife surveys.

I would like to know — basically, how much money that was budgeted was spent on wildlife surveys this year, and in what locations were the surveys done?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** The Department of Environment is committed to collecting robust wildlife population data to evaluate harvest sustainability. We survey and monitor wildlife populations as well as use information from licensed harvesters and our co-management partners to make informed decisions about harvest opportunities for resident and non-resident hunters. The Department of Environment does not survey all wildlife populations annually and therefore also relies on reports from Yukoners and First Nation and Inuvialuit governments to evaluate harvest sustainability and guide decision-making until the next population survey.

The Department of Environment dedicates significant resources to collecting and analyzing data to support evidence-based decisions about wildlife populations. We carry out population inventories, collect harvest data from hunters, and perform ecological assessments to gather up-to-date information. We prioritize areas to survey based on a combination of factors, including harvest levels, access, community concerns, land use planning data needs, the last survey date, and human activity.

Surveys for populations of moose, caribou, sheep, grizzly bear, black bear, fish, picas, bats, and ground squirrels were completed in 2023. Populations of elk and bison will be surveyed this winter. I am not sure if that means this upcoming winter; it is for the past winter. Results from the 2023 surveys are currently being analyzed. Survey results are first shared with wildlife co-management partners, including relevant renewable resources councils, impacted First Nations, and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and then with interest groups, such as the Yukon Fish and Game Association. We continue to share our work, research, and monitoring activities with the public through information that we post on yukon.ca.

The specific answer to the question with respect to the resources that were devoted to surveys are as follows: in fiscal 2023-24, \$445,000 in the areas of the Hyland River, Dawson Goldfields, Richardson Mountains, and the North Slope; \$417,000 in the Ogilvie Mountains; \$1.192 million in Coal River, Finlayson, Chisana, Laberge, Carcross, Ibex, Wolf Lake, Ethel Lake, Tatchun, Klaza, Hart River, Aishihik, Pelly, Clear Creek, Fortymile, Porcupine, and Nelchina. The types of surveys were composition, collar deployment, and census. As well, we have \$156,000 in the Ruby Range, Brooks Arm, Flat Top, Donjek, Nutzotin, Kluane Wildlife Sanctuary, North Richardson, Ivvavik, Caribou Mountain, Ddhaw Ghro, Minto Bluff, and Tombstone Park; and finally, \$113,000 for Takhini and Braeburn — and that was collars, monitoring, and placements — for a total budget of \$2,323,862, which was an increase from 2021-22 and 2022-23 — a significant increase actually. It was about one million dollars more from 2022-23.

It's a very similar budget projected for 2024-25. If the member opposite is interested, I can go through that detail in a subsequent answer, but it is very similar. So, 2023-24 and fiscal 2024-25 — those are two very similar numbers with respect to the planned surveys.

Growing population, pressure from industrial and recreational land use, advances in fishing and hunting, and climate change have placed significant pressures on our fish and wildlife resources. As a result, the need for monitoring has increased. Increased pressures on wildlife populations have been raised by numerous First Nations, highlighting the need for Government of Yukon to ensure equitable allocation of the sustainable harvest among user groups.

Just a shout-out to all Environment staff and any staff who were on contract for what appears to have been a very busy year. The year upcoming looks like it is similarly busy.

Certainly, the Department of Environment — and by extension me — always want to get it right with respect to

decisions on providing opportunities versus — and an assertion that there is abundance versus considerations of conservation based on credible and recent data.

Thank you for the question from the member opposite.

**Mr. Istchenko:** When you do these surveys, who are the observers and the spotters who are in the planes? Can the minister elaborate a little bit on how much of the local traditional knowledge from those people who are constantly on the land and know how to spot animals is used?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Although I do anticipate that a follow-up question would be for specific numbers, I have some general information here and can certainly get back to the member opposite with specific numbers. Also, just by way of up-to-date information, surveys are currently underway for bison, caribou, grizzly, wolverine, and polar bears — okay — polar bears.

I am advised by departmental officials that local spotters are often invited, including members of First Nations and regional resources councils. Participants in the surveys are acknowledged when the results are posted on [yukon.ca](http://yukon.ca). I am just wondering if I have any more specific information.

