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HANSARD

Thursday, April 18, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2024 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, April 18, 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

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to welcome a number of guests we have here today for Ross Findlater's tribute. We have his wife, Sue Findlater. We have his daughters, Amanda Deuling and Heather Finton, and his son-in-law, Andrew Finton. We also have Duncan Sinclair and Laurie MacFeeters, Kristina Craig, Fanny Amyot, Jason Charlie, George Green, Charlotte Hrenchuk, Helen Slama, and Nesta Leduc. Could we welcome them all, please?

Applause

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce a former Member of the Legislative Assembly for Riverdale North, Dale Eftoda, and his long-time partner, Rob Brown, who are also here for the tribute to Mr. Findlater today.

Applause

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I missed one name at the bottom of my list that I can't believe I missed. We also have Larry Bagnell here for the tribute.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Ross Findlater

MLA Tredger: It is my great honour to stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Ross Findlater.

I want to share that my colleague the Member for Takhini-Kopper King wrote this tribute and asked me to deliver it on her behalf as she is participating remotely. It is my great honour to do so.

When we think of Ross, four things come to mind: family, faith, community, and social justice. Ross and his wife and soulmate, Sue, raised their family here in the Yukon. Ross was so proud of all of them — daughters, sons-in-law, and grandchildren.

To the good fortune of others along the way, many individuals and families were absorbed into the Findlater circle. He had the ability to amplify joy and find fun in the mundane. It was so evident at Ross' celebration of life, with friends and family of all ages in attendance sharing stories.

Ross was a man of deep faith and conviction to his values. This faith guided his life and is easily seen in his actions and commitment to others. Ross' background was in education, and his training was social work. This was the foundation of so much of his work and his commitment to his community. Ross worked at Health and Social Services and, over time, held many different leadership roles, but that was just the beginning, and this is where community and social justice come together.

Ross could see what was happening in his community and he could see the gaps in services that people and families were falling through. Ross also saw who the helpers were. He had a wonderful knack of bringing folks with vision and understanding together to find creative and thoughtful ways to fill those gaps. It was by inviting others to join him in imagining what the Yukon could be and should be that led to the creation of impactful organizations like the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, the Teen Parent Centre, the Child Development Centre, and so many more. All of these organizations and groups still exist today, filling in those gaps and offering services and supports that improve the lives of Yukoners.

Ross mentored so many people. He was a solid backboard for problem-solving and he always believed that not only could we do better but that we must do better for those around us.

I want to close with thanks to Sue and the Findlater family for sharing Ross with us and the community and for continuing to carry on his vision of social justice for all Yukoners.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to remember and honour the legacy of Ross Findlater, who passed away in October last year. His unexpected passing was a deep loss felt across the Yukon, where he has been an instrumental figure since 1977.

Born in Hamilton, Ontario, Ross began his career committed to helping children and families navigate the challenges of psychiatric disorders. He brought this passion to the Yukon, where he took on several leadership roles within the Department of Health and Social Services, making a difference and impacting our social services landscape.

Ross was a visionary leader who served as the executive director of the Yukon Family Services Association for many years. He was instrumental in the development of critical community resources, such as the United Way of Yukon, the Teen Parent Centre, and the Yukon Child Development Centre, each of which has left a lasting mark on our community.

I remember him most from his involvement, leadership, and mentorship through the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition. Beyond his professional contributions, Ross was a champion of community involvement and volunteerism. He generously gave his time to the Whitehorse Food Bank and contributed at the national level to the United Way and Canadian Mental Health Association, embodying the spirit of service.

Ross also cherished the company of his family and friends, enjoying lively family games and travels to numerous countries with his wife, Sue. His life reflected a balance of dedication, joy, and love, enriching those around him. Last October, many gathered to pay their respects at the grief-and-gratitude

gathering held at Heritage North Funeral Home in Whitehorse. It was a testament to his love and the void his passing has left in our hearts. Today as we reflect on his life and legacy, we are reminded of the profound influence that one individual can have on the fabric of a community. His thread in the Yukon fabric weaves compassion, care, and support for fellow Yukoners.

Yukoners are welcome to remember Ross by contributing to the Whitehorse Food Bank, United Way, or the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition — organizations close to his heart.

We can all continue to honour his memory by supporting the community that he loved so dearly. Ross Findlater was a protector, a mentor, and a friend to many. As we remember him today, let his legacy inspire us to live and love with the same kindness and dedication that he demonstrated throughout his life.

Thank you, Ross, for your service, your leadership, and your unwavering commitment to our territory. Your example inspires us to strive for a compassionate and supportive community.

Applause

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to remember Ross Findlater. I have known the Findlater family for many years, as Heather and I were classmates throughout our public school years here in Whitehorse.

Ross did so many great things for our community, and on a personal level, he always had time for a chat whenever we would see each other. He was very kind and knowledgeable, and I always enjoyed our conversations, even the political ones, although those ones usually lasted a little longer.

Ross' long-time Riverdale neighbours Dale Eftoda and Rob Brown told me what a pleasure it was living next door to Ross and his family for the years and years that they lived on Firth Road in Riverdale. They also remarked on how close-knit everyone was and how much they all enjoyed each other's company.

When Ross passed away, the Yukon lost someone who contributed so much on so many levels, and the Findlaters lost a husband, a father, and a grandfather. I hope that they are all able to take comfort in the legacy that Ross has left for all of us here in the territory.

Our sincere condolences to all of Ross' friends and family.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, today I have a letter for tabling to the Minister of Highways and Public Works entitled "Takhini River Bridge on the Mayo Road Project Scope" as well as his response and a press release that the Yukon Party issued on January 12, 2024 regarding that same project.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I'm actually standing on behalf of my colleague the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, whom I believe has a document for tabling.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today an e-mail exchange between the president of the YAEP and the ADM of student well-being and inclusion that I was cc'd on yesterday.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 23 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 23 of the First Session of the 35th Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Porter Creek Centre on April 17, 2024.

The petition presented by the Member for Porter Creek Centre meets the requirements as to the form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 23 is deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation.

Therefore, the Executive Council response to Petition No. 23 shall be provided on or before April 30, 2024.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House encourages Yukoners to engage with the Health Transformation Advisory Committee during the Shāw Kwā'ā/Health and Wellness Yukon/Santé et mieux-être Yukon public information sessions to learn more about a Yukon health authority.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to:

(1) ensure that the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board receives additional resources to conduct its assessments within the timelines set out in its rules; and

(2) provide increased support to Yukon First Nations to ensure that they have the capacity to fully participate in Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board assessments of projects affecting their traditional territories.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to increase the honorarium paid to volunteer firefighters.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Federal infrastructure funding

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I have some more questions for the Yukon Liberal government about the federal budget that was introduced this week. In the Minister of Finance's statement on the budget, he noted the importance of the Yukon convention centre project. We previously heard from the Minister of Tourism and Culture that this project was the Liberals' number one and number two top priorities for tourism infrastructure.

In our review of the budget, we did not see any mention of the Yukon convention centre, but the statement from the Minister of Finance for Yukon seemed to suggest that it may be supported.

So, is there any funding in the federal budget for the Yukon convention centre project, and if so, how much?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I do know that CanNor has invested this year in Chu Níikwän, the group that has the proposal to develop the convention centre. I just talked to the Deputy Minister of Tourism and Culture this morning and yesterday. They haven't announced how much funding that is, but I do know that they have funding in the budget for this year that is supporting the planning work for Chu Níikwän.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the answer from the minister.

Another aspect of the federal budget that will impact the Yukon was the decision to hike the capital gains tax. While there is a diverse group of business leaders who have spoken out about the general impact of these new tax measures on the business community in Canada, one of the most concerning criticisms has come from the tech industry.

The Yukon government has long championed the tech industry in its efforts to diversify our economy. According to former federal Finance minister Bill Morneau, these new measures will disincentivize businesses from investing in Canada's innovation sector, and the president of the Council of Canadian Innovators, Benjamin Bergen, has said that this will be a nightmare for the Canadian tech industry.

So, can the Premier tell us whether he supports these measures, and if not, what is he doing to raise the concerns of the Yukon tech and innovation industry with the Prime Minister?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of items that have been announced this week in the budget that we are still analyzing. We know that there is a tangible impact with this new taxation lever, which is basically that there is more revenue coming back to the Yukon government. I think the estimate is around \$3 million.

What I have asked our teams to do across departments is to ensure that we have an understanding of what the other side of that conversation is, what the impacts are, and which potential folks in the Yukon — our entrepreneurs — could be affected by this. As we learn more about what the impacts are of these different policy changes, we will be able to come back to the House and discuss them.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, we have already heard from members of the Yukon tech industry who have concerns, so I encourage the Premier to raise those concerns with the Prime Minister.

Last year, the Premier travelled to Ottawa to meet with the federal government about the Atlin hydro project. In May, he told the *Whitehorse Star* that he had secured what he called a — quote — “strong commitment” from the federal government for additional funding. The federal budget notes the existing commitment from the federal government through the Canada Infrastructure Bank but does not seem to provide any additional funding that would allow this project to advance. Without new funding from the federal government, this project is not going anywhere.

So, can the Premier confirm how much additional funding his strong commitment from the federal government is being provided in this federal budget?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I agree. I think that the federal government has had a strong commitment to the Atlin project. The numbers that I understand are: \$100 million in sort of direct funding and then \$80 million through the Canada Infrastructure Bank. I did note that the dollars for the Atlin project were listed with respect to the Canada Infrastructure Bank. I did not yet see any additional funding within the budget, but I do think that we should acknowledge that significant funding that Canada has allocated toward the project. It is not enough yet to close the funding gap, but it is still significant.

Question re: Women's organizations funding

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on questions that I asked last October about the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* funding and how the Yukon government was involving local women's groups represented by the Yukon Women's Coalition. One of the key requests that the groups that make up the Yukon Women's Coalition have requested is for predictable and consistent core funding. While we know that there is program funding available through the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*, it doesn't seem that it includes core funding.

Can the minister tell us if her government has provided consistent and predictable multi-year core funding to these groups?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to talk about the work that we have been doing to support organizations that are equality-seeking groups. Bilateral negotiations on the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* are complete and we have signed an agreement with Canada that includes funding to address gender-based violence in Yukon.

Of course, we are working with the sector. Actually, I had a great meeting with the Yukon Women's Coalition just last Friday. The deputy minister has been working closely and has had several meetings with the organizations. Eleven core-funded organizations have been approved for \$1.24 million of the national action plan dollars.

This will bring the total 2024-25 contribution to these organizations to over \$3.01 million — so, definitely working closely with them on future funding. This is a four-year agreement that allows for just over \$4 million per year for the next four years.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, my question was about the multi-year core funding.

Following the Yukon Women's Coalition letter in February 2023, the coalition sent another letter on March 6 of this year. They have been requesting a more substantive role in the development and implementation of the Yukon's implementation plan. I will quote from their letter: "We sent a letter with that request in February 2023. The Department has thereafter engaged in significant steps with minimal contribution from sector organisations."

Can the minister respond to the concern that these groups feel that their contribution so far has been minimal, and what is the minister doing to address that concern?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise again to further my answer that I have already given that we are providing substantial funding to the organizations — definitely received that letter, and we have been working with the organizations to gain some better understanding from them in terms of the concerns that they felt that they needed to bring forward.

