



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Thursday, October 3, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2024 Fall Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, October 3, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of a change made to the Order Paper. The following motion has been removed from the Order Paper at the request of the member: Motion No. 818, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.
Visitors introduced

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Sisters in Spirit vigil

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to recognize the Sisters in Spirit vigil happening tomorrow, Friday, October 4.

This annual vigil is held in remembrance of all of the murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, two-spirit, gender-diverse, and transgender people. It honours the families, friends, and communities who live with these profound losses. The day is recognized publicly tomorrow, but every day is a day of mourning for those left behind who are on a very long journey toward justice and healing.

We just marked National TRC Day on September 30, which, in my view, is directly connected to the Sisters in Spirit vigil tomorrow. This year in Whitehorse, the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council is holding a vigil and walk leaving from the RCMP detachment at 11:45 a.m., heading toward the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre.

I want to extend heartfelt appreciation to the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council and the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle — both of which have three members, Natalie Taylor, Monica Garcia, and Florissa Bain, here with us today — and the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society for their work to support Yukon Indigenous women, girls, two-spirit, gender-diverse, and transgender people. Their work showcases the strength and determination of Indigenous women. We also have again today Randy Pierre-Louis with us from les Essentielles, which provides invaluable community-based services to French-speaking women in our communities.

These organizations are steadfast in raising awareness of the ongoing systemic discrimination and racism faced in our communities. This work, however, cannot continue to fall squarely on the shoulders of Indigenous women. Signatories to the Yukon's MMIWG2S+ implementation plan have pledged to be a positive change in a tangible and measurable way.

I am looking forward to the third annual accountability forum at the end of this month where we will have an opportunity to hear more about the work underway across this territory. Until then, I urge each member of the Assembly, members of the public service, and the general public to take a pause tomorrow. Take a moment to reflect on the privileges you have as well as the similarities you have to those who have lost loved ones to senseless violence.

Do not be silent. Take part in the vigil held tomorrow to show your support. Reflect on how you can be part of changing the story to upholding dignity and justice in respect for all Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited people.

I also hope the day brings moments of peace, closure, and even hope as we reflect on the lives of these individuals taken from us but who will forever be in our hearts.

We will keep moving the Yukon and the country forward with their memories at the centre of our work.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the Sisters in Spirit National Day of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Gender Diverse People, also known as "Red Dress Day".

Today we take time to reflect on those who have been the victims of violence, those who continue to live with trauma, and sadly, those who did not make it home. In Canada, the violence continues to happen at high rates. By recognizing this crisis and working to take action to deliver on the 231 individual calls for justice directed at governments, organizations, and all Canadians, we can help to reverse the staggering rates of violence and help to heal communities, families, and individuals who have fallen victim to it.

Sisters in Spirit was an initiative started by the Native Women's Association of Canada, an organization that continues to work to raise awareness and educate Canadians on this tragedy. On October 4, 2006, 11 communities across Canada simultaneously held vigils to raise awareness and honour the memory of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Since then, each year on October 4, we reflect and take the opportunity to honour the memories and lives of those lost to violence.

Thank you to all those who continue to share painful stories and to be a voice for those who have been taken from their loved ones and from our communities.

Salamat po.

Applause

MLA Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to honour Sisters in Spirit and the vigil and the walk that will take place tomorrow. We commemorate this day to honour all of the

Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited and trans people who have been lost to the violence and hate of colonialism.

We commit ourselves to ensuring that their lives are remembered and the injustices that they experienced are not forgotten. We commit ourselves to supporting the families and communities that are mourning their losses. We commit ourselves to supporting and believing survivors, and we commit ourselves to creating a safe world for all the women and girls who are still with us and for those who are yet to come.

We hold our hands up to all the families, loved ones, and survivors who have fought to raise awareness and demand an end to the ongoing systemic violence. We are committed to walking alongside you in this fight for justice.

Applause

In recognition of the 40th anniversary of CHON-FM

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to CHON-FM on the occasion of its 40th anniversary celebration. Born out of a vision from Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon, CHON-FM was created to amplify First Nation voices and unite the communities of this territory through the power of radio. Since hitting the airwaves in 1984, CHON-FM made waves by giving a platform to Indigenous languages, stories, and music, ensuring that cultural traditions were preserved and shared.

The station made a bold statement by prioritizing Indigenous languages and local stories, providing voice to the traditions, knowledge, and creativity of Yukon First Nations. Broadcasting in Gwich'in, Tlingit, and Southern Tutchone, CHON-FM became a beacon of language revitalization.

CHON-FM has also established itself as a trusted voice in community journalism. Whether it was broadcasting from the middle of a community barbecue or interviewing local leaders at the heart of political or cultural discussions, CHON-FM has always cared about the pulse of Yukon life.

Then, of course, there is the music. From folk to hip-hop, classic rock to powwow drumming, CHON-FM's airwaves have been a melting pot of sounds reflecting the diversity and creativity of the Yukon. This was on full display during the special anniversary concert held September 21 at Rotary Park in Whitehorse. The sold-out crowd was treated to live performances by Yukon artists like Yukon Jack, Northstarr, and Dena Zagi as well as headline acts Boogey the Beat and CWeed Band.

In between these performances, founders and contributors from throughout the years shared stories of memorable events and experiences. Well-deserved tributes were made to founder George Henry and former Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Chief Bob Charlie, who passed away earlier this month. Charlie was also fittingly honoured with a lifetime achievement award for his iconic work with the station.

As we celebrate this milestone, we look back with deep appreciation on four decades of music, local stories, and CHON-FM's dedication to the Yukon's communities. Whether broadcasting elders' wisdom, local news, or *Rock the Talk with the Grand Chief* — beginning season 9 next week —

CHON-FM keeps the heartbeat of the Yukon strong and connected.

I ask the members of this House to join me in congratulating CHON-FM, still going strong, and just like the Yukon itself, a little bit metal when it counts.

Gunalch'ish, shāw níthän, sógá sénlá, mǎh'si' cho, CHON. Here's to many more years of music, stories, and connections with the beat of a different drummer.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party to recognize 40 years of the Yukon's First Nation radio station, CHON-FM. This non-profit corporation, owned by all of Yukon's 14 First Nations, has a purpose and grand vision held in its mission statement: "... to reaffirm and maintain First Nation Culture, spiritual beliefs, language, traditional values, land and animals."

NDY serves any communities throughout the Yukon, northern BC, the Northwest Territories, and Alaska, while also having folks tuning in globally on a regular basis. CHON-FM supports the careers of many Yukon First Nation journalists, radio hosts, and broadcast technicians, and we are so thankful for the foundation that they have laid. Today, CHON listeners continue to enjoy the Gwich'in language programming thanks to the dedication of long-time host and master fiddler Ben Chuck, who has worked at CHON-FM for at least 30 years. Ben is a Vuntut Gwitchin citizen, respected elder, knowledge-keeper, and language-carrier.

There continues to be weekly episodes of Haa Shagóon in various Yukon First Nation languages. CHON also supports the efforts of Kaska speakers with its monthly show *Ah'Nezen*, live from the living room of Dennis Shorty in Ross River. And, of course, we can't forget the crowd-pleasing *Rock the Talk* with Grand Chief Peter Johnston coming in strong at eight years and counting.

No matter where you go in their vast territory of coverage, you are guaranteed to hear CHON-FM in the background. I grew up listening to CHON-FM, hearing our Gwich'in elders speak, hearing our leaders talk about pressing issues for our communities, including the unfolding of our self-government agreements. Still today, when I visit my home community of Old Crow, the fiddle music that plays across the airwaves on CHON still gets people up and jigging in their homes.

CHON-FM continues to be a living example of how our language and culture connects our communities and people from all backgrounds, no matter our physical geographical location. It shows how our language and culture are the backbone of our community and way of being. It also shows how language and culture are the foundation of anything we do as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I am the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin, and you are listening to CHON-FM — 98.1 in Whitehorse, 90.5 in the communities — the beat of a different drummer.

Mahsi' cho.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under Tabling Returns and Documents, the Chair has for tabling a report from the Yukon Ombudsman entitled *Yukon Human Rights Commission complaints — Investigative Report*.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have for tabling three legislative returns, all answering questions that were submitted in writing — numbers 50, 51, and 52. They were submitted by the Member for Copperbelt South.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 44: *Traffic Safety Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I move that Bill No. 44, entitled *Traffic Safety Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Highways and Public Works that Bill No. 44, entitled *Traffic Safety Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 44 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House congratulates Robert Dickson on his reelection as Kwänathi inlį — Chief — of Kluane First Nation as well as Joyce Johnson-Albert as elder councillor and Di'yet van Leishout and Kathleen Johnson as councillors-at-large.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House congratulates Elizabeth Bosely on her historic election as Naa Shaáde Háni-elect — chief-elect — and Tod Smarch, elected as Deputy Naa Shaáde Háni for the Teslin Tlingit Council.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to reverse their decision to eliminate the apprenticeship incentive grant and the apprenticeship completion grant.

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

THAT this House thanks the 38 Yukoners who participated in the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

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

THAT this House congratulates Shaan Tlein Carol Geddes on her appointment as the Yukon University chancellor.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to establish a program modelled after the Government of British Columbia's securing small business rebate program that would provide grant funding for businesses that have experienced vandalism or property damage.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to rethink their school replacement plan by building a new high school in Valleyview south, moving the current École Whitehorse Elementary School to the F.H. Collins building, and building a new elementary school downtown.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce amendments to the *Miners Lien Act* that would ensure Yukon businesses get paid first when a mine files for bankruptcy.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide an update to Yukoners on the review of the Connective Support Society.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Economic outlook

Mr. Dixon: Yesterday in responding to media questions about the economic impact of the situation at the Eagle Gold mine, the Minister of Finance dismissed concerns about the impact that this would have on our economy. He said that there wouldn't be too much of an impact because the Liberals have diversified our economy and that he had heard from local companies that weren't concerned about it. He told the media — quote: "Yes, of course there is going to be a hit, but we have a diversified economy now so we are not that reliant on it."

Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems like this minister is deeply out of touch with what is going on in the Yukon's economy. In fact, his own economic outlook states that the removal of Eagle Gold's production creates a \$1.5-billion hole in our economy over the next few years.

So, why is the Minister of Finance downplaying the economic challenges that so many Yukoners are facing?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, late last week — as I think I rose and said yesterday in the House — the Premier and

I met with lienholders — those businesses that have liens or are creditors in the Victoria Gold heap leach failure. It was a very good conversation. The receiver was there as well to answer questions, and we had a really strong conversation about the directions that we were heading in and how to support those companies.

Of course, there is an impact by this accident on our overall economy, but I think that the other thing we know is that we have a strong economy here in Canada generally, so the upside is that it's lucky that tourism has been rebounding and doing well. It's lucky that the Yukon has such low unemployment. It's a good thing that we have such a strong private sector here in general. There is a hit from Victoria Gold; we do think that it is important to address and that is why we stepped in right away.

Mr. Dixon: My question was for the Minister of Finance about comments that he made to the media just yesterday.

But, Mr. Speaker, here is what the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce wrote in a letter just a few weeks ago — and I will quote: “Due to the recent halt in mining activities, we have heard from our members that local businesses have already made decisions to cease projects, lay off or plan to lay off employees, and brace for substantial and unexpected revenue losses over a considerable period of time.”

Then there is the economic outlook that the Minister of Finance tabled yesterday which clearly shows that our economy is shrinking by a projected 2.3 percent this year. According to the Liberal government's own economic outlook, we are going to see multiple quarters of declining GDP.

So, my question for the Finance minister is simple: Are we in a recession?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, first, I confirm with our Minister of Finance — I think we'll go back and look at the way the member opposite has twisted the comments from the Minister of Finance from yesterday, but what we can talk to is — it's a challenge with having Victoria Gold — absolutely. I think what all folks have to understand is that a project of that magnitude has a substantial contribution to our economy. We have seen, in the past, a time when there have been projects that have opened and the waves that have come with it and closed. I know that the member opposite, when he was Minister of Economic Development, had, I think probably most projects closed, so he would understand what that did to an economy that he was shepherding that was actually in a deep recession, previous to the last eight years.

But I think you have to look at the strengths as well as the fundamentals. It is important that we have seen other areas of the economy really in a strong place. Seeing the numbers coming back and the spending, when it comes to tourism, back to those pre-pandemic numbers is important; continuing to see more build permits in a residential piece is important; continuing to see record retail is important; continuing to see wholesale —

I want to go on, because pretty much every area of our economy continues to be incredibly strong, and that's a good foundation. I look forward to question 3.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, my question was clearly for the Minister of Finance because he tabled an economic outlook yesterday that shows that we are seeing multiple consecutive quarters of GDP decline. So, my question again is very simple: Does the economic outlook show that we are currently in a recession?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think what the outlook shows is that we have diversified our economy. If you go back to 2016 and take a look at the forecast of GDP when Wolverine went under, under the Yukon Party's leadership, we went from a situation where, under the Yukon Party, the narrative was: There goes mining; there goes the Yukon — without really thinking about diversifying the economy. Commodity prices go down, and all of a sudden, we see ourselves, in a Yukon Party-government setting, with five out of six years of GDP forecasts that were abysmal.