I recognize the member opposite's contention that local knowledge is certainly of value, and where at all possible, the Department of Environment is trying to utilize that knowledge. Like I said, I can provide some greater detail and can undertake to get that information to the member opposite.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that.

As we know, this information is important. It is important for our boards and councils and our associations so that they can make regulation change proposals and recommendations to the minister. I am just wondering how long — and I know that there are still some surveys that are happening right now. I have lived here all my life, and I understand when they do surveys, where they do surveys, and why they do surveys and everything else like that, but I am just wondering the timeline from the time that they gather this information to when this information could be shared with the boards and councils, the Trappers Association, the Fish and Game Association, and the Outfitters Association so that they can move forward with getting some regulation change proposals put forward, because if numbers are good, maybe we can make change. I am just looking for some timelines on that for those organizations.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Just to begin to answer the member opposite's question, the timelines — and he likely knows this — are highly variable depending on the species, on whether the spectrum is a simple survey like counting elk that can be available within a month. For polar bears, the results may take several years to compile. What I would say at a high level is that this has been of interest to me over the course of the three years that I have had the honour of being Minister of Environment in the Yukon. I have certainly asked, where at all possible, to expedite results for the reasons that the Member for Kluane has advised. This is important information and it's important information on which to base a lot of decisions with respect to whether there are principled conservation concerns or whether there could be principled opportunities being

provided to — well, primarily to resident Yukon hunters but not only.

Surveys for some populations of sheep, grizzly bear, black bear, fish, pikas, bats, and ground squirrels were completed this year — and I think this was late 2023. A few sheep surveys had to be cancelled. However, to answer the member opposite's question, in the past, a two-page summary of a survey was released alongside the fully analyzed report. To share information in a timelier manner, the Department of Environment will now be aiming to release the two-page summary within three to six months of the survey being complete where it is feasible to do so.

Survey results are first shared with wildlife management partners, including relevant renewable resources councils and impacted First Nations, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the Yukon Fish and Game Association, and then the public. Briefly, data is, of course, key to informed wildlife management discussions and evidence-based decision-making. Regional staff members work with the Inuvialuit, First Nations, renewable resources councils, and communities to ensure that our wildlife management programs reflect Indigenous-based knowledge and local perspectives.

For example, we are working as a nine-government steering committee to develop a Southern Lakes caribou management plan. This committee includes lots of groups: Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, Taku River Tlingit First Nation, Teslin Tlingit Council, British Columbia, and Canada. We have developed community-based fish and wildlife plans in the traditional territories of five First Nations, including the Carcross/Tagish, Little Salmon Carmacks, Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Champagne and Aishihik, and Vuntut Gwitchin. We are currently working to update the plans for Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and Champagne and Aishihik traditional territories.

In addition to these existing plans, we have begun the process of developing a community-based fish and wildlife work plan for the Teslin Tlingit Council traditional territory and expect to initiate the development of a plan for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory later this year. These plans are designed to address community concerns. Through traditional, local, and scientific knowledge, we look to find ways to work together to address information gaps and to identify appropriate solutions.

Just to finish this specific point, I hear the member opposite loud and clear. As I indicated, it has been of concern to me personally as well to receive, where appropriate, survey data and information sooner rather than later. I am not a wildlife biologist, so I am sure that there has to be a certain degree of rigour, and I applaud the wildlife biologists and the specialists who work for Environment and the contractors for their rigour. I understand that it is counterbalanced by the reasonable request from a lot of the stakeholder groups to receive survey and data information as soon as is reasonable.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I am going to switch gears a little bit here to Kluane sheep. The proposal that the department had proposed met with a lot of blowback from the entire hunting

and wildlife management community. Just about everyone in my riding wasn't very happy.

So, I want to talk about the plans — the management plan or the recovery plan forum. What is the government planning on doing to deal with the issues facing sheep in the Kluane area?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thinhorn sheep are an iconic species of Yukon wildlife and are economically and culturally significant. Recent aerial sheep surveys conducted by the Department of Environment noted sheep population declines in several management units across southwest Yukon. The results of the 2022 and 2023 aerial surveys conducted by the Department of Environment were published on [yukon.ca](http://yukon.ca) on November 2, 2023. Similarly, other government wildlife agencies have observed low sheep population counts and low lamb survival rates in northern British Columbia and Alaska in recent years. This past year, Parks Canada also observed the lowest numbers of sheep in Kluane National Park and the reserve since their surveys began in the 1970s.