We completed our bilateral negotiations with Canada. This was a government-to-government negotiation. I'm really very pleased that the organizations were able to participate in the planning for the national action plan that certainly informed the pillars of this strategy. Again, we have entered into an agreement with Canada that brings just over \$4 million of new funding per year for four years to Yukon. We have provided substantial funding out of those dollars to equality-seeking groups, and we continue to work with them. Again, I had a great meeting with the organizations last Friday, and the Friday before that, I had a meeting with Indigenous women's groups, so the conversations are happening —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, we are now at the end of year 1 of the national action plan. The organizations that make up the Yukon Women's Coalition have called on the Yukon government to adjust and improve how this new plan rolls out going forward. In their words — quote: "We are at a key time in the implementation of the Plan, as Year One wraps up, to correct the score for collaboration between the Yukon Government and sector organisations."

Mr. Speaker, what steps is the minister taking to learn from the mistakes of the past year and make improvements going forward to, in the words of the Yukon Women's Coalition, "correct the score"?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, we are working very closely with the women's coalition and equality-seeking groups throughout the Yukon. The majority of the funding that we have received from the national action plan is actually going to these groups. As I have stated, it's just over \$3 million for the 2024-25 year and we have worked with Canada to be able to have any unspent dollars be brought forward into this fiscal year.

We have had some great meetings with the women's coalition and other equality-seeking groups. We continue to do that good work to ensure that we are hearing the voices. Ultimately, the agreement that we entered into and the funds that we are receiving are to end gender-based violence in Canada. Yukon is a proud partner in that work. I have worked closely with my colleagues across the country to ensure that we are addressing this issue, which is substantial, in a whole-of-Canada approach.

Question re: Whitehorse Correctional Centre programming

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, in the last year, two-thirds of the 292 admissions to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre were First Nation. In a letter to the Minister of Justice in January of last year, I raised many questions about the available cultural supports at the Correctional Centre. In her response, the minister stated that the Whitehorse Correctional Centre aimed to ensure that programming offered within the facility would be reflective of Yukon First Nation culture, yet we continue to hear numerous concerns regarding a lack of access to cultural supports and programming at Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

How is this government working to ensure that Yukon First Nation cultures are represented in the programming that is provided at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. The Whitehorse Correctional Centre has a number of programs that are aimed to assist inmates who spend some time there. The Department of Justice has been steadily increasing support for delivery of culturally appropriate programming at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. The continuing cultural program includes emphasizing First Nation culture and a contracted service of provision of carving programs, drumming, fire ceremonies, sweat lodges, and talking circles — all led by individuals who are experts in the field. We continue to target referrals to individual First Nations for ongoing community support and assistance in developing and delivering these kinds of programs, providing individual spiritual and cultural support by a First Nation liaison officer, providing cultural and spiritual supports through partnerships with community and spiritual leaders in multiple faiths, including First Nation spirituality and others.

I look forward to continuing my answer.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, in the October 2023 inquest report for Leon Nepper, the coroner made four recommendations for operations at Whitehorse Correctional Centre. The first recommendation is that patients with serious medical conditions who do not have advance directives or do-not-resuscitate orders should meet with a doctor. Second,

there should be more opportunities for advanced emergency training for corrections officers and nurses. Third, WCC should create internal training documents using this situation to improve future responses to similar emergencies. Fourth, the facilities at WCC should be evaluated for suitability to house people with serious medical conditions.

When will this government implement these recommendations?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I think that it is incredibly important that we recognize the review done — the opportunity to learn from that. The recommendations with respect to that review are being assessed and implemented. I cannot speak to specific medical directives at the moment.

I can, of course, note that there are many programs aimed at assisting the inmates at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre to address issues that arise for them and that may be responsible for, in part, them being in the Correctional Centre — and working with their First Nations, if they are a member of a First Nation, to make sure of that reintegration into their community is critical.

I note that, in March of this year, I wrote and responded to a number of specific letters to the member opposite on such topics as First Nation education at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, traditional foods, and many others. I look forward to continuing to answer her requests.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, we have heard from many people who are incarcerated at Whitehorse Correctional Centre that access to counselling is a high priority.

People at WCC described a lack of access to counselling even though they wish to take part in programs like emotion management, cognitive skills training, substance use management, and others.

People who are incarcerated need to have access to a diverse team of counsellors to ensure that every individual serving time can find a counsellor that they connect with, feel comfortable working with, and continue to work with after their release. Without these supports, people are much less likely to be successful when they are discharged from Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

Currently, how many hours per week are counsellors meeting with people at Whitehorse Correctional Centre, and how many people are waiting for access to mental health supports?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, thank you the question. I look forward to adding to the information that I provided to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin in a response that I gave to her in early March regarding mental health and treatment options at Whitehorse Correctional Centre. At the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, our approach to inmate care is highly individualized, emphasizing the crucial role of an interdisciplinary care team. This team is comprised of various professionals tailored to meet each inmate's needs and it plays a pivotal role in developing individualized care plans.

I certainly won't have enough time today to outline all of the initiatives that are available. The decision-making process for referring inmates to mental health and trauma treatments

outside of the territory is a collaborative effort and primarily initiated by a case manager.

I can also indicate that the case managers at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre are not isolated in their efforts to build and implement support plans for incarcerated individuals. They operate within a supportive framework and engage with a wide variety of community partners to provide wraparound services for inmates. It is critical that we assist them while they have access to this kind of treatment.

Question re: Local food production and distribution

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, in August 2021, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources announced a three-year pilot project with a local food distributor that will help government institutions connect with local businesses to get healthy and nutritious food grown here in the Yukon. During debate on April 2, the minister said — and I'll quote: "The note that I have right now — and what I am asking the department just to run to ground — is that, to date, our initiative has us at \$325,000 in purchasing commitments. The member opposite has a different number, so I am asking the department to please confirm that."

Can the minister now tell us how much was spent on the local food through this pilot project for the 2023-24 fiscal year, and how much has been spent since the pilot project was launched almost three years ago?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I did ask for a new note; I did receive it. To date, the Government of Yukon has committed over \$325,000 in purchases under the standing offer agreement, with eggs and meat making up most of the sales to date. Total spending: \$44,000 in 2021-22, \$51,000 in 2022-23, and so far, we have tallied \$27,500 in 2023-24, for a total of \$123,000.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, this summer will be the end of the pilot project, and during that debate, we had asked the minister about this project since we have heard that not very much money was spent in 2023-24 while the government spends \$3 million annually on food and food services.

Can the minister tell us why that amount that they spend on this pilot project is so low and if he believes that the project has been a success, given that all the indications are that it has not really been one?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, I had the same conversation with the department about how we could make it a better success. There is significant spending. This was based on our conversation with the Yukon Agricultural Association. It was how we could take a look at what barriers existed to providing this support or making sure that the standing offer agreement is better used. That is what I asked the department to do and to work with other departments — including Highways and Public Works, Health and Social Services, and Education — to see if there are ways in which we can improve the access to local purchasing.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I will remind the minister that locally grown food is so important to the Yukon in so many different ways.

In the release, it also says that this initiative is one of the Government of Yukon's commitments under *Our Clean Future* — to support local food producers through the procurement process.

Can the minister tell us what the goal is for reducing the GHG emissions as a result of this program, and are we on track to meet that goal?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I will have to go back to check on the greenhouse gas emissions target and where that lies. What I will say for Yukoners is that the more we can grow our food locally and supply food here in the Yukon, the less we have to import, so it is just a better environmental choice.

The last time I sat down with the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, we were there to talk about energy issues, and I asked them to please take up this issue as well, because when you look at leaks to our economy, energy would be the biggest one, but food would be right up there with it. So, yes, I agree that we should continue to work with our food producers, our farms, and the broader public. I think that an example of that would be to work with our own departments to try to provide for these opportunities, but what we really want to do as a territory is become more self-reliant on food production here in the Yukon.

Question re: Takhini River bridge on Mayo Road

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the Takhini River bridge on the Mayo Road is one of the narrowest bridges on Yukon's highways. There have been accidents on the bridge and in the approaches to it, and many people have had near misses and close calls near and on it. As the minister knows, I have raised this issue many times. The number one issue that people raise is how dangerous the narrow bridge is for vehicle traffic. While I am glad that the government has identified \$8.5 million for the Takhini River bridge project, we have yet to hear them confirm if the road surface on the bridge will actually be widened. Instead, the indication seems to be that the main focus is on adding an active transportation route.

Will the acting minister please confirm that the government will widen the Takhini River bridge for vehicle traffic?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. I know that he has been advocating on behalf of this subject for many, many years while I was Minister of Highways and Public Works, and it is opportune that I am up today talking about it. I was actually on deck when we made this announcement about the work that we are going to be doing on this bridge, not long ago, in association with the federal government.

Highways and Public Works is aware of public concerns about crossing at the Takhini River bridge. This past fall, to reduce speed and help increase road safety, the department installed a speed display sign on the north approach to the bridge. A share-the-road sign was also installed. The intent of the signs is to encourage drivers to be more mindful of oncoming vehicle traffic and of other bridge users, such as cyclists. The final option chosen for the active transportation upgrades on the bridge itself will include improvements to the

approaches to the bridge, which will improve sightlines for vehicle drivers.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, while I do appreciate the information that the minister provided, I would note that some people do want to see a walkway for pedestrians and cyclists added to the bridge, but it is clear that it isn't the main safety issue or public priority. The number one issue that people raise about the Takhini River bridge is how dangerous the narrow bridge is for vehicle traffic. The government's announcement in January focused on active transport and seemed to be missing dealing with the public's top concern. The bridge is used every day by hundreds of my constituents and is a vital link to rural communities north of Whitehorse. People want the government to widen the bridge for vehicles or replace it with a wider bridge, not spend \$8.5 million on bike lanes.

The minister's letters responding to mine suggest that they may widen the bridge, but so far, the government has stopped short of actually committing to widening it for vehicle traffic.

So, will the government please make that commitment here today?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I will add the member opposite's interest on this subject to the great public interest that we have on this bridge. We know that it is concerning to the public. Anybody who drives north toward Dawson in the vicinity of the Takhini River bridge knows that the approaches are concerning. I will certainly take the member's comments back to the department.

I will note that we are in the process of actually developing the plans for this bridge. They haven't been finalized yet. As part of the really record infrastructure spending that this government is making in the territory to make our roads, bridges, and public infrastructure — be it recreation centres or other infrastructure that we are investing in — better, we are doing this bridge. \$8.5 million is budgeted for the upgrades to the existing bridge, of which more than \$6 million will be federally funded through Canada's active transportation fund. We thank the federal government for their historic investment in the territory's infrastructure.

The improvement announced in January will not only add active transportation routes to the bridge but will also include structural upgrades to increase bridge safety for everyone, whether they drive, walk, bike, ski, or kick-sled across the bridge. We know that there is lots of interest, certainly for the people using active transportation.

The department is currently reviewing options and estimated costs for the upgrades. Some of the options under construction include widening the bridge and adding a sidewalk.

There is more to say on this, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to more questions in a minute.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Community Services himself acknowledged earlier this year, the bridge is what he called a "dangerous crossing".

Since the government made the announcement of \$8.5 million set aside for the Takhini River bridge project, I wrote to the minister urging him to ensure that the bridge is widened for vehicle traffic. The narrowness of the bridge is the

most serious safety issue, and fixing that is the number one public priority for this project.

Improving the approach and sightlines is also important, but removing part of the hill may require an agreement with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation regarding part of their settlement land.

Can the minister please tell us if the government has raised this issue with KDFN and what the outcome of that was? Finally, will the minister please tell us when public consultation about the Takhini River bridge project will happen and commit to holding public meetings or open houses to hear from my constituents and other Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I think that I heard the member opposite ask if we were working with First Nations; absolutely we are, Mr. Speaker. We do that all of the time. It's a stark contrast to the benches opposite. We do work with First Nations and that is what we're doing.