We also saw forecasts that went to eight percent one year of a reduction and then also 7.9 percent because the Yukon Party only prioritized one particular industry. So, what you're seeing right now with the forecast, what you're seeing with the rebound of the forecast, and what you're seeing with the private sector comments that we're hearing is that we do have a diversified economy. The five-year capital plan has shown how the Government of Yukon has provided the assets necessary for the private sector. How we kept those businesses going during the pandemic was extremely important, and our continued work with the private sector is extremely important to us to keep the economy going.

We see, obviously, the seriousness of the heap leach failure and the seriousness of that impact to the mining community, but we are also showing that we have a diversified economy. It is extremely important for a government to prioritize diversifying economies as opposed to putting all of their eggs in one basket.

Question re: Budget estimates and spending

Mr. Cathers: Yesterday, the Minister of Finance tabled a supplementary budget and it was far worse than even we expected. To put it bluntly, Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government's spending has gone completely out of control. According to the supplementary budget, O&M spending is increasing by more than nine percent, and that is just since the budget was tabled this spring. While spending has skyrocketed, government revenues have been decreasing, so it is no surprise that the Liberal government's net debt has now reached more than \$500 million.

Mr. Speaker, how can the Liberals justify their out-of-control spending when Yukon taxpayers are running out of money?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I will pose a question to the member opposite. When you are looking at the money that is in the supplementary budget — and again, we will put up our record on supplementary budgets versus the budgeting treatments that the Yukon Party did any day — is it the \$50 million to the mining community that the member opposite doesn't want to support? Is it the \$36 million for Health and Social Services that the member opposite doesn't want to

support? Maybe it is the \$21 million that goes to wildland firefighting that the members opposite do not want to support, or maybe it is the \$10 million for various Yukon Housing Corporation funding that is absolutely necessary — that his party always says we are not doing enough to support. They can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. They can't keep on telling us that we need to invest more in certain areas and then, when we do, criticize us for spending too much money.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I will quote from yesterday's fiscal update tabled by the Minister of Finance. Over a 10-year period, almost all of it under the Liberals — and I quote: "... gross expenditures grew by an average of 6.2 per cent annually, which is higher than revenues, at 4.9 per cent annually."

The problem is that the Liberals have been increasing spending faster than revenue growth every year and they wonder why net debt keeps increasing. What is worse is that the Liberals have now started borrowing money just to meet their cash-flow needs for things, including making payroll.

Do the Liberals not realize that increasing spending faster than revenues increase and borrowing money to make payroll is racing toward a huge financial problem?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I think that our spending is very defensible, for example, during the pandemic, making sure that we spent money to keep our businesses afloat, making sure that in inflationary times we have the supports there for Yukoners. What we didn't do was borrow large quantities of money, almost a quarter of a billion dollars like the Yukon Party did, with no plan to pay back any of the principle until decades later — to take that debt and give it to Yukoners of the future. So, we didn't do that; that's for sure.

What we're doing is showing — and again, if the member opposite cares to read the mains and the forecast to see where we want to take the cash position, where we want to get to under our leadership, it's there. It is there; the plan is there.

We've planned during the easy into the hard times and through those times to make sure that we have the accountability. Things like the contingency plan is another example of our wherewithal when it comes to how we want to make sure that we spend taxpayers' money — as opposed to the Yukon Party, which decided to put a quarter of a billion dollars of debt — we're not talking net debt, like the member opposite likes to confuse. We're talking debt on the books in those times when they would say things were going well, but yet, at the same time, the Yukon Party borrowed over \$200 million during those times. The contracts for that borrowing were to not pay back any of that money. Well, at least the Yukon Party wasn't going to pay back that money.

Mr. Cathers: Well, the Minister of Finance is inflating the past borrowing numbers and he knows that, Mr. Speaker, but let's recap: Spending under this government has jumped by over nine percent from just a few months ago. Over the Liberals' time in office, government spending has increased far more than our revenues have increased. Net debt has now reached an historic level of over \$500 million, and now the Liberals are borrowing just to meet immediate financial obligations, including making payroll.

What's really worrisome is that now the Liberals are going to Ottawa to ask Trudeau for an increase to the debt cap. So, my question is simple: How much do the Liberals want to increase the \$800-million debt cap by, and what are they planning on spending that borrowed money on?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the member opposite was listening to the speech we just did yesterday about our financing, so I will talk again about our intentions. We do have higher pressures than normal right across Canada when it comes to health pressures. Our government is responding to these pressures, and we're increasing capacity in acute care and in long-term care. I guess the member opposite doesn't want us to spend on that.

The Eagle mine receivership: This receivership will ensure that the company's assets are used to conduct the urgent environmental protection and monitoring that is required at the site, but again, we need to make sure that money is available for these efforts. How that gets recovered — we'll see as the future comes forward.

Borrowing — when it comes to borrowing, the Yukon Party had increased the rates up to \$400 million. We have done the same in the past as well, and I will take our financial prudence over theirs any day as to how we're moving forward to make sure that we're making lives more affordable for Yukoners, providing the services and programs that they have come to expect, and rightfully so, and to make sure that we have a future.

Our accounting is not just for political expedience, like the Yukon Party showed with the amount of debt they saddled onto this government. When it comes to borrowing, we are in a very strong fiscal position to support borrowing, as evidenced by S&P's credit rating this summer, which was shortly after the Eagle Gold mine incident. That was even considered.

So, the Yukon government has engaged with the federal government to increase the borrowing options, and we will continue to make sure that we are looking at all options possible for the necessary future of the Yukon.

Question re: Nurse practitioner recruitment and retention

Ms. Blake: The Yukon continues to struggle with retention and recruitment of health care workers, including nurse practitioners. Nurse practitioners fill an important gap in the health care continuum. Nurse practitioners in the Yukon make less than their peers in almost all other jurisdictions in Canada. There is a solution to this problem. Right now, there are recent nurse practitioner graduates who are out looking for jobs. The Yukon should be hiring these new graduates at a salary that makes sense and is competitive.

What is this government doing to attract and retain nurse practitioners when wages here are among the lowest in Canada?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. Yukoners and Canadians, in fact, consistently cite health care as one of their primary concerns. They care about access and about improvements to health care here in the territory. We have worked extensively on a health human resources strategy — unique in Canada with respect to

the participants who worked on the strategy — to make sure that we could be addressing the health human resources challenges here in the territory, specifically with responses that were designed by the experts here in the territory.

There has been a collaboration between Health and Social Services and human resource professionals through that process and with the Yukon Hospital Corporation for recruitment of nurses and nurse practitioners. Both groups have attended multiple recruitment events across the country, with more events scheduled for this fall.

I can note that nurse practitioners play an incredibly important role in our current health care system and certainly in the future of health care here in the territory.

Ms. Blake: In the last collective agreement, registered nurses received a raise and midwives were granted their own pay scale. Yukoners need to see the same considerations for nurse practitioners. Right now, Yukon nurse practitioner salaries are capped at a set wage scale. The high level of responsibility, scope of practice, and stress that nurse practitioners carry in their role is not reflected in this pay. Nurse practitioners need their own pay scale that adequately reflects the work they do and the responsibility that they uphold.

Will this government commit to providing Yukon nurse practitioners their own wage scale to ensure that their pay matches what it would be elsewhere in the country?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I know that you and Members of the Legislative Assembly will recall the nurse bonuses recruitment and retention action that was taken by this government for the purposes of increasing nurses as employees here in the territory so that we can reduce the use of nurses who are here on a temporary basis. The impact of those bonuses and, in addition to that, the impact of the *Health Human Resources Strategy* that nurses at all levels of registration were in fact participants in. Results were that community nursing currently has a 19-percent vacancy rate for primary health care nurse positions as of August 2024, and this has been reduced from the 32.5 percent that was reported back in July 2023 and the 39 percent before that in December 2022 — some might say at the height of the COVID pandemic.

Between January 2023 and August 2024, the Department of Health and Social Services has completed 230 nursing staffing actions. I can certainly go on. The work of the strategy and the impact on nursing here in the territory is incredibly positive.

Ms. Blake: Alberta is doing really great things with nurse practitioner wages and bonuses, and so is BC. The pay is much more attractive in those jurisdictions than it is here, so it makes it hard to see why nurse practitioners would choose the Yukon for employment opportunities. We need to ensure that the Yukon is actually a place where nurse practitioners and other health care practitioners want to set up practices. If we could employ everyone at a wage that promotes recruitment and retention, we could give many Yukoners access to primary care.

Will this government commit to offering nurse practitioners wages that match those elsewhere in Canada?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This government has always been incredibly focused on providing health care access and improvements for Yukoners. We continue that work. A new collective agreement and separate nursing pay grids for all nurses and the additions of the bonus structures for the nurses in community health centres have been key to reducing the vacancies.

In Continuing Care and the Care and Community branch, the average vacancy at this point in time is four percent this fiscal year. The home care branch average vacancy, which is incredibly important to providing service to Yukoners where they are, is six percent in this fiscal year, with all the regulated nursing positions currently being filled. I can go on about the details of the hiring of nine internationally educated nurses this summer at the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and newly hired nurses will undergo a 12-week orientation and mentorship program.

Nurse practitioners are an incredibly important part of our medical system, of our wraparound services that are contemplated by the changes and the promotion of the health authority by the health transformation that is underway with respect to our system, and we cherish their role in providing service to Yukoners.

Question re: Dawson City employment support services

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, for over 45 years, Klondike Outreach, an NGO with a volunteer board, has provided employment service to job seekers and small businesses that need support with hiring staff. Recently, the Liberal government ceased funding this NGO that provides this important service. We have heard from the business community in Dawson City that there is a real gap in labour market development and promotion in Dawson. This is particularly important, as the business community in Dawson relies very heavily on itinerant workers. This also means that another important service in rural Yukon is being cut back.

Why has the Liberal government cut the funding for Dawson's employment support office?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, first I want to maybe just touch on the fact that some of the challenges that we are going to have and have had when it comes to our funding for Labour Market — first of all, we have seen an incredibly significant cut by the federal government to the funds that we have had. Some were time-limited, but it has been a really challenging time for the Department of Economic Development. Right now, we are looking at some of the existing TPAs that we have, taking a look at the dollars, trying to make them stretch as far as we can. We were back almost \$1.6 million. Now we have been able to get some interim funding of about \$800,000, but we are still in a difficult position.

I have requested a briefing to see all of the contracts and TPAs that we have. I am not going to speak to this particular one right now, but what we are trying to ensure is that we keep everybody whole, that we have those commitments in place as we move into the end of this fiscal year. As we get ready for our next year's budget — really looking into ensuring what we

can do with the existing relationships and making sure that we can make funds go as far as possible.

I look forward to the next question.

Ms. Van Bibber: Since the NGO has been unable to secure any more funding from the Liberal government, they have now given notice to the owner of the building, which has housed the office for years, that they will be ending their lease and disbanding. It seems very likely that someone else will want to take over this space. This means that a solution must be found immediately or they will lose this space permanently.

When will the Minister of Finance provide the necessary funds to keep this office open?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: What I can commit to is that I will look at this particular TPA if its funded through Labour Market. Again, a lot of comments have been made by the member opposite. I want to take a look at where they are at with their funding piece. Usually, there is an application process — making sure that it is all in place. But certainly I am committed to making sure that we take a deep look into this and speak with officials later this afternoon. I want to make sure, whether it is in Whitehorse or Watson Lake or Dawson City, that there is a service that is really supporting those — especially around the labour market. It is something that is incredibly important.

Of course, the fact is that we have had the lowest unemployment in Canada for the last eight years. We have the highest job vacancy rate and opportunities. So, folks who are not part of the labour market right now — I mean, when you see that we have the best opportunity for new jobs and opportunities in the country percentage-wise, I want to make sure that they are getting the support to seek out those opportunities and increase their quality of life. So, I am absolutely committed to finding out what is going on with this file in Dawson City.

Ms. Van Bibber: When a prospective job seeker or small business hoping to get employment support visits the Klondike Outreach website, they are greeted with a banner stating that they are now closed, effective October 1. Many businesses in Dawson feel that the Liberal government plans to centralize its employment support services in Whitehorse.

Can the minister confirm whether or not this is the case?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I think that, first, nothing is centralized. Really, you are in a position where there are a lot of organizations over the last 10 or 15 years that have always gone to the Department of Economic Development or Department of Education. They normally put in unsolicited proposals to provide a service. Others would know organizations like Employment Central. Some of them are NGOs that help folks who are more vulnerable. But it's usually driven by those particular organizations, so it's not defined by the government where these organizations are located. Hopefully, rural communities have representation. Of course, this is usually really limited to places like Watson Lake or Dawson.

When you look forward, part of the conversation is going to be the new labour market strategy, and that's long overdue, and we're probably looking at another year to a year and a half. That is essentially how we'll move forward when it comes to

making sure that we have folks who are not part of the labour market involved, how we deal with all these vacancies, and how we make sure we have a labour force in the future. That is part of the work that is now undertaken by the department.

Again, a lot of this is done online; I think we all know that. But again, if people are looking for specific services, I want to make sure they have access to them.

Question re: Eagle Gold mine management

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I have some more questions today related to the situation at the Eagle Gold mine. Yesterday, the Minister of Finance made some bizarre claims about the current state of Victoria Gold Corporation and their role at the Eagle Gold mine. In fact, the Minister of Finance made the claim that Victoria Gold was still publicly traded. He told local media — and I quote: “We don't know what's going to happen tomorrow as far as interests, as far as the company that is still publicly traded and what their contributions could be.”