Due to these conservation concerns, the department initiated consultation with co-management partners on proposed accelerated amendments to the wildlife regulations. The proposed amendments would enable the department to use wildlife management tools in 2024 to manage harvest levels for declining sheep populations in the Brooks Arm, Donjek, Nutzotin, Flat Top, and Ruby Range sheep management units and the Kluane Wildlife Sanctuary.

Consultation with co-management partners includes the Kluane First Nation, White River First Nation, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and the Dän Keyi and Alsek renewable resources councils. In addition to these consultations, the department also engaged with affected stakeholders, including affected outfitters, the Yukon Outfitters Association, the Yukon Fish and Game Association, the Yukon Wild Sheep Foundation, the Yukon Conservation Society, and The Wildlife Society, Canada-Yukon chapter. Co-management partners and stakeholders generally agree that sheep populations in southwest Yukon are in decline and that intervention is needed; however, there is no consensus on what conservation methods and management tools should be used.

To help come to a consensus on what conservation methods and management tools should be used for the conservation and management of sheep in southwest Yukon, department officials held a workshop with the Kluane First Nation, White River First Nation, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the Dän Keyi and Alsek renewable resources councils, and Parks Canada Agency for Kluane National Park on March 6 and 7, 2024. The workshop discussed conservation concerns on a sheep management unit, population-by-population basis and options for a broader suite of management tools for sheep while also considering options that can be implemented in the short term to protect these vulnerable populations.

The partners concluded the workshop by drafting a memorandum of understanding to express the consensus on conservation concerns and management options. We hope the

memorandum of understanding will be finalized this spring. I am advised by my officials that the next meeting is scheduled for April 23 of this year, and it is hoped that the memorandum of understanding will be reached at that point. I am certainly encouraged by the meeting that took place on March 6 and 7 of this year and that a number of stakeholders were there. I certainly hope that we can move forward on this matter because, of course, it is the interest of all stakeholders for the population of thimhorn sheep to be maintained for this generation and for several generations to come.

I am just reviewing a few more notes.

I think that is a reasonable summary of where this matter is at right now. I certainly have some more notes that I could continue with, but in any event, I am encouraged by the collaboration that has occurred so far and the fact that there was a better part of a two-day meeting with respect to management suggestions. I am also encouraged that there is a follow-up meeting scheduled in the near future on April 23.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I am also encouraged, and I was encouraged by the work that was done out there. I was glad to see that the department listened. I wrote the minister, and a lot of other people did.

The minister talked about the stakeholders. He talked about the First Nations, Parks Canada, the Yukon Trappers Association, and the Yukon Outfitters Association. He listed a lot out there. I just want to confirm that the minister's own staff — like our regional biologists out there and our conservation officers out there. Can he confirm that both of those entities are part of helping with this plan?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I can confirm that the regional staff from both the Fish and Wildlife branch and Conservation Officer Services are involved. As the member opposite likely knows, the Fish and Wildlife branch is leading the discussion, which includes the regional biologists. They are enlisting the expertise and support from department resources, which include the Conservation Officer Services.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. I think that I will leave it — my questions. I have a whole bunch more questions, but I think that I will leave it at that for today. I will thank the staff and I will turn it over to the NDP for questioning.

**MLA Tredger:** I will start by thanking all the officials for being here as well as those listening in on the phone or the radio.

The minister has probably noticed that in most departments, I'm asking and my colleagues are asking about the greenhouse gas emissions for each department. I want to ask those questions, but I am wondering if he can explain to me a little bit about how the government tracks its greenhouse gas emissions. I am assuming that the Climate Change Secretariat does. Is it done in each department? Is there a central repository of that? Are there overarching — or is it just done for the whole government, like all of the vehicle usage for all of the government? I am wondering if he can help me to understand how it is tracked so that I can best ask about it.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I do have some information here. If it requires greater specificity, then certainly I can get back to the

member opposite, but there is some fairly granular information that has been compiled.