Once the engineers have fully assessed the options, they will share the final design with the public at an information session. We are looking to review options. As I said, widen the bridge — we are looking at widening the bridge, adding a sidewalk to the bridge, improving the sightlines for southbound traffic on the north side of the bridge, excavating the embankment to the west, and also improving sightlines and painting shoulder lanes on approaches to the bridge. We are doing a lot of work to assess and to make this bridge safe for the public. That is our goal as we do this.

We have a budget of \$8 million — \$8.5 million. We are working within the budget. We are going to communicate this.

The unfortunate thing is that the member opposite is using one of his precious Question Period questions, yet I note that on April 24, we had an infrastructure update. We could have had this discussion there during one of our ministerial statements, which the member opposite turned down. I'm really sorry that they had to waste a question on this today. I know that it's important for the public and I look forward to further debate on this subject in the future.

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

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 36: *Exemptions Act* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 36, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 36, entitled *Exemptions Act*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 36, entitled *Exemptions Act*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to bring forward Bill No. 36 to modernize the *Exemptions Act*.

The *Exemptions Act* defines what property is exempt from seizure during personal bankruptcy or following a money

judgment. These impact Yukoners, potentially, on a daily basis if they are finding themselves involved with personal bankruptcy or having a judgment involving money.

The current *Exemptions Act* has not been amended since it was enacted in 1954. The items currently exempted do not address everyday items such as vehicles or electronic devices or financial instruments such as RRSPs, credit card debt, or student loans — many of which did not even exist at the time of this enactment when it was originally brought into law here in the Yukon. The maximum monetary values for exempted items are also 70 years out of date.

Someone declaring bankruptcy or under a money judgment in the Yukon today is only allowed to keep \$200 worth of furniture and \$3,000 of an accrued value in their home. This is completely and utterly unacceptable. Unlike every other jurisdiction in the country, the Yukon does not provide exemption for at least one vehicle for business or personal use. Yukoners who are undergoing bankruptcy or are under money judgments are facing extreme hardship, and updating this legislative framework is urgently needed.

The legislative goal of our proposed repeal and replacement of the *Exemptions Act* is to balance the needs of debtors with the rights of creditors to be compensated. It is not in our collective best interest to have debtors or their dependants become destitute because all of their property and income has been seized following bankruptcy or a money judgment.

Exemptions are intended to enable debtors to maintain a reasonable standard of living and to continue to earn income. The antiquated language, the limited exemptions, and the outdated definitions of the 1954 *Exemptions Act* mean that the existing legislation is not worth keeping, making repeal and replacement the best option. That is the alternative put forward here in Bill No. 36. Retaining the title of the act will remove the need to revise the seven Yukon statutes that make reference to the *Exemptions Act* here in the territory.

The new *Exemptions Act* retains the categories of exemptions in the current act and introduces new exempted items. New exemptions include hunting, trapping, and fishing equipment used to harvest food and feed the debtor and their dependants, which reflects the lifestyle and the values of the Yukon at the very least. The act also proposes exempting one vehicle up to a maximum prescribed monetary value for personal use. The new act would exempt all medical equipment regardless of value, including a personal mobility device, to protect the health and well-being of debtors and their families.

Debtors and their families are not the only stakeholders in this process. We need to stay mindful of the needs and rights of creditors and their families as well. We have retained and added numerous strong protections for creditors. For instance, no exemptions apply if the debtor leaves or tries to leave the Yukon to avoid their creditors. We have also added a section that removes the exempted status from any item that is the source of a debt owed to a creditor. For example, if the debtor bought a boat and tries to claim that the boat should be exempt under the hunting and fishing exemption but still owes the seller money for that boat, the debtor cannot claim the exemption to

keep the boat. The seller must either compensate during the bankruptcy or money judgment proceedings, or the creditor can repossess the boat to satisfy the debt.

Finally, we added a provision that any item purchased specifically to defeat claims of creditors will not be exempted. It is important to ensure that exemptions cannot be used as loopholes to allow debtors to game the system.

The revision of the *Exemptions Act* was initially brought to attention — of course, the legislative council office was aware, but it was also brought to attention by public complaints that were received late last year in 2023 stemming from the hardship caused to debtors undergoing bankruptcy under the current legislation, which is certainly understandable. The current legislation is causing real harm to Yukoners, and the need for us to repeal and replace the *Exemptions Act* and amend the *Garnishee Act* is here before us in Bill No. 36, to be done as quickly and responsibly as possible.

The bill modernizes the exemptions and the values that are currently contained in the *Exemptions Act*, which have not been amended since it was assented to in 1954.

The proposed repeal and replacement of the *Exemptions Act* follows an approach recommended by the Uniform Law Conference of Canada *Civil Enforcement of Money Judgments Act*, which has been adopted in full by four provinces and in part by numerous other provinces and both territories. This recommended approach moves all prescribed dollar values into regulation instead of being listed in the act, as they were initially and in the current legislation. They will be removed from the act itself for easier and more routine updates, although I certainly hope that it is not 70 years before we take a look at this again.

The proposed *Exemptions Act* before you also enables an evergreen clause to be administered in regulation. This allows for the automatic judgment of the prescribed monetary values for exempt items each year to ensure that dollar values attached to the act will never again become so out of date.

The bill before us also offers additional important protections. Seniors over 65 account for one in five bankruptcies in the Yukon — the highest rate among all age categories. Securing the future of seniors experiencing financial difficulties as well as all debtors and their families guided the drafting of this bill that we have brought before the Legislative Assembly.

We have added a section exempting all money payable to a debtor or their dependants under our *Social Assistance Act*. Our *Insurance Act* protects all whole and universal life insurance policies — the type where money accumulates in an account that could potentially be withdrawn, provided that the beneficiary of those policies is a member of the debtor's immediate family. All annuities payable to the debtor or their dependants are protected by existing federal and territorial laws. The federal *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* already protects RRSP and other registered retirement plans, excluding deposits made during the last 12 months.

Finally, the new *Exemptions Act* includes minor yet crucial amendments to the *Garnishee Act*. Sections 22 and 23 of the *Garnishee Act* establish the minimum and maximum amounts

that debtors can retain from their monthly wages under a writ of garnishment. These sections of the *Garnishee Act* have not been amended since April of 1980 and suggest that a family of three can live comfortably in the Yukon on \$1,000 a month, while single employees are guaranteed only \$600 a month.

The proposed amendments to the *Garnishee Act* included in this bill will allow for future work to modernize these values in regulations as well as introducing an evergreen clause to provide annual adjustments to ensure that the values remain up to date and align with the updated *Exemptions Act*.

I am pleased to present this updated *Exemptions Act* as well as subsequent amendments to the *Garnishee Act* as vital components to meeting the needs of vulnerable Yukoners. Our government is pleased to have introduced these revisions to these important pieces of legislation to ensure that both debtors and creditors are treated fairly. I hope the changes needed here are obvious to all. I look forward to debate with respect to any specific questions, and I certainly hope for the support to have these long overdue and important changes made on behalf of Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: We do have a few questions regarding this. There is, in this matter, a question as to where the fair balance lies, which also includes who government consulted with on this matter. During a bankruptcy, while we recognize that having a debtor left destitute following bankruptcy proceedings is not in the public interest, the fact that they owe money also means that there is someone else who hasn't been paid money they are owed by that debtor. It is important to keep in mind that, if the person who is owed that money is a person or a small business owner, they may face financial hardship as a result of not being paid by the debtor who has gone through the bankruptcy proceedings.

Again, we recognize that the legislation hasn't been changed in some time. We will be supporting it going to Committee of the Whole, where we will be asking some questions about it, but we do have questions about where that fair balance between the interest of someone owed money and the interest of someone owing money lies and what provisions are reasonable to strike that fair balance and hopefully ensure that no one is left destitute as a result of the situation.

We would also be interested in hearing about who was consulted on this and whether there was any consultation with the business community or whether this was just in response to complaints received from debtors who would be representing one side of the situation but not both sides of the situation.

Ms. Blake: We are in support of the changes being made to the *Exemptions Act*, considering it is 70 years out of date.

I do have a small number of questions, but I will wait until we are in Committee of the Whole.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, as I have noted, I am really pleased to be able to present Bill No. 36 as well as the subsequent amendments to the named *Garnishee Act*. Changing the *Exemptions Act* is an important opportunity to properly support Yukoners who are subject to a money judgment or bankruptcy proceedings as well as to support their creditors.

As I have noted, it does work to strike a balance in these situations. I look forward to being able to answer questions during Committee of the Whole, and I urge support for this bill at second reading.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 36 agreed to

Bill No. 37: *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 37, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 37, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 37, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to speak about our government's proposed *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*, which is known as Bill

No. 37 here before the House. As members of this Assembly know, miscellaneous statute amendment acts are used to make minor changes to various pieces of legislation in the territory.

This kind of legislation is introduced from time to time, and there is a corresponding process for regulations. The types of amendments that they make are technical and administrative. For example, they correct typographical errors; they correct issues of number sequencing; they update references to legislation where the title of an act might have changed. The changes do not have policy implications for how the legislation is being amended or would apply in practice.

In the fall of 2023, the Department of Justice placed a call-out for amendments to legislation that met this technical test. That call to departments, together with items that were identified by the legislative counsel office at the Department of Justice that require updated language in legislation, make up the contents of this amending bill.

The Minister of Justice has carriage of the legal services within the Government of Yukon and brings these kinds of bills forward on behalf of the government from time to time. As part of my ministerial responsibility for maintaining the integrity of all legislation, this piece of legislation is brought forward to maintain that integrity government-wide.

Bill No. 37 is introduced for that purpose. I look forward to the support of my colleagues of the changes that are proposed in this Bill No. 37 and to answering any questions that members might have during Committee of the Whole when we get to that later today.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, since miscellaneous statute acts of this type are simply supposed to be correcting errors, we don't have much in the way of comments regarding it.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, having looked at the amendments, these are all straightforward and do not raise any questions for us. We will be voting in favour.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the comments by the members opposite. I appreciate their review of this piece of legislation, Bill No. 37, and clearly their review of the specifics and the details brought forward. I look forward to the support at the end of second reading and going forward and, if any questions do arise, being able to answer them as we get to Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 37 agreed to

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 Bill No. 36, entitled *Exemptions Act*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 36: *Exemptions Act*

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 36, entitled *Exemptions Act*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am happy to introduce Mark Radke, the Deputy Minister of Justice with the Yukon government, as well as Debra Komar, who is a policy analyst and has joined us here today for the purposes of proceeding to Committee of the Whole regarding Bill No. 36. I would also like to introduce Emily Harris, who is joining us in the gallery

and is also a newly minted policy analyst with the Department of Justice with the Government of Yukon. Welcome to all of them. I am happy to proceed to any questions there may be regarding this bill.

Mr. Cathers: Deputy Chair, I would like to welcome the officials here as well. I would like to note, as I did refer to at second reading, that we do recognize that the legislation hasn't been updated in quite some time, but as I touched on, there are, of course, two sides to a situation when a bankruptcy proceeding occurs. While recognizing that it is not in the public interest to see debtors left destitute, the fact that they owe money also means that there is someone on the other side, and there is the potential that people or small businesses that are owed money might also face hardship as a result of not being paid.

So, it is that question of balance and fairness and that leads me to the point, beginning with: Who did they consult about this? Did they consult with the legal community? Did they consult with the Yukon chapter of the Canadian Bar Association? Was there any consultation with the local business community, or was this just driven by complaints coming from one side of the situation?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question.