When the Liberals forced the company into receivership in mid-August, the Toronto Stock Exchange immediately halted trading of their shares, and the company was delisted on September 23. So, my question for the Minister of Finance is: Does he stand by his claim that he made yesterday that Victoria Gold is still publicly traded, and if so, can he tell us what stock exchange he is referring to?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the company is not being traded at the moment, but the company still exists, and the company — I took a look at what the court said — let me just find it here, Mr. Speaker. The courts were talking about Victoria Gold and discussing their request when we went to the courts, and the court, or the judge in the case, said that Victoria Gold requested an adjournment to file for an application under — it's called CCAA, or the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*, which is really bankruptcy protection, and the judge said that — and I quote: “... reflected the tenuous financial situation of Victoria Gold Corporation and its ability to fund the remediation.”

So, the court took the decision to put in place a receiver. We appreciate that decision, because the goal is for the receiver to take over the management of the mine in order to deal with the remediation of the environmental risks caused by the heap leach failure. Victoria Gold still exists. They are not being traded, but the work is being done by the receiver.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources for confirming that the Minister of Finance was indeed wrong when he stated that the company was publicly traded. Perhaps he can arrange a briefing for the Minister of Finance so that he can get up to speed on this issue.

Following the slide of the heap leach pad this summer, Victoria Gold laid off hundreds of its employees. Because they had been laid off and not terminated, they were not paid out for any earned vacation time or any of the severance they were owed. When the Liberal government forced the company into receivership, PricewaterhouseCoopers terminated many of those employees. According to a letter in the receiver's

October 1 report, PWC is unable to pay those employees what they were owed because of the receivership order.

Can the minister explain why PWC has been instructed not to pay Victoria Gold's former employees the money they are rightfully owed?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: No instructions were given, Mr. Speaker. Victoria Gold laid off those people or gave them the temporary layoff notice. That commitment to make the decision about whether to bring those employees back — by the way, they would need to have increased the camp size on-site in order to do that because the camp below the slide was not going to safely house those employees — or Victoria Gold would need to pay severance. It's just another reason why — and the court said so as well — Victoria Gold did not have the cash on hand to continue to do the work.

It was a great thing that we stepped in at that time in order to get a receiver in place. Otherwise, what would have happened is that Victoria Gold would have applied for bankruptcy protection under CCAA, and it would have ended up with a situation where we could not get in to deal with the environmental remediation. It has been so important from our perspective. Clearly, for the Yukon Party, that environmental remediation is not important, but it is our perspective that if you want to get back to a functioning mine, you need to make sure that you clean up this environmental risk.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, of course the environmental impacts are important to the Yukon Party. They are important to all Yukoners and the minister should know that, but because of the way the receivership order was structured, which was a product of the Yukon government's petition to the court, these affected employees have been redirected to the federal wage earner protection program. Unfortunately, we have heard from these employees that PWC has not been able to make the necessary filings and that these workers have been left in a precarious position.

Here is what the Yukon Federation of Labour said — and I will quote: "This series of events leaves the workers between a rock and a hard place ... workers have reached out to our office looking for help as they are being bounced around between territorial and federal agencies simply asking for their severance to be paid." So, why did the government put these workers in this position, and how is the government addressing this issue?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the folks who put these workers in to that position is Victoria Gold. They are the ones who laid these employees off and put them on temporary leave. With no ability to pay, there was no money in place.

Yesterday, the Premier suggested that the members opposite — the Official Opposition — take a look at the receiver's report. I have a piece of it in front of me. Paragraph 39 says that, based on the cash-flow forecast, Victoria Gold was facing a near-term liquidity crisis due to its inability to generate sufficient regular future cash inflows in a timely manner to continue operations, repay its obligations accruing, and address the mounting costs of environmental remediation of the failure event.

When we saw the situation arising, we requested that Service Canada get ready to support the staff. The Department of Economic Development was working to support staff, and the receiver — at least in the information that I was provided — was working to support the staff. I can investigate to hear what the Federation of Labour is saying, but the point is that the staff were in a precarious situation as soon as they were laid off because Victoria Gold did not have the money to pay severance or —

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

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 215: *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25* — Second Reading — adjourned debate

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 215, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, Mr. Cathers.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased here today as the Yukon Party's Official Opposition Finance critic to speak to the Liberal government's 2024-25 *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*. My colleagues and I will be saving most of our questions and comments for department debate, but I will speak to several key points, most of them related to the worsening financial situation.

We continue to be quite concerned by this Liberal government's out-of-control spending. While there are some areas where increases were needed — such as in hospital funding and continuing care, for example — the main problem is that, despite record-high revenues and significant growth in revenues annually, this Liberal government keeps increasing spending across government faster than the growth of revenue.

According to the government's fiscal and economic update that the Minister of Finance tabled yesterday, since budget 2024-25 tabled this spring, this government's O&M spending has jumped by another 9.4 percent. That is a 9.4-percent increase since the spring. To quote from the fiscal and economic update tabled by the Finance minister — quote: "Gross operations and maintenance (O&M) expenditures are set to rise by \$150.1 million, or 9.4 per cent, from Budget 2024-25 to \$1.7 billion."

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that this increase is on top of the increases already included in budget 2024-25.

In March of this year, I pointed out that personnel spending has increased by almost one-third under the Liberal watch, comparing Public Accounts to Public Accounts, and that is a reference to Hansard from March 11. Unfortunately, it has grown even higher since then. In budget 2024-25, this Liberal government added 152.8 full-time-equivalent positions, according to their own information provided to us. On top of that, they are now adding 46.6 more new FTEs. Mr. Speaker, that is a total of 199.4 new FTEs added this year alone by this Liberal government. Almost 200 new government employees

are being added this year, mostly in Whitehorse, while this Liberal government cuts services to rural Yukon and continues to chronically underfund our Yukon hospitals. For comparison, the number of new full-time government positions being added by the Liberals this year is more than half the size of the community of Pelly Crossing and almost half as many people as live in the community of Mayo.

According to the government's own fiscal and economic update, over a 10-year period ending March 2023 — quote: "... gross expenditures grew by an average of 6.2 per cent annually, which is higher than revenues, at 4.9 per cent annually." The current government has blown through millions in net financial assets, and net debt for this fiscal year is now forecast to balloon to \$530 million.

Alarming, we learned that, after previously asking the federal government to double the territorial government's borrowing limit to \$800 million, this Liberal government is now asking for the borrowing limit to be increased yet again. Why? How much money are they planning to borrow and for what?

Now, on a positive note, I am pleased to see more funding for Yukon hospitals in this budget bill, but I point out that they are still receiving millions less in operational funding than they needed last fiscal year despite major cost increases due to forced growth. Yukon doctors have had to resort to talking to the media again in the desperate hope that public pressure will force this Liberal government to start taking the health care crisis seriously.

The continued chronic underfunding of our Yukon hospitals by this Liberal government is very problematic. Patients and health care professionals across the territory are seeing the negative impacts of this every single day. I would point out, as did the Minister of Finance earlier today, that when challenged on spending, they often like to try to point to spending on health care. But for comparison, it's important to note that transfers from the federal government continue to grow every year, with the increase this year in major federal transfers being \$100 million more than the territory received last year. That is a \$100 million increase in the transfers over last year. On the other hand, total revised operational funding for Yukon hospitals is just \$120.8 million. This government's revised estimated expenses this year are about \$2 billion. Hospital funding is quite a small percentage of that overall spending.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are also pleased to see increased resources in this budget bill for the RCMP. You will recall that we have pushed for that for quite some time and brought forward a motion last year that passed in this Assembly urging government to provide more resources for the RCMP to tackle organized crime, the illegal drug trade, and property crime.

These are just a few of the many issues facing Yukoners today. As I mentioned, I am going to try to keep my comments today relatively short at second reading. I look forward to raising many more issues on behalf of my constituents and other Yukoners during this Fall Sitting, and my caucus colleagues will be doing that on behalf of their constituents and

all Yukoners. When the Minister of Finance rises to close debate, I would ask him to confirm whether he will be meeting the legislated deadline for tabling the government's Public Accounts this year or whether he expects to break the *Financial Administration Act* again this year.

In conclusion, it is important to note that under this Liberal government, the Yukon is now in a recession. According to the government's own forecast, projected GDP over the next five years has taken a major hit following the collapse of Victoria Gold's Eagle Gold mine and the Liberal government's rash decision to put them into receivership.

The fiscal and economic update tabled yesterday says that there is — quote: "... a reduction in the Yukon's real GDP of over \$1.5 billion over the five-year forecast compared to the previous forecast."

This Liberal government is out of touch with Yukoners, recklessly spending money it doesn't have, and most Yukoners want a change in government.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill No. 215, *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*, with *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for this fiscal year. I'm honoured to speak to Yukoners as their Minister of Environment and Minister of Highways and Public Works.

However, perhaps briefly before I continue with my comments on the budget, I just wanted to take this opportunity today to express my ongoing profound sadness on the passing of my former Deputy Minister of Environment Michael Prochazka on August 2 in an awful accident south of Whitehorse in which I was a passenger. As well, my deep condolences to Krista Prochazka and to Michael and Krista's daughters on their tragic loss.

Briefly as well, I just want to say a deepfelt thank you to all parties who were involved on that day, including off-duty RCMP, volunteer firefighters, other volunteers as well, all the emergency room physicians, nurses, and other personnel in Whitehorse, the skilled pilots of Alkan Air, the paramedics, as well as the trauma team at Vancouver General Hospital for their consummate care, attention, empathy, and professionalism. It will not be forgotten.

I did not wish to become the centre of attention based on this terrible accident; however, at this time, I would certainly like to thank my entire Yukon community for their support over the last two months, MLAs for their kind words, the Legislative Assembly staff and personnel, my constituents, my many former legal colleagues — including Legal Aid and the Department of Justice — for their very heartfelt outpouring of concern and support and, of course, the unconditional love and affection of my wife, Janet, and our sons, Max and Angus, all of which I am truly humbled to have received.

I am very grateful and I also recognize that I am extremely fortunate to physically be on the mend, and I continue to work on my psychological well-being as well. Thank you for that opportunity, and I will continue with my comments.

Over the last summer, our territory experienced a large-scale mining event at the Eagle Gold mine. I am proud of our

government's response, particularly the Department of Environment. The Department of Environment continues to work closely with other Government of Yukon departments, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and the Government of Canada to better understand and mitigate impacts to the surrounding environment. Yukoners expect no less. The Department of Environment will continue to monitor water quality on and off the mine site and to monitor fish and mammal health in the surrounding area.

These collected water samples are then tested for cyanide, metals, and other contaminants, and results are released to the public. These results are compared to water quality objectives in the mine's licences and to aquatic health guidelines, including the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment's Canadian environmental quality guidelines and British Columbia's approved water quality guidelines.

I want to emphasize that the water quality monitoring work is done in collaboration with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and will continue to help inform environmental mitigation and response. Furthermore, the Department of Environment and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun are working closely with the Government of Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans — DFO — to ensure that orders issued by DFO align with the goals of our long-term fish monitoring programs.

In addition to water monitoring and fish monitoring, the Department of Environment has also developed and is now implementing an aquatic-life monitoring program that focuses on sampling aquatic invertebrates to determine their abundance and the level of exposure to contaminants in Hager Creek. This work will help to assess the general health of the aquatic ecosystem in that area. These are only part of the actions taken by the Department of Environment in response to the heap leach failure that occurred at the Eagle Gold mine on June 24, and our government will continue to treat this as an urgent response.

We are confident that the receivership will improve the response to the situation on-site as the receiver's focus will be on remediation work, as directed by the government. The government will be investigating the underlying causes of this failure in order to prevent this from ever happening at a mine site in the Yukon again.

Moving along, I would like to take some time to talk about the very significant investments that we are doing at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. The investments made by our government to the Yukon's infrastructure will provide Yukoners with safe and reliable infrastructure for many years to come. The volume of work being done just above downtown Whitehorse is truly remarkable, as I'm sure Yukoners have seen during the course of this last summer.

Nonetheless, the Department of Highways and Public Works is working hard in minimizing disruptions to the travelling public and will continue to work closely with aviation stakeholders to ensure smooth operations during the construction period. Just to give you an idea of the magnitude of the work being done at the airport, the main airport runway project is budgeted at \$160.7 million and was awarded to Flatiron Construction Canada. This work is part of a total of

\$258 million which has been budgeted overall to improve Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. It is truly an historic investment in vital infrastructure improvement. The federal government is contributing \$186 million through the national trade corridors fund, with the Yukon government funding the remaining \$72 million. That work is ongoing on an annual basis.

With respect to the Nisutlin Bay bridge, we expect to reach substantial completion of this bridge in November 2025 and the total completion in the spring of 2026. This is the longest bridge in the Yukon.

I will certainly be providing additional details as to the work that has been completed there over the course of this Sitting.

Specifically, going back to the Department of Environment, we know that Yukon salmon are in a period of long-term decline, with Yukon First Nation historic fishing camps sitting empty and numerous voluntary restrictions and closures across all Yukon watersheds. This is heartbreaking and it is a loss that we cannot accept. Salmon are culturally important and a subsistence resource to Yukon First Nations as well as a keystone species for our ecosystem. Although the Government of Yukon does not play a formal role in salmon management, we are committed to ensure that wild Pacific salmon are conserved and protected for future generations.