In December 2023, Environment released a report detailing the Government of Yukon's total greenhouse gas emissions. The report showed that, in 2021, the government generated 49.9 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. Of this total, the Government of Yukon's departments emitted about three-quarters of this at about 34.6 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, with government corporations and Yukon University making up the other portion.

Government of Yukon is taking action to reduce emissions from our buildings, fleet vehicle use, and other operations. The Government of Yukon's emissions are largely the result of heating and powering buildings, operating maintenance equipment, and fleet vehicle use. Given this, the Department of Highways and Public Works represents the largest share of emissions due to the significant role that they play in maintaining our buildings, roads, airports, and our main pool of vehicles.

The Department of Highways and Public Works is also the department that is leading a one-government approach to reduce emissions from Government of Yukon buildings by improving energy efficiency and installing renewable energy systems. Building improvements are prioritized based on where they will make the most impact in reducing emissions across government and are not tied to any one department. The Government of Yukon is also involved in providing homes, health care, and electricity for Yukoners. These areas also represent a high proportion of Government of Yukon's emissions.

Many actions in *Our Clean Future* empower Yukoners to take climate action, while other actions support the Government of Yukon in reducing our own emissions and building resilience. To date, we have completed 31 retrofits to Government of Yukon buildings in order to improve efficiency and reduce emissions. We have also completed 81 certified energy assessments on our high-emission Government of Yukon buildings, and we will complete assessments for the remaining 36 high-emitting sites this year.

Briefly, to date, we now have 23 full battery/electric vehicles, including three cars, two trucks, three cargo vans, and 15 compact SUVs. In addition, we have 25 plug-in hybrid vehicles, including 13 trucks and 12 SUVs.

To answer the member opposite's specific question, I do have some detail here.

In 2021, emissions by department in kilotonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent — I would imagine these are estimates, but in any event: Community Services, 1.11 kilotonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent for building emissions and 1.51 for fleet waste and refrigerants, leading to a total of 2.62 kilotonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent; Education, the buildings are 7.57, and government fleet waste and refrigerants are only 0.1, and that leads to a total of 7.67 kilotonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent; Energy, Mines and Resources — it looks like they don't have Energy, Mines and Resources in buildings — but in any event, it's 0.07 kilotonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent and 0.23 in government fleet waste and refrigerants, for a total of 0.3; Environment is 0.19 for building

emissions and 0.78 for the government fleet waste and refrigerants, to get it to 0.97; for Health and Social Services, the buildings are at 4.31 and government fleet at 0.44, getting it to 4.75; for Highways and Public Works, building emissions are 7.05 kilotonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent and the government fleet is at 6.47, for a total of 13.53; Justice has 1.0 on building emissions and 0.04 on fleet; and the last department that has reported is Tourism and Culture at 0.24 of building emissions and government fleet waste and refrigerants at 0.08, to get to 0.32. That is where we get the 34.6 kilotonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent in 2021.

Corporations are estimated at 13.3 and Yukon University is estimated at 2.0, which gets you to the 49.9 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. This is already somewhat dated data. We certainly hope that we can access the 2022 data sooner rather than later.

I will see if there is anything further.

I will leave it at that. I probably have some more information here, but certainly the Highways and Public Works and Environment departments — we are starting to particularize and be able to identify by department what the estimated emissions are. It will certainly be very interesting to see what 2022 looks like and ultimately what 2023 looks like. I am not in the conjecture business, but based on the retrofits that continue and some of the alternate fuels like the biomass plants that are in place and the addition of electric and battery/electric vehicles, I am cautiously optimistic that the numbers for 2022 will look better than 2021 and that the numbers for 2023 will look more promising than 2022.

**MLA Tredger:** I thank the minister for that. That is probably going to save us lots of time in all sorts of debates, so I am excited to go through those numbers. I really appreciate hearing them.

I want to talk a little bit about the other report that came out last year, which was the *Our Clean Future* update on 2022, which came out in December 2023, which was, of course, after the last Sitting, which was unusual. Usually, we get to discuss that report in the Fall Sitting. I was wondering why it didn't come out until December, because typically it comes out in August or September. I have heard before that it was because the Climate Leadership Council recommendations needed to be incorporated. I was wondering if the minister could tell me about what that timeline was like, when that modelling was done, how it was incorporated into the document, and why that took until December.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Yes, the member opposite is correct that, in this instance, the recommendations from the YCLC took some time to explore, and the relevant departments required time to research and explore options to help us get closest to our targets. So, in reverse-engineering the answer, I would say that I would certainly anticipate that the 2023 report — I am sure the department loves it when I promise things — would come sooner or would come more in line with when the prior report came, which was, I understand, in October, August, or September.