The need to revise this act came to attention — but also the need to not delay it was a priority for the work done at the Department of Justice. It meant that, in order to do so, we would not be conducting a full public engagement. It wouldn't have been possible in the circumstances because each and every day, potentially, Yukoners are adversely affected by the limitations of this current law, and it was also not considered necessary given the relatively small number of Yukoners impacted by the legislation each year and how completely out of touch the provisions are with life here in the Yukon nowadays. For instance, there is the argument that potentially someone's cellphone, which would be valued at more than what the current exemption is for all of the furniture in someone's house, might be valued at well over that, and we know how much those phones can cost. It was simply — I am going to say — an urgent need to make sure that we have made the appropriate changes as quickly as possible.

That said, there was targeted engagement. It was focused on licensed insolvency trustees, who are federally regulated financial advisors. They are the only professionals authorized to administer government-regulated insolvency proceedings such as consumer proposals to creditors and bankruptcies. There are 16 licensed insolvency trustees who currently practise within the Yukon Territory. They provided written answers to some 23 questions, which will inform the maximum prescribed dollar values for exempted items to be established in regulation.

The trustees routinely calculate how much property the debtors can retain, and that is their expertise, and they identified tipping points at which most debtors will lose their homes or vehicles or tools of a trade that enable them to earn income. Those tipping points will inform the revised maximum prescribed dollar values for all exempted items as we go forward and create regulations.

Seven of the licensed insolvency trustees with offices in the Yukon were also interviewed by telephone for one or two hours each, providing invaluable information that has shaped this legislation going forward.

Mr. Cathers: I don't have a long list of questions on this, recognizing that we do have the budget and other matters to address as time is growing short this Sitting.

I want to note that in this legislation, we see that they are amending the *Garnishee Act* to permit regulations as to the amounts that can be garnished and prescribing debts that can't be garnished at all. The first question is whether it's the intention to have whole categories of debts being exempted by regulation. If that is the intent, would it not be more appropriate to include those amounts in the statute itself?

Secondly, there don't appear to be transitional provisions in the legislation. A concern that we have heard from one lawyer is whether this would have any impact on writs of continuing garnishment, which we understand are in place for two years and can be extended.

Will the new limits apply to writs of continuing garnishment that are already active at the point in time that the law comes into force?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The sections of the *Garnishee Act* governing how much salary a debtor is permitted to keep while under a writ of garnishment have not been amended since the sections were brought into force by an ordinance in April of 1980 — that is the *Garnishee Act* being out of date as well. Section 22 of the *Garnishee Act* determines the maximum amount a debtor may retain, defined as 70 percent of their take-home pay. It is an interesting turn of phrase. The section also defines a minimum amount that the debtor must retain so that individuals making minimum wage or, for instance, working part time are protected.

Currently, the minimum amounts being protected from garnishment are \$600 a month for a single debtor, some \$7,200 of take-home pay per year; they are \$1,000 a month for a debtor with up to two dependants or \$12,000 of take-home pay per year; and \$150 a month for each additional dependant or \$1,800 a year per child. These are woefully inadequate, of course.

The federal low-income threshold for a single person is \$24,500 a year, while the threshold for a family of three is \$42,500 per year with respect to the federal low-income concepts. The current legislation is forcing low-income Yukoners with garnishment wages to live well below the poverty line, and immediate amendments are warranted.

The amendments to the act will also introduce regulation-making authorities to allow for easier revisions in the future. Those specific numbers — I can find the section references, if that is of assistance. They are in part 3 of Bill No. 36 under section 8, and they deal with the *Garnishee Act* amendments. The amendments, as you can see there, are to take out those expressions of "\$1,000", "\$600", and "\$150" respectively and to add in the concept of "the prescribed amount". So, those prescribed amounts will now be in regulation so that they can be appropriately reviewed and adjusted as necessary and they can then support individuals who may be subject to a garnishee order that relates to the *Exemptions Act* as well.

I will move on to the next question. It relates to individuals who might be subject to a writ of continuing garnishment. Individuals who recently declared bankruptcy may be understandably concerned at the dramatic changes that are being introduced. Several features exist to mitigate the response of recently bankrupted individuals. The Department of Justice, during engagement, committed to keeping the licensed insolvency trustees informed as the legislation moves forward.

As enforcement of the revised legislation nears, the Department of Justice will contact trustees, who can in turn counsel their clients, where appropriate, to delay either filing a bankruptcy until the new legislation could apply — or other advice.

For those with initiated or recently discharged bankruptcies, an appeals process does exist. However, licensed insolvency trustees indicated that such an appeals process has not been used in the Yukon, and as it requires the recently bankrupted person to engage a lawyer to proceed with an appeal, even if an appeal were filed and proven successful, it is not possible for the debtor to recover their seized home or vehicle if they are that far gone in the process. Financial compensation would be truly the only recourse. Public awareness of upcoming changes and the efforts of the licensed insolvency trustees are the best pathways to lessen the negative impacts of the revised legislation on those directly impacted.

We are prioritizing development of the regulations under this act in the event that it does pass this Legislative Assembly, and they will be required to bring the act into force as quickly as possible while taking time to ensure that all of the issues of concern are addressed. I'm just going to check one part — if I might just have a moment.

I just want to add that we will be working to bring any changes, as approved by this Legislative Assembly, into place as quickly as possible, taking the time to ensure that proper consideration is given to a legal framework that can have significant impacts on the lives of those who are affected. I would also be able to add that the existing exemptions and garnishee acts do not address the issue of timing or implementation. As I have just noted, upon regulation, it's the plan to bring the *Exemptions Act* into force and effect. Nor has the issue been significant, as neither act has been revised for decades and dollar values have not been changed.

As the revised acts do come into force and because the dollar figures will be revised each year, it is necessary to establish clear benchmarks to determine which dollar values apply to each individual undergoing a bankruptcy or money judgment. The benchmarks that have been recommended by the licensed insolvency trustees are as follows: For individuals clearing bankruptcy, the law that is in force on the date of the initial bankruptcy event as defined in the federal *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* will be the law that applies to that individual. For individuals experiencing garnishment of their wages, there will be particular specifics. The law that is in force on the date of the issuance of the writ of garnishment will be the law that applies.

Deputy Chair: Ten seconds.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Sorry; did you call order?

Deputy Chair: Ten seconds.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you. I will complete my answer, if possible, going forward.

Ms. Blake: I would like to welcome the officials and thank them for being here today.

To start, I just have a question, more out of curiosity. What is the decision process that decides whether an act is repealed or amended?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I apologize; I didn't quite hear the question. I think I now understand what has been asked.

The question is about the choice to repeal and replace this act. The antiquated and out-of-date language that exists in the current legislation truly limits the exemptions that were even able to be considered. There are outdated definitions in the *Exemptions Act* that meant that really none of the existing legislation was worth retaining. There were no definitions that were applicable to sort of modern-day life in the Yukon.

The legislative counsel office has recommended that we repeal the current act and replace it with the act that is before you as part of Bill No. 36 rather than make amendments to the current piece of legislation. This provided ease of debate. It allowed Members of the Legislative Assembly to see the new *Exemptions Act* in its entirety before you, and it also provides long-term readability and frankly provides the opportunity for the new *Exemptions Act* to be relevant.

Retaining the title of the act to be the same from the *Exemptions Act* currently to the new *Exemptions Act* removes the need for us to make changes in other statutes, other laws in the Yukon, where they reference the *Exemptions Act*. There are seven other pieces of legislation that reference the *Exemptions Act*, and so, for ease of transfer from one set of laws and applicable rules for Yukoners to another, this is the choice that has been made and that's how these things are assessed.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for her answer to that question.

Under definitions for "spouse" under (b), it indicates: "... a person with whom the debtor has cohabited as a couple for at least 12 continuous months..." Is this definition the same as other legislation? I ask because I am thinking of the *Social Assistance Act*. I couldn't find anything in the act or regulations for what the timeline is for a person to be considered a spouse.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. The definition of "spouse" is contained in section 1 as in many but not all pieces of legislation where section 1 is a list of definitions that would be applicable under the legislation. "Spouse" is defined there as someone married to the debtor or someone with whom the debtor has lived as a couple for at least one year. That is consistent with other pieces of Yukon legislation.

I don't want to give an example of it now and be wrong about it, but there are several other pieces of Yukon legislation where the definition of "spouse" or what we sometimes refer to as "common-law spouse" requires cohabitation for a year. I don't know about the specific reference to the *Social Assistance Act*, but I can look there. We can also make sure — and I think maybe it is the case with other pieces of legislation where the definition of "spouse" is expanded on in regulation.

Ms. Blake: The next section that I have a question about is section 5, "Exemption after death of debtor." It indicates: "Property, or an interest in property, of a debtor exempted under this Act, or the proceeds of the sale of such property or interest, is exempt from seizure and the claims of creditors of the debtor after the debtor's death."

I'm just wondering if the minister could explain this section and clarify it, please.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Exemption after death of a debtor is noted in section 5. Occasionally, what happens is that the family or administrator of an estate discovers, after they become involved with administering someone's estate, that the deceased person was insolvent or had no funds, and the estate needs to proceed into bankruptcy. The proposed bill introduces several features that permit an estate administrator or the next of kin to receive the same exemptions and protections to which the deceased debtor would have been entitled if they had made those claims themselves.

Section 5 of the bill protects exemptions and exempted items after the death of a debtor. Section 6 extends the right of selection or the ability to determine which of the items that qualify for an exemption in each category will be retained to an estate administrator or the surviving next of kin. Additional protections for next of kin and estate administrators are found in territorial legislation such as the *Estate Administration Act*, the *Dependants Relief Act*, and also the *Wills Act*.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for her response to the question.

The next question I have is in regard to section 7, "Regulations", which indicates that the Commissioner in Executive Council may make regulations — and there is a long list of items in there. I'm just wondering: Will there be new regulations written for this new act? If yes, when will they be ready? If no, will there then be amendments to the current regulations?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. I am advised that — and this makes sense that there are no regulations worth saving under the current piece of legislation, which is, I think that it would be fair to say, ancient — pretty close — and not relevant. New regulations are being drafted in anticipation of a new exemptions act being supported by this Legislative Assembly and also in collaboration with the folks I mentioned earlier who we have consulted or engaged with respect to creating new regulations — new regulations that I hope to see proceed through the Cabinet process as soon as possible. When those regulations are ready and proceed through that process in the coming months, the *Exemptions Act* and the regulations will come into force and effect at the same time for ease of support and information for Yukoners.

Ms. Blake: I don't have any further questions, and again, I would like to thank the minister for her time in answering my questions and thank the officials for being here today.

Mahsi' cho.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 36, entitled *Exemptions Act*?

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

Ms. Blake: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 36, entitled *Exemptions Act*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title of Bill No. 36 read and agreed to

Deputy Chair: The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 36, entitled *Exemptions Act*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Clauses 1 to 10 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 36, entitled *Exemptions Act*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South that the Chair report Bill No. 36, entitled *Exemptions Act*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 37, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 37: *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 37, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would just like to ask my colleagues to help me welcome back Mark Radke, the Deputy Minister of the Department of Justice, to my right, and beyond his seat is Susan Hardy, who is our chief legislative counsel and has worked on Bill No. 37 that is now before us.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 37, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*?

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

Ms. Blake: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 37, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title of Bill No. 37 read and agreed to

Deputy Chair: The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 37, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 33 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 37, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South that the Chair report Bill No. 37, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, 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 five minutes.

Recess

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

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

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Public Service Commission — *continued*

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, I will just introduce my officials again. I have the Public Service Commissioner Sherri Young and also Ash Kayseas, who is the Acting Assistant Deputy Minister for the People and Culture division. I thank them very much — both of them — for their time today and for their assistance in questions from the opposition.