In May 2020, the Government of Yukon welcomed an agreement signed by Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Alaska state government that commits the parties to several actions for the recovery of chinook salmon in the Yukon River drainage. This agreement commits the parties to recover chinook salmon numbers with the goal of at least 71,000 Canadian-origin chinook salmon entering the Yukon from Alaska over the next seven years. This includes the suspension of subsistence fishing for chinook salmon in the Yukon River until the goal of 71,000 Canadian-origin fish reach the border.

The Government of Yukon is pleased to see this agreement direct the Yukon River Panel to develop a recovery plan to guide a path forward in recovery while placing a priority on traditional and local knowledge to better understand the causes of low chinook salmon counts. Our government will continue to support the Yukon River Panel's efforts to advocate for international cooperation on salmon recovery.

An option currently under discussion with Alaska and our First Nation partners is the value of establishing a conservation hatchery in the territory as one of several possible ways to improve salmon escapement levels. This conversation is ongoing, with a joint First Nation and government working group still discussing recovery options. I look forward to continuing to advance discussions with our partners to pursue opportunities to secure the future of this iconic species.

There is still much work ahead of us, but I am cautiously optimistic with encouraging numbers of the 2024 Yukon River chinook run. Preliminary estimates indicate that over 24,000 chinook made it to the sonar at Eagle, Alaska and crossed into Canada.

We are only at year 1 of the seven-year agreement, but I am hopeful, as the pre-season estimates for this year were

13,000 fish, and you can see that the actual count at Eagle is almost double that. We have heard local news reports recently with respect to signs of improvement at Michie Creek, which flows into the M'Clintock River, which is upstream from the Whitehorse dam, as well as cautiously higher numbers at the Whitehorse fish ladder, which are approximately double this year from the year prior, with admittedly small numbers, and we certainly want to see significantly higher numbers making it to Whitehorse and beyond.

While these are far from the numbers and sights experienced by Yukon First Nations over generations, the return of spawning salmon, as identified by the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, offers hope. It is too early to draw significant conclusions, but these numbers are promising, particularly when we haven't had particularly good news on this file for many years.

While we are talking about iconic species, we have taken steps to address the decline of Yukon's Dall sheep — or thinhorn sheep — in the southwest Yukon. The Donjek sheep management unit, which is located on the east side of Kluane Lake, was particularly concerning, with a 63-percent decline noted in a 2023 survey compared to a 2015 survey. On June 19, the Government of Yukon closed game management subzone 5-17, which comprises the Donjek sheep management unit, to licensed sheep hunters for three years, starting August 1, 2024 until October 31, 2026. I am particularly proud of the engagement with First Nation governments, renewable resources councils, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and Parks Canada and am welcoming feedback from other impacted stakeholders which resulted in the decision to issue a closure in that sheep management unit.

Based on collaboration and the feedback we received during the consultation, we have issued this closure in the short term and have signed a memorandum of understanding with co-management partners to work together on future management actions, including the development of a long-term sheep conservation and management plan for southwest Yukon. The government remains keenly aware of our responsibility to protect and conserve these sheep populations for the long term.

We also know that residents and non-residents value the hunting experience that the Yukon offers and, as the territory's population grows, there is an increasing demand for hunting opportunities. The Department of Environment evaluates harvest sustainability annually in order to identify areas and species where increased licensed hunting opportunities would not result in conservation concerns. Often, these new hunting opportunities are made possible because of collective recovery efforts.

In recent years, we have increased the volume and frequency of wildlife surveys in order to ensure that decision-making related to harvest opportunities is grounded in high-quality, up-to-date data and information. The Government of Yukon is committed to sustainably managing wildlife populations to preserve subsistence harvest and to continue to offer licensed hunting opportunities. Hunting is a cherished practice and way of life for many Yukoners and sustainable harvest management helps to preserve the Yukon hunting

experience. Our government works hard to maintain a careful balance between hunting opportunities, using the legislative tools available, staying within sustainable limits, and preserving the world-class Yukon hunting experience for generations to come.

Speaking of world-class, we are, of course, fortunate to be able to enjoy and live within the breathtaking nature and wilderness that we have here in the Yukon.

Our government is in year 2 of implementing the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement*. The *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement* provides funding to advance the Yukon's conservation priorities, including protecting our lands and waters, supporting Indigenous-led conservation initiatives, and increasing our efforts on protecting species at risk. This important work is helping us to be better prepared and informed for future planning processes, discussions on land and resource management issues, addressing Yukon's climate resiliency, and managing and preserving biodiversity.

In fiscal 2023-24, we were able to make meaningful progress toward the outcomes of the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement*, including reporting an additional two percent of lands and waters to the *Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database* to bring the Yukon's total of protected areas to 21.1 percent, which is currently the highest percent of reported protected areas of any province or territory in Canada. This is something that I am extremely proud of as we work hard to improve our position even further.

Mr. Speaker, protecting new areas and ensuring conservation in the territory is complex and challenging work, but it is more important than ever as we face challenges like population growth, industrial development, climate change impacts, and loss of biodiversity. Our government continues to do the work as we advance these crucial pieces.

This year, the Government of Yukon will continue to work toward protecting areas in the Yukon that are of important ecological and cultural value. New areas for conservation will also be collaboratively identified with Indigenous governments and groups.

One of these areas that I am extremely excited about is the Chasàn Chuà/McIntyre Creek area. In April, we signed a memorandum of understanding with Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, the City of Whitehorse, and Parks Canada outlining the commitment to protect this area, and we certainly look forward to more productive work being done on that in the next few months.

As I move to conclude my remarks for the day, I would like to touch upon another significant infrastructure project, the Dempster fibre line. The Dempster fibre line is a 778-kilometre fibre optic line that follows the Dempster Highway from Dawson City, Yukon to Inuvik, Northwest Territories, going through some of the roughest terrain in the Yukon and crossing numerous waterways from little creeks to massive undertakings such as horizontal drilling beneath the Mackenzie River.

The new network line will provide communities with a backup line in the event of a service disruption and provide more reliable Internet and cellphone services. A quick survey of how this line was laid, for Yukoners listening today:

Approximately 89 percent was buried below the surface using plows — I think that was at approximately 30 centimetres; seven percent was installed using horizontal directional drilling, and this was mostly used to go under wetlands and rivers; 1.7 percent was installed on existing power poles mostly in and around communities; and 1.4 percent was installed on new poles in areas where horizontal directional drilling or other methods were not possible due to environmental conditions or subsurface geology.

The construction phase of the project was completed by ROHL Global Networks on September 12, 2024. The total contract value was \$94 million. Northwestel is now completing their work to bring the fibre line online, and we anticipate this commissioning to be completed before the end of 2024.

As I close, I would like to thank all public servants, particularly the employees at the departments of Environment and Highways and Public Works.

Finally, as we enter the winter season, I would like to show my deep appreciation to all those who work hard to keep us safe and our road infrastructure open and navigable during these upcoming cold and dark months.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to be here today as MLA for Mountainview. I am very grateful for the constituents of Mountainview who have chosen me to represent them in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. I am very proud to hold the positions that I do, and I do that very humbly as Deputy Premier, Minister of Education, and Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. This is my eighth year serving Yukoners as an MLA and as a minister, and I am very thankful for that opportunity and I want to — as I am reflecting on this time in the Legislative Assembly — also thank my family: my husband, Rick, and my sons, Colin and Jedrek, and their partners now, Sam and Isabel, and all of my friends who continue to show up and just provide me with unwavering support in the work that I do, and they never, ever give up on me. They continue to — even though I don't have a lot of time to spend with folks — invite and make sure that I'm included, so I'm very grateful always for that type of support.

Over these past five months between the Spring and Fall Sittings, it seems like a blink and all of a sudden we're back in here doing the work from the Legislative Assembly. Time goes by fast. I had a valuable opportunity over the summer months to connect with constituents, meet with my provincial and federal counterparts, and advance key initiatives.

I will highlight a few, but over the summer, we had an opportunity to participate in a mission to London, which was an incredible opportunity, to accompany a delegation of Yukon First Nations in the spirit of reconciliation, cultural diplomacy, and industry engagement. Throughout the trip, we affirmed our government's commitment to build meaningful relationships and collaborate with Yukon First Nations to advance reconciliation.

A key moment of this visit was the opening of the Honouring Our Future: Yukon First Nations Graduation Regalia exhibition at Canada House. This was a very powerful and important showcase of our heritage and promise of our

future. I want to thank Lisa Dewhurst, who was the curator for this exhibition, and, of course, the Yukon Arts Centre staff who were incredible in making this particular event happen and the folks at the Department of Tourism and Culture who also supported this work to happen. Thank you to the important staff at the Executive Council Office who supported this mission. During this trip, there was a visit to the National Archives to explore Yukon's historical holdings, and we connected with significant cultural artifacts from our communities at the Pitt Rivers Museum and the British Museum. I was again deeply grateful to the chiefs, elders, and business leaders who joined us, strengthening our ties both within the Yukon and across the globe.

In terms of education, I am excited to reflect on the successful return of Welcome Week for Yukon Education staff as an important event that took place this year after a hiatus since 2019 due to the pandemic. This four-day orientation, training, and development event was designed to support and connect both new and returning educators from across the territory. This year, Welcome Week brought together 200 new educators for two days of orientation where they had the opportunity to meet their colleagues from various Yukon schools, and for the final two days, all of the other educators joined in. So, approximately 850 educators were able to gather to hear a number of inspiring keynote speakers, but one of them was Leona Prince. I know that Tosh Southwick gave a keynote as well, and they participated in a range of interactive sessions. The topics covered during this week included current educational practices that support student learning, an overview of departmental policies, the kindergarten-to-grade 7 literacy strategy and numeracy supports, and even discussions on the integration of artificial intelligence in the K to 12 classroom.

We also focused on role-specific learning for educators, including teachers, learning assistance teachers, educational assistants, and the Yukon First Nation language teachers. Welcome Week served as a fantastic platform for collaboration, innovation, and community building among educators. It was certainly a significant step forward in our commitment to enhancing education across the Yukon, and I look forward to seeing the positive impacts of this gathering on our schools and students in the year ahead.

I also had an opportunity to attend the Yukon First Nation School Board welcome week, or their education camp, as they framed it. It was an exciting and very energetic event as well and was very well-attended.

Through Education, we are actively transforming our system to better meet the needs of all Yukoners. In collaboration with Yukon First Nations and our education partners, our primary objective is to make schools more inclusive spaces and responsive to diverse communities while improving outcomes for every learner. This school year, our focus remains on our unwavering commitment to safer schools and our expanded vision for inclusive and special education. For us, safety and inclusion are more than just words; they are a foundation to everything we do. We are working to ensure that every student experiences a sense of belonging and connection.

Our efforts to shape Yukon's education landscape are collaborative. Every school community shares the common goal of creating welcoming, safe, and supportive spaces. Teachers, students, families, and all stakeholders play an essential role in ensuring that our schools are nurturing environments where students can thrive and reach their full potential.

I'm very excited, of course — I know that folks have heard me talk about it a lot, but I'm going to talk about it again today — to share that this August marked the inaugural class of the very first cohort of students to Whistle Bend Elementary School. Of course, folks also know that this is the first new elementary school to be built in Whitehorse in over two decades and it truly embodies the Yukon government's vision of special and inclusive education.

In September, I had the pleasure of touring the new Whistle Bend Elementary School along with the former Paralympian and activist Rick Hansen. This incredible school is a shining example of what we can achieve when we prioritize accessibility and inclusivity in education. The Yukon government is fully committed to creating more schools like this — schools that welcome all students regardless of ability and give them the opportunity to thrive by integrating barrier-free designs and ensuring that every space is accessible and appropriately sized. We are making sure that no student is left behind.

As well, I'm very proud of the Kêts'ádañ Kù project and am happy to speak about it — this important step in our commitment to reconciliation. The Kêts'ádañ Kù project has been a priority for the Kluane First Nation for more than 100 years. Of course, we are also furthering our commitment for long-term capital planning for Yukon schools. We are pleased again to be working in partnership with the Kluane First Nation on the development of the Kêts'ádañ Kù, which means "house of learning".

For many years, the Kluane First Nation has requested the relocation of the Kluane school from Destruction Bay to Burwash Landing. Today we stand, of course, united with the Kluane First Nation in upholding our memorandum of understanding that outlines our shared commitment to plan and construct this new school. Kêts'ádañ Kù will be more than just a building; it will be a place where Kluane First Nation citizens can learn and thrive within their own community where their culture, language, and values are at the heart of the educational experience. So, again, I am very excited about this project and to see it advance in this year.

Recently, our government announced that we had begun phase 2 of the École Whitehorse Elementary replacement project on the Takhini Educational Land Reserve. This site was chosen not only because of its size and zoning but because it provides students with something essential to their education — access to greenspace. Modern learning environments require spaces where children can engage with nature, promoting outdoor learning and physical activity, both of which are critical to students while being in development. This location offers a centralized service space that will allow us to build an

innovative, modern facility that meets the evolving needs of our students and teachers.

Our government is not only committed to fulfilling our promises by building adequately sized, accessible, and community-centred schools across the Yukon, but we are also dedicated to actively listening to our constituents. We understand that engaging with the voices of our communities is essential to creating educational environments that truly meet the needs of our students and families. Together, we are building a brighter future for all Yukoners. This is why our government is committed to engaging with the downtown community and other partners to open up conversations — have further conversations about a new downtown school. Together, we are building brighter futures for all Yukoners, big and small.