In 2022, the Government of Yukon implemented significant climate actions, including introducing a new *Clean*

*Energy Act* to legislate the Yukon's greenhouse gas reduction targets, implementing a better buildings program to offer affordable financing for energy retrofits on Yukoners' homes and buildings, establishing a geohazard mapping program to understand the risks from climate change to the Yukon's transportation corridors, and making significant progress on community wildfire protection plans across the territory.

We recognize the urgency of the climate emergency and launched *Our Clean Future* in September of 2020. The Government of Yukon continues to make significant progress on implementing *Our Clean Future*. In December of 2023, we released the third *Our Clean Future* annual report outlining the progress we made responding to climate change in 2022. The report announced the addition of 42 new actions to help us reach our climate goals. These new actions are a product of the important work of the Yukon Climate Leadership Council, the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change, Navius Research, and the findings in the climate risk assessment. The 42 new actions implement 15 recommendations from the Yukon Climate Leadership Council and three recommendations from the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change.

Additionally, several of the new recommendations put forward by the Yukon Climate Leadership Council align with existing *Our Clean Future* actions. We will continue to work together to advance our efforts to reduce emissions as we assess our progress year to year, considering new research and the input of others, and increase our resilience to climate change. We have also revised 19 existing actions to better align with our efforts to reduce Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions and build a climate-resilient territory.

That is the slightly longer answer, I suppose, with respect to the slight delay in the release of the *Our Clean Future* 2022 annual report, but once again, I am indicating that, subject to me being advised otherwise, I would anticipate that the 2023 annual report would be released more in line with the deadline or release date that was met for the first two reports, which I guess would have been 2020 and 2021.

**MLA Tredger:** Given that the report was late because it incorporated the Climate Leadership Council recommendations, I had expected actually to respond to the Climate Leadership Council recommendations because they provided their report in September 2022, 16 months prior. I had been told for 16 months that the reason there was no response to that report — no response to which recommendations would be incorporated and why or why not — was because it was coming in that report.

I was pretty shocked in that report that I did not, in fact, see a response to any of the recommendations. Some of them had been included. I could cross-reference the two documents and try to figure out which recommendations had been included, but there was no list of which recommendations had or had not been included or why they had or why they had not.

So, that leaves me now having to again go through this report and ask why different recommendations were or weren't included, unless the minister is planning at this time to start responding to that report and actually provide some of that information. So, I will start with L2 from *Climate Shot 2030*

from the Climate Leadership Council, which was a recommendation to “Require that an internal cost of carbon ... be included in all financial and budgeting decisions, including projects funded by YG and Crown Corporations.”

Can the minister comment on why this was not included in the most recent *Our Clean Future*?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite. The Yukon Climate Leadership Council identified two overarching barriers and provided 61 recommendations. Of these, 16 actions that respond to 15 recommendations and two overarching barriers were included in *Our Clean Future*. In response to this recommendation, Highways and Public Works has drafted a framework to apply an internal cost of carbon to major capital decisions impacting YG’s building stock. There is certainly the potential for this approach to extend beyond the initial pilot study. This was not included as a new action, as work on this was already underway before we received this recommendation.

I was just looking for some of my Highways and Public Works notes on this topic, because I know that department has done some great work on this topic. We are in the process of costing most projects, in any event, but I take the member opposite’s point.

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

**Acting Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale North that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

**Mr. Cathers:** I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

**Acting Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge 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 Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole?

### Chair’s report

**Ms. White:** 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 Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.*

### The following sessional paper was tabled April 10, 2024:

35-1-151

*Yukon Ombudsman Special Report — Pursuant to section 31 of the Ombudsman Act — Recommendations for Amendments to the Ombudsman Act (April 10, 2024) (Speaker Harper)*

### The following written question was tabled April 10, 2024:

Written Question No. 48

Re: Yukon nominee program (Clarke, Y.)