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, I just want to follow up with the minister on an issue the last time we were in debate on this department, and it was in relation to the preferential hiring policy that the Yukon government has. The minister explained that it is indeed correct that the preferential hiring process for

First Nations does not apply in the same way for teachers, and I am wondering if the minister can explain why that is.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would say that, when defining the Indigenous hiring preference through the representative public service plan, this policy applies to employees who are members of the YEU and the Public Service Alliance of Canada as well. So, the collective agreement for employees under the Yukon Association of Education Professionals also includes — over and above a provision — prioritizing hire for teachers of Yukon First Nation ancestry returning to their traditional territory.

So, you could look at it as a framework policy, but then very much more specific in the teachers hiring policy, there is a section — if you review the job postings for Education, they do not necessarily include a preferential hiring statement. Article 49 of the YAEP collective agreement reads that the teachers priority hiring — this is the over-and-above section, basically:

“49.01 Qualified applicants for posted teacher vacancies shall be hired in the following priority order:

“a) Persons of Yukon First Nations Ancestry not already employed as a teacher or existing Teachers of Yukon First Nations Ancestry seeking to return to their traditional territory;

“b) Indeterminant teachers with 3 or more years of continuous service in the same school;

“c) Other indeterminant teachers;

“d) Other applicants.”

As we continue to strengthen the representation and inclusion of Yukon First Nation employees in the Yukon public service by actively working with Yukon First Nation governments to implement government’s representative public service plan *Breaking Trail Together*, this would be encapsulating for regular Yukon employees. The way we could look at it, I guess, is that when it comes to teachers, there is one extra step added based on that section 49.01.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that information from the minister, but I just want to clarify. So, the reason for the discrepancy between the two is because of the differentiation between the two union agreements; is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Silver: When we’re talking about *Breaking Trail Together*, that is an overarching policy, whereas specific to the YAEP process, yes, that would be a collective bargaining agreement.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission?

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

Mr. Dixon: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Copperbelt North has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$53,543,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$63,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$53,606,000 agreed to

Public Service Commission agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Department of Community Services

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is a pleasure to be here this afternoon. I would like to take a second to welcome to the Chamber again Phil MacDonald and Matt King, who will be assisting me and providing help and accurate information to the opposition this afternoon where we can.

The Department of Community Services’ main objective is building resilient, sustainable, healthy, and safe communities across the territory. We have a broad scope of work that includes building critical community infrastructure, protecting communities from fire, operating landfills, overseeing effective local governance, and establishing the legislative framework for medical workers operating in the territory. The efforts of Community Services touch the lives of every Yukoner.

I would like to thank the members of this Legislature for the opportunity to speak to highlights of their work outlined in the budget for 2024-25.

The department’s main estimates include \$99.3 million in capital expenditures and just over \$106.8 million in operation and maintenance expenditures.

The Department of Community Services ensures that communities have what they need to deliver sustainable services in climate-resilient communities. We are proud to be doing that work in partnership with Canada, municipalities, First Nations, and unincorporated Yukon.

This year, as most, we are continuing or completing several projects around the territory. This fiscal year, the Yukon government will be investing \$64.5 million in a range of infrastructure projects. For the most part, the cost of these

projects is shared by Canada and Yukon on a 75/25 split under the federal small communities fund and the Investing in Canada infrastructure program.

With these investments, we are building flourishing communities, ensuring that every special place in the Yukon has a viable future. These investments reflect the priorities of municipalities, First Nations, and communities identified several years ago, but they are adjusted as needs and priorities change over time.

We need to carefully evaluate our priorities so that decisions we make along with our community partners maximize the benefit of the funding. We are constantly advocating with our federal colleagues to expand and increase funds for the Yukon because community infrastructure investments deliver high-quality services and improve the territory's economic health and the well-being of Yukoners.

In Dawson, we are committed to a \$65.6-million investment for a new recreation centre. In Mayo, year 2 of construction is underway on a two-and-a-half-year project to replace critical in-ground infrastructure. Substantial completion is expected in the fall of 2024. We are also working with the community on replacing their reservoirs. A contract has been awarded for their replacement, and we expect substantial completion later this year.

In Watson Lake, up to \$14 million worth of work is being completed for water, sewer, and road improvements in the five-year capital plan. This money will upgrade or repair more than 1,200 metres of sewer line, 1,500 metres of water mains, and 16 kilometres of roads.

In Dawson, engagement with the municipality and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in is being completed on a preferred location for a lagoon. We are excited to be taking tangible steps toward replacing Dawson's secondary sewage treatment plant.

In Whitehorse, a \$31-million contract for construction of a gymnastics and climbing facility has started in Whistle Bend. This 3,000-square-metre facility will be large enough to host competitive and recreational sporting events. We are pleased to be developing this future world-class facility.

Madam Chair, modern water and sewer systems are essential for healthy, active lives. No one cuts a ribbon on a water or sewer pipe or road upgrade, but these projects are the foundation on which any community sits. Up-to-date infrastructure is integral to any community's future. In Faro, Haines Junction, Mayo, Dawson City, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse, replacements and upgrades of aging water and sewer will be underway this year, as they have been for the past several years.

We are advancing the Mount Lorne water treatment plant through regulatory approvals and design. The well has been drilled, and construction of the facility will begin in 2025 — the cost of which will be 100-percent federally funded. We look forward to continuing all this critical, important work that enables sustainable local services in climate-resilient communities.

Recycling is critical to limiting our environmental impact and getting value for taxpayers' money. Decommissioning a landfill and opening a new one are expensive undertakings. It

makes sense to extend the life of the landfills that we have. We would rather be spending money on recreation centres and new subdivisions than digging new holes to throw our trash into.

That's why, to help bridge the gap between now and the start of the extended producer responsibility, we have offered to invest \$2.4 million over the next two years for the City of Whitehorse to implement a curbside collection program if the city chooses to offer this service to its citizens. Establishing a municipal curbside collection system in our largest city will be a tremendous benefit to citizens that will help to set the conditions for sustainable waste management well into the future. Part of that funding will support the diversion credit program that we provide territorially, which has increased in recent years from approximately \$500,000 in 2018 to \$1 million in 2022 and a projected \$1.8 million in 2023. We have approved an additional \$1 million in funding from last year to ensure that recycling remains sustainable.

There are, of course, some things that are not dealt with by recycling processors and end up in a landfill. To support municipalities dealing with the volumes of waste produced, we have budgeted \$450,000 for regional landfill agreements. The agreements support municipalities while ensuring waste management facilities have gates, operating hours, tipping fees, and on-site staff to monitor and manage waste streams. This will reduce environmental risk and extend the life of landfills.

The Sport and Recreation branch contributes to Yukoners' health, well-being, and quality of life by supporting sport, recreation, and active living throughout the territory. Our annual supports include the following: more than \$1.8 million for active living programs and Special Olympics Yukon, the ElderActive Recreation Association, and the Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon; direct funding of \$980,000 for recreation in rural Yukon communities through support for staffing, infrastructure, liability insurance, and small capital funding; more than \$1.7 million for 28 sport governing bodies, elite and high-performance athletes, officials, and five special recreation groups; and \$858,000 for sport programs and initiatives, including aboriginal sport development and leadership.

This year's budget also includes \$1.75 million in support of the 2026 Arctic Winter Games Host Society. The Yukon is proud to be the host jurisdiction in 2026, and the Yukon government is profoundly honoured to be partnering in the 2026 Arctic Winter Games. We know that our capital City of Whitehorse will host an amazing and historic games. The games will impact Yukon society in many incredible ways. Performing in front of a home crowd will be the high-water mark for our athletes and artists. It is a wonderful event, and we can't wait for it to arrive. We have committed \$4 million for the games, along with \$350,000 of in-kind support.

As the Yukon grows in population, so too does the number of homeowners. This budget includes \$91,000 for new subscriptions to the homeowners grant. The homeowners grant provides eligible Yukon homeowners who have paid their property taxes in full and lived in their homes for 184 days — or six months of the tax year — with a grant of up to 50 percent of the property taxes owing on their eligible principal residence

to a maximum of \$450 and \$500 for homeowners 65 years or older. In 2022, approximately 9,000 Yukon households applied for the homeowners grant, saving Yukon homeowners more than \$4.2 million.

We not only help residents pay for their bills, we provide that assistance to municipalities as well. The comprehensive municipal grant is a reliable source of funding for communities. The 6.8-percent inflation that impacted society in 2022 also put pressure on our municipal partners. This inflationary pressure will be factored into the 2024 grant payments. The grant formula accounts for high inflation, and we are pleased to see the formula positively influencing this year's grant. The result will be a \$2.3 million increase for Yukon municipalities, with overall contributions of more than \$24.5 million for the fiscal year 2024-25.

The Yukon continues to see incredible population growth. Our infrastructure investments over the past several years have made our communities the envy of the nation, so it is no surprise that people are eager to move to and live in Canada's most incredible jurisdiction. My colleague might say, "It's a little bit metal."

Housing these new Yukoners is our challenge, and we are pleased to be joined in that work with our municipal, First Nation, and private sector partners. \$25.9 million is budgeted for land development, which includes \$17.6 million for continued development of the Whistle Bend subdivision in the Whitehorse area and \$6.1 million for development of rural lots in Yukon.

We are working on land development projects in every single Yukon municipality and partnering with Yukon First Nations on meeting lot demand. This year, the land development team will be advancing suitability assessments on more than 15 sites, master planning of more than 15 sites, and 20 land development construction projects across the territory, preparing for another 250 lots to be released in 2025.

In Whitehorse, we are supporting or leading planning and feasibility work for sites identified in the City of Whitehorse's official community plan and supporting the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation on advancing their own lot development interests.

Whistle Bend is the territory's largest residential development ever — in phases 9A, 9B, 12, and 13, along with two lift stations and two landscaping projects that are under construction as we speak.

In partnership with Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Range Road subdivision, which will provide up to 400 units of housing, is being designed, with the construction tender target later this year.

Feasibility and planning of the Copper Ridge parcel for private sector developers is complete, and zoning and preparation for sale is underway.

The city-led, multi-owner master plan for the Valleyview south master plan, including the tank farm, is ongoing. The city will complete infrastructure cost-sharing, zoning, and granular-use guidelines that will serve as the foundation for private sector land development.

In Carmacks, we released six urban lots this spring and are working with the Village of Carmacks and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation to identify future residential and industrial parcels.

In Dawson, three or four more infill lots are targeted for release in the summer of 2024. At the same time, lower Dome regulatory work and detailed design is underway. We are meeting new Dredge Pond 2 master planning spring targets set by the City of Dawson Council and working toward construction tenders in 2024 for both of these exciting projects.

In Faro, seven serviced infill lots will be released in the spring of 2024.

In Haines Junction, a new subdivision near Willow Acres is underway with targeted completion set for the summer of 2025. This phase of the project will yield 44 lots.

In Mayo, five infill lots were released in the spring of 2024, and the Land Development branch is also working with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the Village of Mayo to advance planning for residential development on the upper bench above Mayo and in the north urban expansion area.

In Teslin, 20 Lone Tree and two large airport industrial lots will be released this spring.

In Watson Lake, the Frances Avenue 43-lot extension and lift station construction is targeted for completion in the fall of 2024. This was the first project that is part of a partnership between the Yukon government, Liard First Nation, and the Town of Watson Lake.

We are busy, Madam Chair. Housing pressures keep the expectations high for our small land planning crew, but they are doing a wonderful job of moving the Yukon forward on the projects that will create spaces for new neighbours.

The Emergency Measures Organization enhances emergency readiness in the Yukon alongside other Yukon government branches and our partners in communities, First Nations, industry, federal government, and other agencies. The Emergency Measures Organization coordinates Government of Yukon efforts throughout all aspects of emergency management, including prevention and mitigation preparedness, response, and recovery.