As we know, Yukon's population is growing and with that growth comes the need not only for investment in infrastructure but also for investment directly in our students' education. I am proud to share that we have made significant strides in making childcare more affordable for families across the Yukon. As part of our government's commitment to supporting families and investing in early childhood education, we have successfully brought the cost of childcare to less than \$10 a day. This achievement ensures that families can access high-quality, affordable childcare. By allowing students to pursue their careers in education and greater peace of mind by reducing their financial burden, we are not only helping families but really also creating stronger, more inclusive communities where every child has the opportunity to thrive.

In September 2024, we had the great privilege of hosting a conference for early learning childcare educators from across the Yukon. It was a wonderful opportunity for educators to come together and exchange ideas and learn from one another, sharing the diverse experiences and innovative practices that are shaping the future of early childhood education in our territory. As my colleague highlighted yesterday, we are proud to announce that we have allocated this year \$4.6 million to support early learning and childcare infrastructure, an investment that will be fully recoverable from the federal government. Funding will ensure that we can continue to build and improve spaces where children begin their educational journeys and where educators have the resources that they need to nurture and guide them.

In addition to this, to support the growing number of students, we are increasing post-secondary grants by \$1.2 million in new funding. These grants are essential in helping post-secondary learners pursue their education and to achieve their goals.

Building on the section 17.7 agreement with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in on August 30, we gathered to celebrate an historic milestone: the signing of a letter of agreement on education co-governance between the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government and the Government of Yukon. This agreement marked a pivotal moment in our shared commitment to creating a more inclusive and representative education system within the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory.

This agreement symbolizes the strength of our partnership grounded in mutual respect and shared vision for the future. By

working together, we're creating an education system that reflects the unique values, cultures, and languages of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people, ensuring that future generations can thrive in an environment that honours their heritage.

This is more than just a document; it's a step toward reconciliation, empowering Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people to guide and shape the education of their children. Together, we are building a future where every student can see themselves, their history, and their culture reflected in their learning.

I'm not sure how much time I have.

I think I'll just move on to a few things around women and gender equity. I had the privilege of meeting with Consul General DeHart to discuss a matter that weighs heavily on both sides of our shared border: the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. On the Alaska side, they refer to it as "missing and murdered Indigenous people". This issue is not confined to one region or community; it transcends borders and demands a unified response.

In my discussions with Consul General DeHart, we emphasized the importance of cross-border communication and collaboration between Yukon and Alaska. We recognize that the crisis requires a coordinated approach, one that includes stronger communication channels and sharing resources, information, and best practices between our governments. Too many Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people have been affected by this type of violence and too many families are left without answers. It is our responsibility to work together and find solutions. We certainly have made space within our implementation plan for the development of an MOU between Yukon and Alaska, and we are also pursuing this with BC and the Northwest Territories.

Through the Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-spirit+ People, we have moved from the planning phase into implementation, and the advisory committee is evolving to better support the critical work ahead and focus on implementation and accountability. As part of this, we are currently working with the advisory committee to plan the third annual accountability forum, which will be held on October 28 to 30. We will also be releasing our very first 2023-24 annual report outlining the actions taken by all partners during the first year of the implementation plan. We certainly have resources within this budget that are in support of this work.

I look forward to all of those important discussions continuing and for participation from folks from this Assembly. I look forward to the remainder of our Sitting and, of course, Committee of the Whole debate on the supplementary budget. There are some really important resources through Education and Women and Gender Equity as part of this budget.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, it is great to be back standing here in the Legislative Assembly talking about the *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*. There is much to talk about this afternoon: my constituents in wonderful Whitehorse West, all the good work we're doing helping to protect communities, and so much more — so very much more.

I expect I will sprinkle a few song lyrics amid my remarks and perhaps some thoughts from music producer Rick Rubin. It's fun, so let's hit it.

Whitehorse West is a growing urban riding. In fact, at the end of my street, a copse of trees — it was once a popular bike, fort-building space for my sons and other neighbourhood kids. It now houses at least four new family homes.

As MLA, I worked with my good colleague the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources on the infill project. It densifies the neighbourhood and it makes better use of municipal infrastructure. It involved a few tough conversations, but ultimately, folks understood the need for more housing in Whitehorse. Of course, the housing construction is drumming up concerns from residents lately, mostly centred around traffic congestion and safety. It has drawn bylaw officers to the scene a couple of times. But all of that aside, it's wonderful to see the neighbourhood growing. The houses there are selling relatively fast, which just signals that the Yukon economy — despite the naysayers on the benches opposite, the Yukon economy is still one of the strongest in the country. It's a nice neighbourhood that I live in, filled with good folks.

With that, this afternoon, I'm going to take a moment to officially welcome my newest constituents, the Dixon clan. Given the speed at which their house is going up, I expect that they will be moving in sooner rather than later. It's always nice to have new neighbours on Magpie and Finch. So, I say to the Leader of the Official Opposition, welcome to the neighbourhood. I am sure that having strong representation here in the House is one of the reasons that you chose the Logan subdivision, so I will reach out with any questions or concerns you have and I will be sure to track them down for you. Of course, I look forward to chatting with you as I make my way to collect the mail.

Folks these days are talking an awful lot about firesmarting their properties and want to know what steps we are taking to protect the town and others around the territory. The folks at Community Services are working around the clock on that front. Recently, I met with representatives of the European Union who were here on a fact-finding and information-sharing tour of our community that was organized by the City of Whitehorse. The Whitehorse south fuel break was one of the places that we all surveyed. The progress on that living infrastructure project is really incredible to behold. The fuel break is designed to slow the approach of wildfires from the south where the most common prevailing winds blow into town. It will also give firefighters space to operate should such a thing occur. So far, almost 350 hectares of boreal have been cleared, and we are planting fire-resistant deciduous species like aspen to make the place a lot more fire-resistant.

The European delegates I met were fascinated by this incredible infrastructure and have asked for more information about the project and the research that several universities are undertaking as the project evolves.

We are also working with municipalities to help with planning for emergencies. We have helped some communities with tabletop exercises. We have also held larger exercises with the City of Whitehorse, ATCO, Northwestel, joint task force

north, First Nations, volunteer firefighters, municipal fire departments, the RCMP, and other local groups with a role in emergency response and planning. Those exercises have sharpened our understanding of the communities' needs and identified some gaps that need to be addressed.

Last year, Wildland Fire Management launched a new online wildfires hub in response to feedback received following the 2022 wildfire season. Our goal is making it easier to find information about the Yukon's wildfire situation as well as potential impacts to residents and travellers. The wildfires hub builds on improvements made to the wildfire map last year, providing information about individual wildfires, wildfire season statistics, fire danger ratings, wildfire smoke, highway delays, and fires near your location. The hub differentiates full response fires from all fires, helping Yukoners understand the real fire situation rather than being overwhelmed by active wilderness fires.

Wildland Fire Management's fire information team uses a variety of communication methods to keep Yukoners informed during the wildfire season. This is one of the things we heard from Yukoners in the aftermath of the 2022 fire season — that they needed more information. We have taken action on that front. Including the wildfires hub, there are: a publicly available phone number; Yukon Protective Services social media pages; ads; information bulletins to Yukon media; and interviews with local radio stations. For directly affected residents, outreach methods may include door-knocking, centrally located information booths, town halls, collaboration from local government communication officials, and other tools. Information officers choose to use any of these tools, and it all depends on the situation at the time.

We also conduct community outreach during less busy times of the year — like now, as we are moving into the fall and winter — including visits to local schools and community events to raise awareness about wildfire safety. These visits often feature Smokey Bear, a popular addition to any event for kids and adults.

More than 40 media interviews were conducted and resulted in news coverage over the last six months. That included a feature on the Whitehorse south fuel break in the spring, and it aired on CBC's *The National* and a nationally syndicated radio interview on the same topic that aired on CBC's *The Current*. In the spring, an information officer from Wildland Fire Management presented at the annual Yukon tourism conference to advise tourism operations about how to prepare for the wildfire season. Information officers also attended more than 10 additional events on FireSmart and emergency preparedness during the season. It goes on, but the point is that we are learning and working very, very hard to get more information into the hands of Yukoners so that they are better able to deal with emergencies as they arise.

The department is also doing controlled burns to reduce flammable material in our forests when the weather conditions are favourable for such operations. On that front, through our government's *Our Clean Future* strategy, Wildland Fire Management leads wildfire prevention and mitigation efforts in many communities. This includes, as I have said, firesmarting

and fuel breaks, like the work taking place south of Whitehorse. It also includes development of forward-looking community wildfire protection plans. These strategies are created through a collaborative process between communities and Wildland Fire Management officials who provide support and technical input. In the previous era of wildfire management, fire was not allowed to play its natural ecological role near communities, which includes thinning forest fuels and reducing the risk of future catastrophic fires. The wildland firefighting strategy of extinguishing all fires caused a buildup of hazardous forest fuels in the boreal surrounding many Yukon communities.

Wildland Fire Management today leads landscape-level hazard-reduction projects that promote safe and effective fire suppression and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires near Yukon communities. These projects are achieved using a diverse toolbox of manual and mechanical methods, including clearing, thinning, prescribed fire, as I just mentioned, and converting coniferous stands to deciduous forests.

Already, as I have said, almost 335 hectares of the Whitehorse south fuel break are complete, including 33 hectares treated this summer, and we expect to finish the Copper Haul Road portion in the fall — soon. The Mary Lake shaded fuel break will be finished in the fall of 2026.

Just this year, prescribed burning operations took place on the fuel break. This also creates good planting conditions for the aspen, which are fire-retardant trees, and as of August 16, seven hectares were burned. This involved extensive communication with the public.

So, as you can hear, Mr. Speaker, we're doing a lot on the wildland fire front, and it is important. It's something that my constituents — I'm sure many constituencies here in the Legislative Assembly — are hearing about — the need to do more and to involve Yukoners in the preparation for wildland fire preparedness.

I would be remiss if I didn't go into the 72-hour kit. Everybody should do that, and there is plenty of advice online to make sure that you have an idea of what you should include in such kits. We have our responsibility as the Yukon government to work with folks with wildfire. Municipalities have a responsibility; First Nations have a responsibility; citizens have a responsibility, both with flooding and with wildfire. So, make up your kit. Look at your property, firesmart it, and make sure you look around and see what keepsakes and what possessions you have around your house that you would like to save in the event of an evacuation order. Just prepare yourself, know your community, know what you need to keep, and keep yourself protected. Protect your homes and make sure you do some of the prep work ahead of time so our firefighting crews are not having to spend more time protecting your home because you didn't do a little bit of work in the spring or the fall.

All right. So, we're making progress on disaster mitigation, but the pollution that we continue to pump into the atmosphere is rapidly changing our climate and the weather is getting weirder. We have all seen it, and it's costly. Much of the supplementary requests from Community Services are related to increasing natural disasters and their cost.

We are asking for \$1.45 million related to the spring and summer incidents, particularly the flood response in Old Crow. Logistically, responding to emergent disasters in such a remote area is expensive, and we're also asking for another \$21.5 million for Wildland Fire Management. These expenses stem from the significant efforts to contain fire activity near Yukon communities and export costs related to fire personnel who were sent to help with suppression efforts outside the Yukon.

We often benefit from these mutual aid agreements, so we're happy to answer the call when our neighbouring or far-off regions request assistance.

Now, I mentioned Rick Rubin. As he noted in his book on creativity, this speech is a moment captured in amber. It captures a moment in time and reflects me in this government at this moment. Tomorrow, I will be a different person. Tomorrow, the situation in the territory will be different. Things happen. It's changing; it's evolving. Time rolls on. Things are going to change in the coming days, months, and years, and I can assure you that our weather and the disasters that it brings are only going to get more profound and weirder.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot stress enough that global squeamishness — indeed, humanity's foot-dragging on the hard decisions to mitigate carbon pollution — is costing us dearly. It's costing us here in the Yukon, it's costing us in Canada, and it's costing us around the globe. You can't deny it. Those costs, both human and financial, in devastation, in lives lost, in preparations and recovery efforts are only going to rise. We are being asked for help around the globe for our firefighters to help out way more often, and we are calling for help way more often as well.

That's why, for me, it is very disheartening to see premiers across the country falling in line with the federal Conservative Party leader's politically driven campaign to roll back carbon pricing. Never mind that all revenue collected from said taxes are refunded to Canadians who file tax forms with Revenue Canada. Municipalities, First Nations, and businesses — they are all getting money back. Never mind that pricing carbon is deemed to be the most efficient and effective way to encourage the worst polluters to embrace cleaner energy by almost all global economies. Never mind that the evidence from European, Asian, and North American jurisdictions that have implemented a price on carbon or a cap-and-trade system have seen per capita emissions drop, energy efficiency increase, and economies diversify and grow. The fact that citizens are being gulled into believing a conservative populist disinformation strategy imported from Australia is frankly disheartening. To see even the federal Leader of the NDP parroting this populist anti-carbon pricing approach is disappointing.

So many progressive jurisdictions in the world are making important strides to encourage folks to reduce pollution, yet the Yukon Party and federal Conservatives want to turn our ship around and head back where the world was 20 years ago. I have to ask: What expertise and what evidence are these other parties relying on when they claim it is ineffective? I challenge my good colleagues on the opposition benches, the Official Opposition benches, to cite their sources. I challenge them to

table an effective, tested alternative to carbon pricing. I haven't seen anything yet. All I saw, actually, was the good folks opposite pledge to implement the carbon-pricing mechanism in their last election materials, but they seem to have grown cold on that.