We are working on a legislative review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health and Safety Act*. The review will allow the Government of Yukon and our First Nation and municipal government partners to respond effectively to future epidemics and pandemics. The review will ensure that Yukon's legislation meets our needs by providing the legislative framework for an efficient and effective approach to emergency management during epidemics and pandemics.

Wildland Fire Management protects life, critical infrastructure, and property while facilitating the creation of wildfire-resilient Yukon communities. Wildland Fire Management is grateful to all of our partners in the Yukon emergency response, including Yukon First Nation and municipal governments, First Nations Wildfire, volunteer fire departments, municipal fire departments, RCMP, and many others. We are proud of all responders' hard work during the 2023 fire season.

Approximately \$1.8 million is allocated for First Nation initial attack firefighter crew services.

This budget also includes money for the purchase and deployment of washing, cooking, communications, and first-aid trailers to support the crews who do so much to protect us. Approximately \$1.8 million is budgeted to Fire Marshal's Office activities. This includes the operation of community fire halls, honoraria and travel for volunteers, as well as program administration costs. This year, the Fire Marshal's Office will be building on their work with communities on implementing a new level of service model for unincorporated communities. This innovative model offers multiple levels of fire service to match the needs and capacities of Yukon communities. Defining levels of service was a recommendation of the 2021 review of the Yukon Fire Marshal's Office, and we are pleased to have introduced new fire service levels in Keno, Ross River, Pelly Crossing, Destruction Bay, and Old Crow. Training is also underway in other communities, including Tagish and Champagne.

We recently concluded broad public engagement on changes to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. The engagement began in February 2024 and included a survey and public information sessions. We are thankful for everyone who took part. The feedback is essential to informing the review and ensuring that we move forward with legislation that supports a healthy market and affordable housing for Yukoners. We need to strike a balance in this legislation. This budget includes money to complete that important work so that the House has new legislation to consider in 2025.

Government of Yukon recognizes that homes and buildings are a large source of greenhouse gas emissions. To reduce our environmental footprint and build our climate resiliency, we are investing in energy-efficient homes and commercial buildings. With the different local improvement loans offered to Yukoners, we are investing more than \$3.5 million to help offset the cost of rural electrification, telecommunications, domestic wells, and energy-efficiency upgrades through the better building program. These programs support Yukoners to build and retrofit their homes across the territory.

In closing, Madam Chair, I want to thank you and the members of this Legislature for the opportunity to share some of the budget highlights and work of the Department of Community Services. I will now open the floor to questions.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister, and thank you to the officials for being here today.

I just have one topic I want to touch on before I pass the floor over to my colleague. I wanted to ask about the incinerator in Old Crow. I am wondering if it is operational and if the minister can tell me about the staffing — whether there are existing employees who are operating it or new employees who have been hired — and what sort of supports are in place for those employees.

I also understand that there have been times in the past when it hasn't been operational, and I am wondering if there is an air emissions permit in place to burn garbage when the incinerator is not operational.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question this afternoon — and I know that this is of interest, certainly to yourself and probably the Chair, as well.

The gasifier went through extensive upgrades in October 2023, and we are pleased that the unit is now fully functional. The Government of Yukon spent approximately \$200,000 on upgrades to the unit in 2023. The final phase of work related to staff training and safety is currently underway. Once the training and safety upgrades are complete this spring, the unit will be brought back into operation by this summer. The solid-waste facility is very busy with large construction projects in Old Crow, and therefore, several local staff are being trained to operate the gasifier.

You also asked about air permits or air emissions permits. Due to the — yes, so the solid-waste permit for the facility in Old Crow was previously amended for a short period to allow for open burning while the Old Crow gasifier repairs were completed. We continue to work with the regulator to communicate the timelines for repair and to ensure that the unit is operational as soon as possible.

I hope that answers your question.

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to ask some questions in the Department of Community Services. I will jump right into it.

I will start with the comprehensive municipal grant. The minister has said previously that the department is negotiating a renewal, upgrade, or a change to the comprehensive municipal grant with the Association of Yukon Communities and Yukon municipalities. Can the minister give us an update on the ongoing discussions and negotiations on the CMG?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question. I look forward to our discussion this afternoon.

We are talking about the comprehensive municipal grant. I can report that, since receiving the Association of Yukon Communities report in 2023, the association and the government have transitioned from a review process, where we were, to beginning negotiations. A new working group has been formed with representatives from both organizations. The members first met in November and have had additional meetings planned throughout the spring. The due-diligence work will help inform all parties in negotiations about funding formulas, work that we expect will carry on throughout 2024, with an aim to inform future decisions on the municipal grant for the 2025 budget and beyond.

I can report to the House and to the member opposite that we met with the Association of Yukon Communities — time flies these days — several weeks ago now or maybe a couple of months or eight weeks ago — with the president of the association and the executive director, the CAO. We agreed at that time to continue negotiations. We are setting up terms of reference for those talks. That is really where everything is going on right now. It was a cordial meeting. We actually agreed at that time that, as negotiations go forward, we will actually hold a news conference to announce progress on the work that we are doing on the comprehensive municipal grant. I think we have also hired a financial accountancy firm to look

at the state of the finances for the municipalities. We are going to continue all that good work.

I have always been clear that we are shooting for the 2025-26 budget for this work. In the meantime, it is great news — as I mentioned in my remarks earlier today — that there is an escalator built in. We know that inflation is a lagging indicator, so it takes a year or two to get caught up, but we are seeing millions of dollars flow to municipalities that they hadn't had in the past. That will continue to sort of make up the ground that municipalities saw when inflation was much higher than it is today. That is also happening. I hope that answers the member opposite's question.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate some of the information from the minister. He said that negotiations have begun and that there is a working group.

Can we take that to mean that the working group is the group that is actually conducting the negotiations? If so, who is on that working group? Has the minister given his officials or the officials that are representing the Yukon government in those negotiations a negotiating mandate at this point?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: There seems to be an echo of an earlier point of tension between me and the Association of Yukon Communities about the word “negotiation”. That's unfortunate. I mean, we met, as I said, several weeks ago. We talked about this issue. We agreed to go forward in harmony; we are doing so. I think the next meeting of officials is planned for April 29, and we look forward to that discussion. We are working together.

We have assigned our teams to actually do the work. We are going to see the results of the financial review that the team has done. We are going to consider the work of the consultant hired by the Association of Yukon Communities. Again, the next meeting is planned for April 29 and I look forward to hearing about that discussion.

Mr. Dixon: The minister mentioned some tensions between the Association of Yukon Communities and the government about this. Can he elaborate? I'm not sure that I understand what he meant.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Well, that surprises me a little bit. The member brought that tension to the floor of the House and we talked about it at the AYC — during some of the questions that were raised by the opposition about this matter. It was a long time ago now. The president of the AYC and I sat down and had coffee together at Boston Pizza. We had talks and we have had discussions afterwards. He even texted me today.

It came around whether or not we were negotiating. I said they were; they said they weren't. I think it's a potato/potahto situation. Nevertheless, we have worked out among ourselves that discrepancy about what a negotiation is and what it isn't. We have agreed to go forward in harmony. The next meeting with officials is planned for April 29 and I look forward to hearing about that discussion.

Mr. Dixon: I am glad to hear that the minister was able to work out the discrepancy between the Yukon government and the AYC with regard to whether or not they were in negotiations. Based on working that out, can the minister elaborate, then — are they in negotiations? Is that indeed the

case? If so, has the minister granted officials representing the Yukon government a mandate to negotiate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As of now, as I said, we have had a number of very good talks between ourselves — our officials — at the officials level as well. We are working very well together. AYC has named three members for the negotiating team. YG has three officials on the negotiation team. We are currently in the process of setting the terms of reference for the negotiations. So, that is where we are at right now. There is a lot of work to be done, of course, as we move forward. As I said, the next meeting is planned for April 29. There is no reason to believe that won't happen, and I look forward to hearing what happens from that discussion. We'll take it from there.

Mr. Dixon: I will move on from the point about negotiations. I think the minister has been clear about what he thinks about that.

I would like to follow up, though, on the terms of reference. What is the status of the development of the terms of reference for those discussions? Will those be discussed at this April 29 meeting, or have they been established already?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for these questions. I understand his interest in this matter. I know that it's a priority for a municipality. I have certainly heard that with my many meetings with mayors over the last little while. I have been clear that we are looking to have some sort of clarity by the 2025-26 budget discussions. That is the deadline we are working toward. I'm not going to negotiate this on the floor of the House. I have been clear about that on many subjects.

We have a meeting on April 29. On April 29, we are going to discuss terms of reference, as I said. We will see what happens out of that meeting on the 29th.

Mr. Dixon: I will move on. I appreciate the minister's answers there on the comprehensive municipal grant. I will move on to the fund formerly known as the “gas tax”, the CCBF.

We had heard some indications that Canada was looking at making changes to the CCBF to include provisions around housing and that the funding for that fund needed to be linked to housing or for the development of housing in order for municipalities to accept or to receive that money. Can the minister comment on whether or not that is indeed the case?

The second question I have is — my understanding is that Canada and Yukon are in the process of renegotiating or have recently renegotiated their bilateral agreement for the CCBF, and I would like to know the status of those bilateral discussions. Is there a bilateral agreement between Canada and Yukon for the CCBF in place now? If not, when does the minister anticipate that agreement being completed?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, now we are talking about the Canada Community-Building Fund. The “gas tax” is so much more elegant in some ways, but that is what it is called now, and Canada is tying the Canada Community-Building Fund to housing outcomes. As part of that, they are looking for housing assessments involving municipalities of 30,000 or more.

That said, they may look at alternatives to that here in the north. That is where Community Services is going to play a

role. We are going to be continuing to lobby and working with our municipal partners on that — specifically Whitehorse because it is right on the line — and those talks are in process. Nothing yet to report on that front. Those talks are ongoing.

We do have a bilateral agreement with Canada, and it is in the process of being renewed. That process has been going on for a year or more. It is still being negotiated. We have gathered feedback from municipalities that we are feeding into the federal government, and so, that process is still going on at the officials level.

The federal government has been very clear with us and with municipalities that this is not a renegotiation — this is a renewal of the existing program. That is where we are. I haven't had any direct briefings; it is still at the officials level — those talks. I am sure that when I have an answer for the House, I will probably come with a ministerial statement.

Mr. Dixon: I have to say that I am a little bit concerned to hear that from the minister: that Canada is looking at adding in new parameters to the Canada Community-Building Fund. As I am sure the minister can appreciate, the CCBF is one of the primary funds that municipalities can access for general infrastructure needs that they can invest in based on their own priorities. To hear that Canada may be imposing additional parameters on that funding in the way of housing assessments would add a significant level of new red tape to accessing the gas tax, and the fact that the threshold that the minister just suggested was 30,000 would absolutely affect the City of Whitehorse.

So, can he provide a little bit more information or whatever knowledge he has about why Canada is imposing that new stringent requirement?

I assume that he has had push-back from the City of Whitehorse. Can he let us know if he is taking that feedback from municipalities and pushing back against Canada and looking for either an exemption for the City of Whitehorse or an exemption for the north as a whole? I am sure other municipalities in other parts of Canada will be doing the same as well.

I hope that Canada gets the message that this kind of imposition of new red tape would be very challenging for a lot of municipalities in the north.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I think — the member opposite shouldn't be surprised by this. I mean, he brought the question up; he prefaced the initial question about more controls on it over housing, so he knew that this was part of the discussion that was going on federally. It certainly shouldn't come as a surprise to him. You know, these are issues, certainly, from municipalities. I have heard these same — I have heard concerns about this. They like the flexibility that comes with the former gas tax, now the Canada Community-Building Fund. The federal government has been talking for a long time about putting some structure around the Canada Community-Building Fund to deal with the housing issues that we're seeing across the country.