Mr. Speaker, we can no longer fool around. As leaders, we all must do better, and our children and future generations are depending upon it.

Okay. Amid the crash and clatter of angels hitting the ground, I will move on to other matters.

In our supplementary budget, there is a request for \$234,000 for an increase to volunteer firefighters' honoraria wages. There are also various amounts for different FireSmart projects throughout the Yukon. I'm sure we'll get into the specifics of these in Committee of the Whole. Outside of requests for Protective Services, we also have \$558,000 for Sport and Recreation and \$175,000 for Community Affairs. Many of these expenses are recoverable, particularly from the Government of Canada, which we thank for the generous support.

Again, we will get into the particulars in Committee of the Whole, and given the member opposite's — the Finance critic's — comments this afternoon, I look forward to seeing which of these expenses he wants cut from the books.

Community Services and the Yukon Workers' Safety and Compensation Board have been busy, as usual, since this House last sat, and I would like to highlight a few of the issues and initiatives they have been working on. Most will be more like updates, since they are large and complex files that are ongoing. I'm happy to report that, as a result of hard work of the staff within Community Services, we now have a new agreement for the Canada community-building fund that was signed this summer. It enables the territorial government to continue receiving funds for a 10-year term from 2024-25 through to 2033-34.

This year, 2023-24, there were more than 30 projects completed for a total of \$9 million. The 2024-25 total funding jumped to \$18 million. Needless to say, this was an important achievement for the department. The long-promised Dawson recreation centre replacement is now underway, with a conceptual design having been completed this summer and presented to the community. As members of this House may have seen, the contract has been awarded to a local company, Wildstone Construction. The budget for this project remains firmly at \$65 million, and we look forward to seeing some of the site preparations getting underway this winter and the facility construction beginning next spring.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I will take my seat and look forward to the comments from other members of this House.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I had a pretty tough summer. It started off on the Mother's Day weekend when the Association of Yukon Communities hosted its annual general meeting. Many of us were there in Dawson City. I always look forward to that event. It's a great time when a lot of leaders from communities across our territory get together and talk through a whole lot of issues. It just happened that, on that

weekend, someone — I don't know who — decided to vandalize my home out at Marsh Lake. I got a call or a text from my wife. She was here in the Assembly yesterday — the lovely Susan Walton. She let me know that this had happened. It had happened during the nighttime while she was out at our place at Marsh Lake. It was really disturbing and disheartening. One of the reasons it was tough was because whoever decided to vandalize our place used graffiti across our house, walkway, and carport. They were criticizing policies that the government had taken. I think that's a great thing for someone who has concerns to raise them with me directly and to talk through those concerns. It's never okay to do what happened. It is so disturbing to see your home threatened.

In fact, one of the things that happened with that graffiti was that they even named my wife, as though she was responsible for those decisions that we took, which really were about trying to protect Yukoners. But I know that when you are in the role of government, you always have to take hard decisions; it can be tough.

I want to say thank you to my colleagues, and when I say "colleagues", I mean colleagues here in the Assembly, because lots of folks reached out to me and expressed their concern at what had happened, so thank you to everyone. During a time when politics just seem to get more polarized in other parts of the world, I appreciate that we treat each other much more respectfully here.

I also want to give a shout-out — because right now, we are in municipal and local advisory council elections and I just want to thank everybody who takes the time to put their name forward to run for office. It is so encouraging that whenever anyone does that — and I encourage all Yukoners to just please be respectful when sharing your views. Being elected to represent Yukoners is a tough privilege and a tough responsibility. Okay, that was Mother's Day, and then June 24 hit.

On June 24, I got a call from Victoria Gold and they let me know about the failure of the heap. I think that the event only took — well, it might have even been less than a minute for that slide to happen — four million tonnes of rock sliding down. The heap dropped 60 metres in a breath.

I reached out to the Premier, to Cabinet, to let them know. I called Chief Hope with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and Mayor Ellis. What I said yesterday when I rose in the House to speak about this was that, from that moment, everyone has really been working non-stop, and all political differences aside — all differences about what each of us, as parties, would choose in how to respond to this — and I think that it is very important that we all tell Yukoners how we would respond to it. I think that we can all acknowledge how hard everyone has been working. I will note in particular the folks from Energy, Mines and Resources and the folks from the Department of Environment. I know that when I talked to Chief Hope, she talked about how hard the team from the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun has been working, like throughout, and I will say as well, the staff at Eagle Gold and the receiver, and it has just been a lot of work. To all of you, and you know you're

doing that work, I just want to take this moment to say thank you.

I was so thankful that there were no fatalities. That was quite a slide. Four million tonnes of rock dropped. When I went to see it, there was a dozer right in the middle of that slide. You look at it from far away and it's just like a little pinpoint, and then you get up to the edge of the heap facility and it still looks tiny, but you can see that the dozer dropped 30, 40, 50 metres. I talked to the worker who, after that drop happened, ran off to get to the side to get to safety. So, I'm just so thankful that there were no fatalities, but when the four million tonnes of rock dropped, two million of the tonnes came over the lined embankment and ended up in Dublin Gulch. With it is the leach solution which has within it cyanide, and that leach solution then is in contact with the ground. That has been the risk all along. Also, as I said yesterday, right where we want to do the work to do the groundwater extraction is at the foot of the slide, but you have this headscarp up above because not all of the heap dropped. The technical specialists say to us, "You still have a risk of further slide."

So, if you're going to put workers there, you can't put them at risk, of course, and so, right away, we said that our two priorities were safety on-site and protecting the environment.

We're going to talk about this for a long time over this session I hope, and I will leave it there for now, but I am keen to hear from the Official Opposition. Are they really saying that what they would do is just have left Victoria Gold in place to attempt to deal with this, even knowing now, as I said earlier during Question Period today, that through the courts and through the receiver's filings just two days ago, it was clear that Victoria Gold didn't have the resources in order to continue to do the work?

And if that hasn't been the gift that keeps on giving — Victoria Gold, then came August 2. I would like to thank the Minister of Environment for his words today. It turns out that I was at the same event with Mr. Prochazka — Michael — and the Minister of Environment. It was being held by Kwanlin Dün and Carcross/Tagish. It was to celebrate salmon. We were there at North M'Clintock. It just happened that as we were all getting ready to leave, I got pulled back to help be part of some salmon fileting competition. Of course, that's great; I helped out. As I left, I could see that there was all of this traffic that was stopped and people started to tell me that maybe one of the vehicles in the accident was a government vehicle. Then I sort of identified myself to the RCMP to ask if I could be of any support, and then I was asked to help identify — because there had been this sort of heroic effort to try to keep Michael alive. The Minister of Environment had been taken off to the hospital. Of course, no one stopped at that point to ask people's names, so I had the role of identifying for the RCMP which family they should contact.

I just for a second want to talk about Michael as a public servant. He was a great guy — so completely dedicated. He brought this really terrific energy and enthusiasm to his role. I know he will, of course, be missed by his family, but I think, you know, he is also missed by the Yukon because of what he contributed for all of us. It just again reminds me that it can be

such a tough job to be in these roles within this Assembly or in government and giving it up to try to make this a better world for all of us, and I don't think that it always gets acknowledged. So, I will just say that it was a tough summer.

But even as all of that is happening, there are always going to be some silver linings and I'll talk about a few of those. I'll try to just touch on them to give a sense. We are talking about Victoria Gold a lot, but just for a second, all of the focus is pulled away from Minto. The reclamation work there has been going really amazingly well. I know that the Selkirk First Nation has been looking into purchasing the mine and that our teams are working together on a potential path that would see a Selkirk-owned company advance this project and ensure that taxpayers are not burdened with the remaining environmental liability.

I was in Dawson maybe last month and was there with our director of Mineral Resources and we had really productive meetings with the Klondike Placer Miners' Association — by the way, happy 50th to them. There has been a ton of work happening on new minerals legislation and also successor lands legislation. I know that our team has been working really hard on land use planning files. I know from our meetings at the Yukon Forum how important these issues are.

We hosted all of the agriculture ministers from across Canada here in Whitehorse. I think that was in July and it was really heartwarming to see some of those provinces — Saskatchewan, Alberta, Québec, and New Brunswick — that have huge agriculture sectors and yet they were talking to us about how impressed they were with our local production here. It was really fantastic. They just raved about Yukon hospitality and amazing local food. We were really proud to get to host that.

By the way, one of the things that happened there — a shout-out to Québec for their hard work — was that we got word that the last grocery chains agreed to the grocery code of conduct, which is about how to try to make sure that our grocery stores are pricing food fairly for Canadians across the country, so that was a big deal.

We also happened to host the ministers of culture and heritage here in the spring. I am sporting my fireweed beaded pin. What we did for all of the ministers from across the country and their deputy ministers and teams was that we commissioned 14 Yukon artists to bead pins of the provincial and territorial flowers as gifts for those ministers to give them something that represented them and where they are from but also to show them a piece of our heritage and craft and art from here in the Yukon. This one is made by Janelle Hager from Selkirk. It is just beautiful, but they were all beautiful, so I don't want to highlight just one person.

We also had this really amazing opportunity — and I know that the Deputy Premier talked about it earlier. There was an art exhibit mounted at Canada House in London, England, and it was the First Nation grad regalia show. Chiefs, the Grand Chief, and elders travelled to be there for the opening of this show and to talk about their pieces. They went to Cambridge University, I think, to look at this collection, but it included artifacts that come from the Yukon. Take a moment, Madam

Deputy Speaker, to read this version of the edition of *Yukon, North of Ordinary*. It has this great article on it. I encourage all Yukoners to do that.

Then just a couple of weeks ago, the National Art Gallery of Canada held their board of trustees meeting here, and it aligned with shows opening up at the Yukon art gallery — our new acquisitions for the permanent collection — but also, the Northern Cultural Expressions Society has a 20th anniversary retrospective show that is happening. It's stunning; please get to the Arts Centre to take a look.

Other silver linings: Yukon tourism — we've had visitors here. Road travel is just under 2019 I think, but air travel is above. Remember, 2019, pre-COVID, was the strongest year on the books for tourism, and so the Yukon has rebounded faster than any other Canadian jurisdiction. It's not that revenues are up everywhere, but they are up overall. There are still challenges with labour; there are still challenges with the food sector at our restaurants because the prices of food are so high, so the profit margins are not there. But overall, tourism has been really coming back strong. I want to say that Air North has been knocking it out of the park with their interline agreements. To respond to Condor switching its aircrafts, Air North introduced interline agreements and our European visitors are up even though the Condor flight isn't flying directly here, which is amazing.

Then just recently, Air North signed an interline agreement with WestJet. That is going to open up a lot of the southern North America but also East Asia and Europe. It's amazing.

There have been a few things happening around our communities and I just wanted to make mention of a few of them. Toward the end of August, I was really excited to speak at the Canadian Grand Masters Fiddle Competition — first time it was ever north of 60 — and by the way, Old Crow got into the fiddling hall of fame as a community and it was quite something, and the Pan-Northern Youth Fiddle Summit was held with, like — it had to be hundreds of fiddlers from across the territories who were all here. They did a combined concert and it was just so exciting. Just after that, the Minister of Health and Social Services and I got to be part of Team Yukon going to the Canada 55+ Games. I just have to say, for all of you who are heading in the direction of 55-plus, this is a really great thing and Team Yukon is just the best for spirit all the time. The letter Y comes late in the alphabet, so often we are the last ones to go in the parade, but we go to the front of the parade and we high five all the other teams and cheer them on. It is just really a fun thing.

Just at the equinox — so that would have been two weeks ago or a week and a half ago — I got to volunteer again at Theatre in the Bush, which has just become this really wonderful expression of very immediate performance art held in Pineridge and it is just a wonderful evening. So, those were some of my highlights.

I just want to make one comment before my time runs out. A couple of days ago, I was asked to attend a demonstration — a march — by Seniors for Climate and their message was: "Later is Too Late!" I just want to echo the Minister of Community Services' comments about how important it is that

we address the issue of climate change. I thank him for saying that and I want to just say that it is so important that we think sustainably for our future, for our kids.

I am proud to be a Yukoner, proud to be in this Assembly, proud to work for Yukoners, and even though it has been a very tough summer, I just want to say thanks to everyone who has shown their support to my family and to me and my colleagues. I just really appreciate the opportunity to represent Yukoners here in the Assembly.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Madam Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today. I am really pleased to rise today.

I think that I will just say that I am saddened by the fact that the opposition is not taking the opportunity — the same one that I and all my colleagues have been granted today — to speak on behalf of their constituents or to speak about their concerns and issues and things that are important to them. I am really disappointed for Yukoners who deserve to hear from the opposition about their priorities and why they will or will not support certain priorities, focused on the supplementary budget. I think that's an opportunity that is missed, but it won't surprise anyone that the opposition rarely does what maybe I think they should be doing to represent Yukoners.

I would like to also echo the comments of my colleagues the Minister of Highways and Public Works and Minister of Environment in particular and also the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. It has truly been a very sad and difficult time for all of the reasons described by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources so eloquently today.

It has been a difficult time this summer and, in fact, it continues to be a difficult time for all of us as we process the impacts — and each of us will feel them differently — of several truly tragic and upsetting situations. There are others, but my colleagues have mentioned the primary ones today and I thank them for doing so. I thank them for their vulnerability and for taking the opportunity and the time from other comments they might have made to recognize Michael, for instance, and to recognize the truly serious impact that the other events have had.