So, we are at this point where municipalities like the flexibility of having that account that they can draw on, and I understand that, which is why I have been talking to my federal

counterparts about this and advocating on behalf of municipalities in the territory and indeed across the north to try to retain the flexibility within the Canada Community-Building Fund.

I have also, with the Department of Community Services, staged workshops with municipalities — rather, a forum with municipalities — and First Nations, who are also involved in this, to solicit their feedback and how they would like to see the Canada Community-Building Fund progress and how we can improve the process.

So, we are working with our municipalities and lobbying the federal government on their behalf. I know that they are making their own entreaties to the Government of Canada as well. In May, the northern premiers are going to be talking about this very subject when they come here. Again, I have said that I am advocating on behalf of Whitehorse and Yukon municipalities on this very subject.

On the subject of red tape, I have had this discussion with my federal counterparts and underscored the capacity issues in small northern municipalities and how onerous some of these assessments may be. They have heard me on that front, and so, we will wait and see what comes of that. We are talking about these things, and we will continue to talk and advocate on behalf of Yukon municipalities to make sure that the fund continues to serve Yukon municipalities.

Mr. Dixon: Just to respond to the minister's comments, my expression of surprise is about the detail. I had always heard that Canada was looking at adding new parameters to the CCBF. That was not a surprise, and that's why I asked him. I had not heard until the minister just said so that it would be linked directly to housing. I had never heard that threshold of 30,000 before. That is relevant to us here in Whitehorse, certainly, because Whitehorse obviously is above 30,000 people, so that change would affect Whitehorse.

I know that Whitehorse in particular relies on the CCBF — the Canada Community-Building Fund — heavily for priorities that emerge out of nowhere. A really good example we had just last year was the trunk line coming down from Takhini near Mountain View Drive where the city had to quickly respond to that and use their gas tax funding. If that funding had been linked to housing, I don't think they would have been able to do that.

So, I am a little bit worried about that, so I won't belabour the point too much, but I would implore the minister to make the case to Canada that I don't think imposing that kind of onerous requirement on the CCBF would be welcomed by Yukon municipalities and specifically the City of Whitehorse. I will let them speak for themselves, but I certainly can't imagine that they would appreciate the adding of those types of parameters to the CCBF.

I will just return quickly to the matter of the bilateral relationship between Yukon and Canada on the CCBF. The minister said that — he corrected me — it was not a renegotiation; it's a renewal. But can he tell us again: Then what is the status of the agreement between Canada and Yukon? If it is being renewed, is there a draft agreement that they are debating right now? Is there additional language being

added to it? What is the status of those discussions to renew the bilateral agreement between Canada and Yukon with regard to the CCBF?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for his interest in this matter. Again, I have regular meetings with the Mayor of Whitehorse on this matter and others. We have discussed the threshold that the feds are looking at with this. I am advocating on Whitehorse's behalf with our federal counterparts.

As I said, we are working with our federal partners on this matter, and when I have clarity on the 30,000 threshold and how it may or may not affect Whitehorse, I will certainly be forwarding that, as I have said to the mayor as well.

As far as the renewal of the Canada Community-Building Fund, as I said earlier, this is still at the officials level. I have not seen a draft report. It's still in process. When I have more information from my officials on the status of those talks — it's still working its way through the civil service of both governments — I will be happy to report to the House details of that when I have much more to add to that discussion.

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, I appreciate the minister providing that information. The reason that I'm asking about a bilateral agreement is because I'm wondering if Canada is using this bilateral agreement or either the renewal or renegotiation of that agreement to impose some of these new conditions, like housing and a 30,000-population threshold. Is that the case? Is Canada asking to have the bilateral agreement amended to include these new requirements?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This is an active conversation between the federal government, provinces, territories, and municipalities. The feds have been clear that they want it tied to housing; the provinces, territories, and municipalities want to retain some flexibility and want to have that. It's a live conversation; it's at the officials level at the moment. These details are being worked on at that level, and when I have more to talk about here in the House, I will certainly bring it here to — and to the municipalities of the territory and First Nations, who are the real front lines of this discussion. I will have more to say once we have more to say.

Mr. Dixon: Is the minister aware of whether or not any other provinces have either renegotiated or renewed their agreements? Do other provinces have bilateral agreements in place for the CCBF currently?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It has been a live conversation at the federal-provincial tables that I have sat at — certainly at the municipal ministers' meetings that I have been at. I am not aware of the status of each province's or territory's discussions. I do know that it is a live discussion and it's on the agenda for the meeting here in May. I don't have that information for the member opposite at the moment.

Mr. Dixon: Is the overall breakdown of the CCBF being discussed as well? What I'm referring to there, of course, is the breakdown between municipalities, First Nations, and Yukon government. There is a percentage breakdown, and the numbers escape me right now, but I feel like roughly 60-some-odd percent goes to municipalities, a smaller amount goes to First Nations, and then a single-digit percentage, I believe, goes to

unincorporated communities or therefore the Yukon government. Can the minister remind me of what those percentages are and tell us if those percentages are being discussed right now as well?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will get the percentages for the member opposite. Those percentages, though, were agreed to by the Association of Yukon Communities and Yukon First Nations. We're not interfering with those percentages because those were agreed upon between those two parties, so I don't think that's an issue. I will get the percentages, though, and remind the member opposite what they are.

Mr. Dixon: My last question on the CCBF is a more general question about the way it's delivered. As it works in Yukon right now, the funding is provided to the Yukon government and then the Yukon government distributes it to municipalities, First Nations, and for their own use.

I know that is not the delivery mechanism in every province, and I am wondering if the Yukon has ever considered changing the delivery mechanism to allow municipalities or a group like the AYC or perhaps even the CYFN to deal directly with Canada to receive CCBF funding and then allocate it themselves?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The percentages that we have — 68 percent is the municipal share; 25 percent is First Nation; and seven percent to unincorporated Yukoners.

On an alternate means of distributing, yes, those conversations have come up. I have had them — the Association of Yukon Communities did float this with me quite a long time ago now. The officials looked at it and talked it over with AYC. There is an administrative burden that is carried currently by the Government of Yukon. The Government of Yukon also holds this money in trust and distributes it on behalf of not only the municipalities and the First Nations but also unincorporated Yukoners — Yukon communities. It is not necessarily a simple process.

We have had those discussions with the Association of Yukon Communities. The conversation has gone relatively dormant, and we have not received a proposal or any concrete entreaties from the AYC following the discussions they had many, many months ago — I believe it was many months ago. Anyway, that is where that currently stands, but we had discussed it with the association at some point.

Mr. Dixon: I will move on from the CCBF to the ICIP, and we had some discussions in the last little while about this. I just wanted to confirm a few things.

Now, the minister has been very clear earlier this week that the ICIP has not been entirely spent, and I understand that. As far as I understood, ICIP has been entirely allocated, though. So, I would like to just have the minister confirm that. Can he confirm that the amount of money that we have through ICIP has been entirely allocated — that is to say that there is no money left over to be spent on other projects that haven't already been allocated funding? Can he tell us how much of the money from ICIP is unspent? I'm also wondering — well, I'll leave it there, and I'll take it from there.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yukon signed the integrated bilateral agreement for the Investing in Canada infrastructure

program in May of 2018. Through this program, the Yukon will see \$454.7 million in federal funding that will support projects before the funding ends in 2032-33. So, we have almost a hair shy of half a billion dollars to spend by 2033. The deadline for final applications to the ICIP and the finalization of priorities by the Government of Yukon is March 31, 2025, but at the moment, the entire chunk of money has been allocated to projects across the territory.

To date, under the Investing in Canada infrastructure program, Yukon has advanced 63 projects, totalling \$495.6 million of the combined federal and Yukon contributions, so the whole thing has been allocated. At the moment, remaining yet to spend in the territory by 2033 is \$229.7 million, so there is a ton of ICIP-related money still to be spent in the territory over the coming years until 2033.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the information from the minister. Can he tell us how much ICIP funding is used for either operations or FTEs?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question. It is an interesting one.

We are going to get a number of FTEs or full-time equivalents — people — and they are doing a great job. There are a lot of projects to manage, a lot of money to manage, and I have to say that, like so many of our team, they are doing a tremendous job. The amount of money that we are able to claim for administration on the entire pot of money over the entire 2018 to 2033 is \$5.4 million. That is a total of administration over the entire life of the project.

Mr. Dixon: I think I will move on then from federal infrastructure funding. I will jump to the issue of recycling.

We asked some questions earlier this week about the impact of the changes at Raven ReCentre on rural municipalities. I know we asked a question in Question Period, but as the minister knows, it's not "Answer Period", so I'm hoping that with the bright lights of QP dimmed, we can get a little more detail on what the impact of the announcement about Raven will be on rural municipalities.

I will turn it over to the minister. I am looking for an understanding of what will happen for rural municipalities after September 15 when Raven no longer accepts, processes, or ships most non-refundable recyclables.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thanks very much for the question, and I will be painfully clear this afternoon — or absolutely clear I guess is probably a better way to frame it. No effect whatsoever on rural municipalities — keep doing what they're doing — no effect on rural municipalities in any way, shape, or form.

Mr. Dixon: So, then what will happen to the materials that are collected in rural communities that are currently sending their materials to Raven? Because after September 15, Raven will no longer be accepting, processing, or shipping non-refundable recyclables. I appreciate that there may be minimal impact on the communities themselves, but where will those products go? The Yukon government pays for them to be shipped from the communities. I'll use Haines Junction as an example. They are collected, processed in some cases, and then

shipped to Whitehorse, where they typically go to Raven. After September 15, what will happen with those materials?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the more relaxed atmosphere here during debate — general budget debate here.

The reality is that the material — the garbage recycling, that material — will come into Whitehorse, and Community Services will ensure that it is handled in a similar manner as Raven is handling it today. There are active talks with many different producers, so that is the reticence I have, because those discussions are ongoing. They will also be informed by the city decision on its curbside program as well and what it does. I don't want to jeopardize those discussions. I don't want to throw them out in the House. They are ongoing with the Department of Community Services.

There are a number of alternatives that we are looking at, including shipping the material until we have a contract with a local producer ourselves, so we have lots of options. We don't want any trepidation in rural Yukon. The material that they are sending to Whitehorse, that we are bringing to Whitehorse right now from the landfills and recycling depots we have in rural Yukon — do not fear; keep sending that material. We want to keep processing it, and we will find ways to process it in town — lots of options here. We really don't want to send that shockwave through rural Yukon. We are dealing with enough here in Whitehorse. Rural Yukon will be taken care of as it always has. We have lots of irons in the fire in that regard. We have no concern with rural recycling at this time.

We are working and will continue to do that just as always. Rural Yukon does not have to worry about recycling as Whitehorse does at the moment because we don't have a solution for residents who have a free drop-off currently. That is going to end, and I don't know what is going to happen with the City of Whitehorse. Do they find some sort of alternative? I don't know. That's my concern right now, and that's the concern of my colleagues. We want to make sure that there is a place for recycling to go here in Whitehorse, for the public to have a drop-off for their recycling here in Whitehorse. That's now in the city's court.

We are providing \$2.4 million in funding for the City of Whitehorse to help ease the transition to their curbside program. We have a comfort letter we have given to the City of Whitehorse that says: Hey, you don't have to worry about curbside with the producers group. We will make sure that the producers group continues with any blue box system you set up, so don't worry about that; keep going.