I'll turn firstly to Health and Social Services. I'm excited to speak about some of our accomplishments and our focus over the summer. I will speak a bit about the position, our portion of the supplementary budget, but I have to say that I marvel at the comments made by the conservative Yukon Party about spending for the improvements to Yukoners and to Yukon health care for Yukoners. The Finance critic continues to deliberately — or to not deliberately — misunderstand the budget of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. I am also unable to understand the inconsistent criticisms from the Yukon Party conservatives. We are criticized for not properly funding health care services and then we're also criticized for spending too much on health care services, as laid out in our main budgets and in our supplementary budgets. We are very clear — to make sure that this is a priority — and we show so through our actions.

As my colleague the Minister of Finance said earlier today, you really can't have it both ways. A lot of the operation and maintenance funding that is included in this supplementary budget is really for people. It's for people who deserve to have health care and the services provided to them, and it's for people who have to deliver those health care services and programs.

We cannot continue to have a population that is growing; we cannot continue to have a population that is aging and having more complex health situations and, in many cases, having the opportunity to deal with a complex health care situation for much longer than they might have in the past.

Individuals are living longer with complicated health problems and issues, and that is a good thing. But we have to be clear that this is an expense for the health care system and it is an opportunity that we must respond to. We have to have individuals to deliver those services, and much of that is what you see in the supplementary budget here.

I would just like to mention a few facts about the funding for the Hospital Corporation, and I won't spend much time on that because it's clear that the members of the opposition will refuse to understand the facts. But since 2018-19, we have increased the Yukon Hospital Corporation's O&M funding from \$68.2 million to \$120.8 million, which represents an overall increase of 77.2 percent since 2018-19. We are dedicated to providing the services that Yukoners need at our Yukon hospitals. We have stated this repeatedly and we have proved our commitment through action — through budgetary increases and through support, financially and otherwise, for the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

I would also like to take the opportunity today to welcome the new chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Directors, Pamela Hine, and the new chief executive officer — soon to start at the Yukon Hospital Corporation — Tiffany Boyd. I am extremely confident that Yukoners will be the beneficiaries of this new leadership and each of their commitments to improving health care services for Yukoners. I know of their individual and collective dedication to Yukoners, and I know that the Hospital Corporation and all of its issues are in good hands.

In the spring of 2024, this Legislative Assembly passed the *Health Authority Act*. We have coordinated with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to add an additional 10 acute care hospital beds and 12 long-term-care beds back in July 2024. Through discussions between Health and Social Services and the Yukon First Nation leadership, a Yukon First Nation Chiefs Committee on Health was established to guide the implementation of *Putting People First* and the creation of a health authority through Health and Wellness Yukon.

The minister and the Chiefs Committee on Health appointed executive members to a Health Transformation Advisory Committee to implement priorities and direction on the development of Shāw Kwā'ā/Health and Wellness Yukon and to continue to improve health and social services here in the territory.

Our government released in December of 2023 a downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan, which is a

living document completed in partnership with many community partners and summarizes the actions taken to date and future actions to help shape a safe, supportive, and thriving downtown sector.

We have released a health and human resources strategy with 25 actions spanning the five key pillars that are aimed to boost delivery of care and improve the recruitment and retention of health care professionals. That was released back in December of 2023. At that time, we established a Health Human Resources Steering Committee to respond to the local, national, and global health human resources crisis. This health human resources crisis is probably the most challenging situation that all governments in Canada face at the moment and perhaps worldwide, but certainly, it is something faced by every single provincial and territorial government. There are not too many issues that cross the boundaries of each and every jurisdiction in Canada, but this one does.

We signed a letter of intent with the Government of Nova Scotia to collaborate on the recruitment, retention, and training of health care professionals. We implemented many projects under the strategy so far to train, recruit, mentor, and retain health and social services workers. We announced as far back as December 2022 a \$6-million nurse retention and bonus package for registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and licensed practical nurses who are employed by the Government of Yukon. That has had a significant impact on decreasing our nursing shortage here in the territory. We have community nursing and home care nursing. Home care is staffed completely — their nursing positions — and they have a current vacancy rate of about six percent. Continuing care has a nursing vacancy rate of about four percent, and community nursing has a vacancy rate now of approximately 19 percent, which still sounds way too high, and it is, but in late December 2022, it was as high as 39 percent. So, our *Health Human Resources Strategy* is working.

Mr. Speaker, we are also focused on primary care. We opened a new walk-in medical clinic in Whitehorse to provide accessible and the essential non-urgent health care services for those without a primary care provider. We worked closely with the francophone community to open Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre in Whitehorse, and we provided funding to Queer Yukon to hire a health care navigator position to support 2SLGBTQIA+ Yukoners to work at removing barriers and helping to identify pathways to care for individuals who have felt underserved.

We have focused on mental wellness and substance use services, working to establish a managed alcohol program, which we are opening within a number of weeks. We opened a supervised consumption site with Blood Ties Four Directions and their expertise and expanded services to include inhalation as well, and we have increased the hours there.

We are hiring additional licensed practical nurses. We have done so to increase bed availability throughout withdrawal management, which is a service provided here in Whitehorse but serves communities as well. We have introduced an IV medication protocol and felt autonomy to withdrawal management, improving care and reducing visits to Whitehorse

General Hospital. We have provided mental wellness and substance use treatment at Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

We completed two land-based family camps to support family healing here in the territory, and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services supported Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and community partners with a Suicide Prevention Week course, and it provided care, information, and counselling in the community. We have worked with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and their wellness department and a number of youth from Dawson City to host a youth-led retreat aimed at elevating youth voices around the topics of youth mental health, substance use, and the substance use health emergency here in the territory. That is so incredibly important, and we'll continue to do that work.

We expanded access to opioid treatment services from the Referred Care Clinic. We have expanded the safer supply of opioids to include fentanyl patches and hydromorphone tablets for people living with opioid use disorder.

With respect to continuing care and focus on seniors, we launched an online dementia portal back in May of this year to provide a central information resource for patients, families, and caregivers. We entered into an agreement with the Alzheimer Society of British Columbia to collaborate on expanding dementia services.

In a National Institute on Aging jurisdictional review of the new national long-term-care service standard that assessed the delivery of safe, reliable, high-quality long-term care across Canada, Yukon ranked second in the country, meeting 100 of the 117 standards.

We established a First Nation advisory committee to review policies and provide input to services. We partnered with Yukon Housing to support development of Normandy Living, again focused on seniors, providing services that were not previously done. We reopened 12 long-term care rooms at Copper Ridge Place after temporarily supporting the Child Development Centre in that space following building-wide renovation. We worked tirelessly to establish and focus on nursing recruitment and retention. We have worked with our partners to provide Meals on Wheels to seniors and to improve communication for residents in the event that English is not their first language. We have also provided the option of traditional meals to residents of all long-term care homes, including regular global substitutions of local game meat for commercially available meat.

This is work that continues to expand the care given for and to Yukoners. We have expanded the chronic disease and disability benefits program to include alcohol use disorder to provide coverage for certain drugs that are of assistance to deal with this disorder. We have enhanced those benefits and pharmacare to extend health care benefit programs introducing biosimilars.

In the territory, we launched the Yukon dental program back in January 2023 to provide dental benefits to eligible Yukoners. Again, this is an important development in Health and Social Services and care for Yukoners. It is particularly important as I understand that the cousins of the Yukon Party conservatives here in the territory have spoken publicly about

not supporting the federal dental program being proposed or even the federal pharmacare program being proposed.

Those are very important programs for Canadians, and they are programs set to put the care of individuals front and centre, providing them additional financial support if those kinds of services are covered. I certainly hope our local Yukon Party will not take the same direction given by the federal party.

As far back as a few years, we doubled the medical travel subsidy, which is an improvement for Yukoners who need to travel for medical services. Last year, we opened the warming centre right here outside of our own room and expect to do so again this year to provide services to Yukoners. It was very successful, with about six weeks of operation and over 1,200 visits for individuals — some new Canadians, some individuals who are street-involved, some individuals who needed access to a bus pass, a warm cup of coffee, a place to be out of the weather, or access to a computer and assistance with a job application. There were so many opportunities for individuals here. I am very proud of that work, and I look forward to again being able to open that, hopefully by the end of this month.

In partnership with Indigenous Services Canada, Yukon First Nations, and the Council of Yukon First Nations, we launched the cultural connections project and continue that work. We provided increased funding for the Yukon seniors income supplement. We also hired a library outreach worker to work with library patrons to access services and supports. We financially supported the Moccasin mobile, an initiative of the Council of Yukon First Nations for downtown outreach to provide after-hours and weekend services.

I am truly proud of the work the Department of Health and Social Services has done to respond to Yukoners and their needs. I want to take the opportunity to thank the department and staff officials. I also want to take the opportunity to thank the staff and the dedicated individuals who work at the Department of Justice for their work on behalf of Yukoners and for their dedication to responding to the needs that we have of them all of the time.

My colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources spoke about the heap leach failure and the impact that has had. I can tell you that the Department of Justice individuals have been working night and day since June 24 to work on solutions and to respond to the needs of the department. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank my colleagues who are here in this room and who make this job bearable every day. Thank you.

Ms. White: I thank my colleagues for the opportunity today. I just wanted to start off by thanking the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Environment for sharing stuff that is absolutely vulnerable. It's not often that we get to have those kinds of conversations here, so I thank them for their thoughts and appreciate them bringing back the humanity that this place should have. That's probably as nice as my comments are going to be, to be perfectly frank, Mr. Speaker, so I'm just going to move on.

You know, I appreciated — well, I did appreciate the shortness of the Member for Lake Laberge's comments today

at seven minutes and 15 seconds, because that's pretty rare — or has been rare in my experience here, so I thought that, well, that was a pretty exciting thing. So, that was something to be grateful for.

I just want to focus on some of the stuff that was said yesterday by the Minister of Finance, and then I want to tie it back into some of the things that I'm seeing that are happening not just — well, possibly in the supplementary budget but kind of in the territory as a whole and how sometimes I don't think that they line up. So, you know, a minister will say one set of words, and then we'll see a separate set of actions, and then we'll see consequences, and they don't necessarily line up.

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance said — and I'm just quoting from page 5480 of Hansard, where he said — and I'm quoting: "Making life affordable for Yukoners has long been a focus of this government. We are committed to supporting Yukoners in the face of a higher cost of living and what has recently been higher than normal inflation. Now, in recent months, inflation has started to improve, but households in the Yukon continue to see their budget stretched by elevated prices, and this is exacerbated for lower-income households. We continue to track inflation and its impacts so that we can take decisive steps to ease these burdens."

Now, the reason I bring up affordability and inflation and how folks are facing some hard choices is transfer stations. My first go-round of getting elected, I talked about accessible bathrooms for seniors in Yukon Housing buildings. I spoke about bathrooms a lot, and I never thought that I would be talking about garbage to the level that I have been, but it's true.

So, we have a minister who was set on closing four rural transfer stations. Of course, in Keno, we saw a solution — until the mine chooses not to follow through — but we saw a solution in Keno that works. I say that with hesitation, but it has been working. The real challenge is when we look at Silver City, Johnsons Crossing, and Braeburn. Those are the challenges.

Last week, I had the pleasure of driving up the north Alaska Highway, and I'm just going to put this out there as a fascinating thing. I have been to the Silver City transfer station before. I have been escorted. I was taken there after a meeting last year. I don't remember if it was — or maybe it was this year. If it was the spring or last fall, I'm not sure. Anyway, I was taken to the Silver City transfer station, and I have to tell you that these transfer stations that the minister says are environmental disasters — and he says they are of deep concern and we should all be deeply embarrassed about them — well, I have to say that I spend a fair amount of time in rural landfills and rural transfer stations, and I always go and take a look because I'm always curious and I know that garbage costs money. So, I had to be escorted to the one in Silver City the first time because I had no idea where it was. There is no sign on the highway; it doesn't say that there's garbage. There is no sign on the highway. So, last week when I was going up the north Alaska Highway, I specifically was like: I need to stop and see this transfer station. It's set for closure; I need to go take another look at it.

So, on my way toward Destruction Bay, I missed it. I didn't find it, but I had meetings in Destruction Bay and stuff in

Burwash. I went and did those first, but when I was in Burwash, the crazy part was is that there was the garbage truck that came through. Now, the reason why I say this is crazy is because it's a garbage truck that comes from Haines Junction and it goes to Destruction Bay and Burwash Landing and it picks up the garbage, but it drives past Silver City —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. White: I stand corrected; it comes from Whitehorse.

So, it goes past Silver City, drives past Silver City twice. It goes in each direction; it goes out toward Burwash and Destruction Bay, and then it goes back toward Whitehorse. So, it passes Silver City two times. That was the truck that was picking up the household waste in Silver City — that truck there.

Now, there are lots of different ways we could have tackled this. We could have said that, as long as that contractor is still taking that contract, we're going to keep Silver City open and we're going to work together with the residents to find a solution. So, in all fairness, I got the gears yesterday in Question Period even though I couldn't answer the questions. It was referenced on more than one occasion, and I understand the criticism; I do.

I will say that negotiations aren't always — you don't always get your way. If I did, I wouldn't be having this conversation right now, would I? But here we are.