They will have to continue it, and now we are waiting to see what the City of Whitehorse decides, because frankly, municipal waste is the city's responsibility. So, I am not going to interfere in their process, but I will help ease the transition to a curbside program within the City of Whitehorse because of the circumstances that the city found itself in.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate some of the information that the minister provided, but I think that I am still not entirely clear what is going to happen to the material that is collected in rural Yukon at either government-run transfer stations or municipal facilities, because as it stands right now, in most municipalities, they collect non-refundable recyclables. The government then

pays for them to be shipped to Whitehorse where, in most cases, Raven processes those materials and then sends them Outside.

Starting on September 15, it is not just that Raven is closing their public drop-off; it is that they are getting out of non-refundable recyclables altogether. In fact, they have said in their release that they are selling off their processing equipment and they won't accept any non-refundable material whether it's from a business, whether it is from a municipality or anything else after September 15.

The minister said that there won't be any implications for rural municipalities, but I am just trying to understand how that could be because there is only one other processor in town, and the minister has said now that the Yukon government could take that over.

So, is the Department of Community Services considering becoming a recycling processor and shipping that material directly south themselves, or are they looking at using the other processor in town? — in which case, I would like to know because to my knowledge, I hadn't heard that the processor was scaled up to the extent that they would be ready to accept all the material from rural Yukon. So, I would like to hear a bit more from the minister.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Okay, thank you very much, Deputy Chair; we're going to go there.

As I said, rural Yukon does not have to worry about the recycling in their communities. It will continue to be shipped to Whitehorse just as it always is. Community Services is not at all interested in getting into the business of recycling; that is not what I said or intimated. What I said was that we are in discussions with the recycling — there are several different businesses that are interested in this and we're talking to them. I'm not naming names today. I'm not getting into the nuts and bolts of this, and neither is the department.

I will say that we have plans and contingencies and contingencies on contingencies to deal with this issue. Recycling is an important issue to people. In rural Yukon — and yes, Raven has issued this statement and is selling off — absolutely. Having heard that and learned that, we are talking to producers about alternatives; those talks are ongoing. We are optimistic that there will be at least one solution, so I do not want to in any way jeopardize or put the idea in rural Yukon's head that there is a problem with their recycling. There isn't. It will continue; there will be recycling happening in the territory into the future through other options beyond Raven.

Mr. Dixon: The minister has said a few times the word “producer”, and I think that he means “processor”, but I would like him just to clarify. Does he mean “processors” when he says that he's talking to several different processors of recycling?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for his clarity. Yes, I mean “processors”; I misspoke. Thank you very much. To be perfectly clear, we are talking to processors here in town to make sure that we have alternatives to Raven in light of the release that they put out.

However, I will say that those talks have been going on a lot longer than that release. There are lots of pieces here, but we

are optimistic that there will be a processor to handle waste or recycling in the territory following the closure of Raven.

Mr. Dixon: How many processors are in the Yukon today? How many businesses are processing recyclables today in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition — his interest mirrors that of the communities. Everybody is interested in recycling and what is going to happen. There is a transition happening from Raven ReCentre to some other model.

The big fish is Whitehorse. That's where most of the material is generated. In rural Yukon, we are looking at the numbers, but it is a fraction of what is produced here in the biggest city in northern Canada. That's what we are talking about. We are in a transition and it's happening in real time.

We are not at all concerned about recycling from rural Yukon. We are not, but we have the largest centre of production of recycling material in flux, and so, we are dealing with that. That will inform decisions going forward. At the moment, we are paying diversion credits to two companies. The city, as part of its process, put out an expression of interest, and it got names from other potential processors, so there are a lot of people looking at this as an opportunity right now. It's a live conversation. The department is having conversations with people and coming up with plans to deal with the recycled material for the territory with processors.

That is what I can say right now here this afternoon.

Mr. Dixon: I will move on from this issue, but I think that I'm left with many more questions about this topic. Unfortunately, time requires me to move on.

I will move now to the community of Dawson City. The release that went out a short while ago announcing the tendering of the recreation centre up there garnered some attention because of the new model of procurement being used in this case. It's a progressive design/build, as I understand it. I am wondering if the minister can tell us a little bit about that. What is planned for this new system? What is it going to mean practically for the community in terms of the outcome or the end product that they will receive? What will it mean for the contracting community that will be bidding on this, and can he provide a little bit more information about what this new procurement will look like?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Madam Chair, I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

What is running through my mind is the sod-turning that happened in Dawson under a former government many, many years ago. It was basically hastily pulled together by the side of the road — shovels, pictures taken — nothing happened. The MLA for the region and I talk about this all the time — about the five years of promises: It is coming; it is coming; it is going to be built; it is going to be built; it is going to be built — never happened.

So, I am happy to talk about the tender going out this afternoon and get into that a little bit. It actually allows me to get into a ministerial statement that was turned down today that I actually have here. It will give you some details that you didn't

hear today, but now we will take it up this afternoon and use some of the notes from that, which will help.

I am happy to rise and speak about fulfilling this government's promise to build a new recreation centre in Dawson. Recreation is a vital part of a thriving community. It inspires a lifelong love of sport and active living and brings people together for all the right reasons. Successive governments have promised a Dawson recreation centre, and we are happy to be the government taking steps toward construction.

On April 11, the Yukon government released a tender for a new recreation centre in Dawson City. This tender employs a progressive design/build approach that is used with great success all over the country.

This procurement method ensures greater collaboration between the designers and constructors to plan and to build to a specific budget while also meeting the owner's needs. It adds a practical lens to the design team and allows for local expertise within the sectors. This will also benefit the City of Dawson by ensuring that features are built to keep operating costs within the means of the municipality, which is a concern that I have heard from that municipality.

We are committed to build a recreation facility for the City of Dawson to own and operate that at least replaces the existing facility that is fraught with problems and cannot reasonably be saved. A new facility will at least offer the community to skate, curl, and gather. We are optimistic that the progressive design process will find a way to deliver within the \$65-million budget, and we know that this investment will meet the needs of the community for decades to come.

We are pleased to acknowledge this significant project milestone and look forward to working with the City of Dawson and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in on designing a facility that will benefit current and future users.

I will also say that it puts a bid value out there — and it has been no secret — but then seeks to balance and to work together with the contracting community and the design team to come up with a plan that meets the needs of the community within the budget. This approach has been used on the French school. I have talked to the builder of that, who lauded the process used to build the French school in Riverdale. Having done that, we are learning from that process and refining it, and that is the process that we are using for this procurement here.

I know the team — and I have spoken to the contracting association on this. When I was at Highways and Public Works and doing procurement and working on improving the procurement process there, we had lots of talks with the Contractors Association about exactly this type of process being used more in the territory. They were very excited about it at the time. The contractors whom I have spoken to who have done this have expressed a lot of support for this method of procurement as being more collaborative and less at odds with one another. That it creates a better outcome is what I have been told. I know that on this procurement, the team at Community Services has actually reached out to the Contractors Association.

They have met with the executive and with the industry as a whole. There is a lot of interest in this procurement process. It also helps us work closer with the municipality, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and the Dawson recreation board to design a facility that will work for the municipality, for the users, and for the community as a whole. I hope that answers the member opposite's questions, and I am happy to take more on this subject.

Mr. Dixon: I thank the minister for the response. He mentioned in his opening comments the work being done on the sewage lagoon. Can the minister provide us with an update on the sewage lagoon in Dawson?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Work on the sewage lagoon continues — the replacement for the waste-water treatment facility in Dawson City. We all know that history well. We are seeking a lagoon site. We are working with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the municipality. That work is progressing as well as could be expected. There will be more to report on this in the coming days. That work is still at the beginning stages. We are trying to find sites and stuff that are acceptable to the community, but that work is progressing, and I will have more to say on that in the near future.

Mr. Dixon: Does that mean that a site has not yet been selected for the sewage lagoon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That is correct.

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, I appreciate that from the minister. He also provided some comments about the Dredge Pond lots. I believe he said the construction would begin this year. Can he confirm when construction will begin? How many lots are intended to result from that project, and what is the budget?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can report that we plan on building four vacant lots and five Dredge Pond II lots in Dawson City this year. That is the plan for this year right now.

Mr. Dixon: I was just looking for a bit more detail on the timing and the budget.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The plan is to have those lots completed this year. Then it goes to my good colleague at Energy, Mines and Resources. Generally, they are for sale, or whatever it is, so there is the completion of the lots, and then the sale of the lots will actually happen after they are completed. We are hoping to have those lots done this year.

Mr. Dixon: How will those lots be priced?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We had a little combat there. It is between development cost and market cost, so it will be somewhere between those two pieces, and that is how we set our lots — development costs or market price are the two markers that we use, and the price often comes in somewhere in between those two extremes.

Mr. Dixon: I will move to Faro. I understand that the fire hall is either complete or near complete. Can I have just a quick update on the fire hall? I understood that there were some deficiencies. Have those been addressed? If so, has the fire hall been handed off to the municipality of Faro?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The building is now with the Town of Faro, I was told just moments ago. Any deficiencies — there was a problem with a door. We talked about that. The

department has worked with the contractor and fixed the deficiencies, and now it is with the Town of Faro.

Mr. Dixon: Can I have an update on the Ross River pool? I understand that pool has been facing difficulty over the last number of years, and I am wondering if there are plans to have the Ross River pool reopened in the near future?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I remember visiting the Ross River pool when I was in my former role. The Ross River pool was last operational in 2017. It was constructed in 1999. The facility has significant foundational issues that could affect its continued operation. The Ross River pool was anticipated to open in 2023, following completion of critical repairs to the pool systems; however, additional areas of concerns were identified in the repair process, preventing its opening. The department is currently working to determine how we can address the 2023 building assessment findings. Sport and Recreation will be working with the Ross River Recreation Society and the community of Faro to create opportunities for community members from Ross River to access the Faro pool until we can fix the deficiencies we found with the Ross River pool.

As we know, there are issues with permafrost in Ross River that are really hurting some foundations of key infrastructure in the community.

Mr. Dixon: Does the minister anticipate the pool being ready for 2025, then?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are going to get the pool open as soon as possible, dealing with the challenges we are finding. We are working in Ross River on infrastructure, so I would personally hope to see that open in 2025.

The department is currently doing the important work. It is not always easy work to fix the deficiencies that we found and find contractors to do it. I will work with the department and with the community to make sure that pool, if it can be reopened, opens as fast as possible.

Mr. Dixon: Can the minister provide a quick update on the Beaver Creek pool?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The pool in Beaver Creek was last open in 2018. Water is accumulating under the pool liner and a hydrogeological assessment of the soil is required to determine where the water is coming from and if it is impacting the septic system. Once this work is complete, an assessment of the circulation systems will be required and repairs identified in the 2018 Stantec report will then be addressed. This work is being planned.

Mr. Dixon: With regard to the pool in Pelly, my understanding is that there was some novel filtration system that was used that required expertise to be brought in from Europe. Can the minister comment on that? Is that correct? If so, what implications does that have for the cost of running it?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That is interesting information from the member opposite. We will look into it and I will endeavour to get an answer to the member.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 36, entitled *Exemptions Act*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 37, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following documents were filed April 18, 2024:

35-1-243

Takhini River Bridge on the Mayo Road — Project Scope, letter re (dated February 6, 2024) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works (Cathers)

35-1-244

Takhini River Bridge on the Mayo Road — Project Scope, letter re (dated February 27, 2024) from Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works, to Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge (Cathers)

35-1-245

Educational assistants and teachers on call training working group, correspondence re (dated October 10, 2023 to April 17, 2024) between Ted Hupé, President, Yukon Association of Education Professionals, Shanna Epp, and Jordan Stevens, Project Manager for R.I.S.E. (Reimagining Inclusive and Special Education) (White)