But there was an opportunity. I was at those meetings. I was at one in Silver City in person and I was definitely at the workshop that they asked for online. I have been involved with Johnsons Crossing a whole heap of a lot and in regular contact with those residents and have been on the occasional Zoom meeting. The interesting thing that we heard yesterday is that it needs to be paid for, that the garbage isn't free, and that it needs to be paid for. That makes it sound like folks in Silver City, Johnsons Crossing, and Braeburn are uninterested in paying. It makes it sound like they want this service for free. It's fascinating — I say this because that is not what they said; it is not what they said. They didn't say that ever. They didn't ever say that; they never said that this should be a free service for those in those rural communities. They did say that they would like to pay — it could be attached to their property taxes. They said that they could pay quarterly or they could pay yearly. It is interesting that the businesses in Silver City said that they were willing to pay more to reflect that they generated more waste; they were willing to pay more.

At all of those meetings, it was really interesting, because people came forward with some suggestions. They said: Okay, what if it was a closed, lock system but you gave residents keys and then they would make sure that it was locked up when they left? They were told that people in Whitehorse don't get keys for the landfill, so it's not fair because we can't do it everywhere. I remember sitting in that room at the time and being like, oh, it's a bit different. We are not talking about the same situation between residents in Whitehorse and residents in Silver City or Johnsons Crossing. For folks who think that a 60-kilometre drive from Silver City to Haines Junction is an easy 60 kilometres, I disagree. For folks who say that from

Johnsons Crossing you can either head to Teslin or you can head to Whitehorse and it's an easy go, I also disagree.

The concept that folks in rural Yukon come into town once a week — I also disagree, because I have to tell you that the menu planning that happens in households outside of Whitehorse is pretty phenomenal because you want to save the money from not having to go into town.

It was really interesting to me because, in the “what we heard” document, there were so many suggestions that were offered. There were so many different alternatives. They talked about having the facility open for designated hours. There were a lot of solutions that were brought forward.

Johnsons Crossing — two residents had been south last year on the highway and they had seen a really interesting skookum set-up in Toad River. They said that we can look at the Toad River example. They went so far as to get the contact information from the person who ran the Toad River facility to find out more information. It was \$1,000 a month that it cost to manage the Toad River facility — to both store and have the garbage picked up.

But the minister wasn't interested in those solutions. Although in the confidence and supply agreement, it said “consult”, it turns out that, while I believe that you can go out, learn things, and change your mind, this is not the universal thought on consultation. It's like the consultation on the École Whitehorse Elementary School relocation. When you get told that here is a hot dog and you can have mustard or you can have ketchup, but what you really wanted was a hamburger, you have to wonder if it's really consultation. You can have these two things that you don't like but where nothing else is on the table. When a press release went out and it said that the École Whitehorse Elementary School replacement project has been supported by the Takhini Community Association — well, I was at the meeting and there was no conversation about other options. It was just: Here are three crappy options for your neighbourhood. Which one is the least crappy? Which is the least crappy for you? When it comes out in a press release, it makes it sound like the community in Takhini is supportive of that relocation, which they are not, by the way. I will just put that out. They are universally not in support.

It is interesting to hear about consultation and about getting out and listening to people, because I don't know if I fully agree. The Minister of Finance yesterday — and I am quoting again from the same page. It says: “In 2024, Wildland Fire Management responded to more than 140 wildfires, which burned over 165,000 hectares, including 28 wildfires that were high risk to communities or critical infrastructure. Teams were challenged by wildfires of note, evacuation alerts and orders, and critical infrastructure disruptions. The crews did excellent work on initial attack efforts and, without these efforts, the impacts to the communities would have been a lot greater.”

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, a fascinating thing that has happened recently? It is really exciting news and it comes to us all the way from Ontario. Ontario — this is so exciting — has extended presumptive cancer coverage to wildland firefighters. They did that this spring. They did. They thought it was so important that they extended it.

So, imagine being a Yukon wildland firefighter working next — because Ontario, just so you know, sent wildland fire crews to help in Yukon. So, imagine you have two firefighters side by side; one is from Yukon and one is from Ontario, and they have different coverage — different coverage. I got letters about it from wildland firefighters who were just like: How come this is a thing? Why is this a thing? Why isn't it the same? Why don't we have the same access?

It was interesting. We heard yesterday about investment in schools and we heard today about investment in schools, but we know that 27 schools have lead in their drinking water. It's interesting because, in that same breath yesterday when the minister said that there is clean drinking water available, right now, the requirement is one fountain per 100 students. I found out that Selkirk Elementary actually has one fountain for 400 students. I guess access to clean drinking water is available. Do we think it's adequate? Do we think that the remediation that was promised before school started should have happened? I think so.

Again, I talked about the school replacement plan, and it's the idea that being offered two hotdogs with different toppings is really consultation. You wanted a hamburger, but you were told that you had to pick a hotdog, so you picked the least of the two that you liked the most — if that makes any sense.

So, again, I think it's a missed opportunity and it's also not accurate. I think there is a whole potential. F.H. Collins — and let's give full credit to the Yukon Party for this one. The Yukon Party bungled the new F.H. Collins. I should call it the "new new" F.H. Collins because the original plan for the new F.H. Collins would have been adequate, and it would have been big enough and it would have been beautiful, but the Yukon Party bungled that one, and the new new F.H. Collins was too small the day it opened, and it's too small now.

I regret that the Liberals have to deal with it when it was the Yukon Party. I mean, we could talk about a lot of things that the Liberals have to deal with about the Yukon Party, including the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, but right now, I'm talking about F.H. Collins.

So, the Yukon Party bungled the new new F.H. Collins. They made it too small, they based it on an elementary school, and it was never going to be adequate. But now the Liberals have an opportunity, and we can look at it differently. You know what would make an excellent École Whitehorse Elementary School? F.H. Collins. Do you know what opportunity arises? Building a purpose-built high school that makes sense. You could look toward Valleyview; you could look toward the tank farm. There are other solutions, and it's absolutely critical that we look at an elementary school in downtown Whitehorse.

I'm going to suggest dual stream. We can go back to my roots. I went to Whitehorse Elementary School. I mean, it was probably in the 1980s. I went to Whitehorse Elementary School in the 1980s and it was dual stream because it was the third French immersion class.

It had kids from all over downtown. It was great. You know, we heard a lot, actually, again — you know, not to pick on him, but from the Minister of Community Services talking

about climate change. Agreed — you know, climate change is a concern, but like, there are no apparent new energy projects on our really near horizon and still no more home solar. Right? That project was put on pause, and we haven't seen that. What we see right now is that we see a whole, whole, whole intention of putting all of our eggs in the grid-connect basket, but there are so many reasons to be skeptical of that right now, including the timeline and the sheer cost of it.

You know, we just heard from the Minister of Health and Social Services, and sure, they may be spending more money on health care, but I wouldn't call it a public investment. We talk about agency nursing, the pursuit of public/private partnerships for infrastructure, and the fact that many Yukoners right now being forced to pursue private treatment out-of-territory out of desperation are worrying signs for those of us who believe in a public health care system.

So, \$34 million in new spending for health is welcome news, but how did we get to this place where it was so underbudgeted in the first place? So, how are we the only jurisdiction in Canada to have budgeted less money per capita for health year over year? And let me just be clear: This comes from the Canadian Institute for Health Information. It's not from me; it's not my numbers; it's from them.

You know, we heard from my colleague today when we talked about the wages of the nurse practitioners, and I know during the scrum that the minister said that we were wrong. We supplied the information that says differently. You know, health is something that we should all be concerned about. We have heard from the Yukon Medical Association, and we have heard from a respected surgeon. We have heard from everyone saying that, you know, we were in a crisis before, but now we are really in a crisis. You know, the Yukon Medical Association invited leaders — they said: Put your politics aside, and let's figure this out. So, I'm willing; I hope others in this room are willing. I have encouraged the Yukon Medical Association to call us all together.

I mean, Community Services is pretty easy to pick on, if I'm frank, right now. Whether we talk about the closure of the rural transfer stations or the presumptive cancer legislation under the workers' compensation, there is a lot to talk about there.

Not to miss the Department of Economic Development, but the Canadian Federation of Independent Business gave the Yukon a D grade because of interprovincial trade barriers for small businesses. This is included in failures for small businesses, like difficulties registering with WCB, licensing, employee regulatory training, and certification recognition. A major criticism from the CFIB is that the Yukon makes it hard for people from other jurisdictions to get certifications recognized, and they highlighted the high cost, wait times, and paperwork to get that all done.

It is interesting, because there are solutions. We can look toward the Atlantic provinces, which introduced the Atlantic physician registry that allows physicians to practise in multiple provinces within the region without having to get individual licenses from each provincial college. I hope that the Premier

speaks after me and tells me that there are answers to all of these things.

It is interesting, because listening to and reading the notes from the scrum, the truth is that the situation with the folks who worked at Victoria Gold and the looming deadline of October 9 for them to apply for the federal wage earner protection program — it's not their fault. I encourage the members opposite to work with the federal government to get an extension. I hope that it can be successful. I think that would be a good news story, that deal to get an extension to make sure that those workers are covered.

I have talked about the *Miners Lien Act* a lot. I do follow in the footsteps of giants, though, because Elizabeth Hanson was the one who taught me about the *Miners Lien Act* and how it fails Yukon businesses and it fails Yukon contractors. And interestingly enough, my colleague the Member for Lake Laberge was the one who brought that forward. In the notes at the time, it said it was to support big mines. It doesn't support Yukon businesses, though.

I appreciate the Minister of Health and Social Services' comments when there was mention of the dental program. I agree that we should be proud of that — or the supervised consumption site, agreed we should also be proud of that. These are two things from the confidence and supply agreement. I think that there were a lot of measures listed in the Minister of Finance's speech that really do go back to the confidence and supply agreement: paid sick leave, increased minimum wage, and so many things I am proud of. They were all brought to the Yukon by the Yukon NDP.

I look forward to the department debates. I will just highlight to the ministers that I hope we don't hear the same speech again. I hope there are some differences, and I look forward to further conversations.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly, esteemed colleagues and citizens, I rise today to speak to Bill No. 215, *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*. This supplementary budget reflects our government's commitment to fostering a robust economy and addressing the challenges we face as a territory. As we navigate through a period of transition, I am proud to present our government's strategic approach to balancing growth, sustainability, and the well-being of all Yukoners.

Not only is the Yukon's outlook strong when it comes to our economy, but we also have the right fundamentals to deal with any tender spots as we move through the end of this year. Our unemployment rate is 3.0 percent as of July 2024, and that is less than half the Canadian average of 6.4 percent. Average weekly earnings increased by 6.2 percent year over year in May 2024, outpacing the 1.9-percent inflation rate.

While we are also pursuing major infrastructure projects, like a \$50-million grid connection feasibility study, we support economic growth, attract investment in critical minerals, and transition to a low-carbon economy. These efforts, combined with a strong labour market performance, position the Yukon's economy for continued growth and diversification.

On June 24, our government was made aware of a significant failure at Victoria Gold's Eagle Gold mine site, an event that remains top of mind for many Yukoners to this day. Since the moment we became aware, our government has worked incredibly hard on the response to this event, with the safety of individuals and the environment being the most urgent priority at hand, while always keeping in mind the future of mining in the Yukon.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank every one of those individuals who, since this event, have been working tirelessly on this file, putting in long hours, overtime, and weekends. There was a real recognition that our collective response to this event would permanently shape the future of the Yukon's environment and economy. I want to thank everyone for rising to the challenge and putting in so much work to make sure that Yukon's future is brighter than its past.

While we were doing the work to respond to the Victoria Gold incident, managing the downstream environmental response, working with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and keeping the public aware through information bulletins, technical briefings, and regular updates, the opposition voiced their own positions about how they would have handled the response. The Leader of the Official Opposition has stated openly that he disagrees with what he portrays as our government's so-called — quote — “decision to take over” Victoria Gold. He would like to see us answer to Yukoners why we did that.

I would like to take this opportunity to do just that. First of all, our team has worked incredibly hard with Victoria Gold Corporation to support them through the failure at their site while maintaining the duty and integrity required by us as the regulator and recognizing that we were looking at an environmental situation that simply could not be allowed to get worse.

As Yukoners know, Victoria Gold was repeatedly unable to meet orders issued by the mining inspector. We met with Victoria Gold to discuss the art of the possible and what was essential. We also met with the members of industry to provide information and clarity on where we were at on this file.

At a certain point, however, it became clear that Victoria Gold could not or would not continue to do what was necessary to protect people and the environment. The Leader of the Official Opposition wants Yukoners to believe that Victoria Gold would have been able to handle everything if they were just left to their own devices. The Leader of the Official Opposition seems to forget that the day the Government of Yukon filed for receivership over Victoria Gold, the company tried to file for CCAA to avoid bankruptcy.

While the Leader of the Official Opposition might enjoy leading Yukoners to believe that everything with Victoria Gold would have been fine if left to run its course, Victoria Gold itself said multiple times that this was not the case. The facts show that, in a short span, \$22 million left Victoria Gold's bank accounts. The PricewaterhouseCoopers report issued on October 1 stated — and I quote: “... the Company would have run out of cash sooner than the end of November 2024.”

This company could not sustain itself and it was not going to. As the Leader of the NDP talked about today — and other members of the opposition as well focused on some of the liabilities that were incurred by Victoria Gold through their employees, and I think it's important to note that there was not money to pay any of those costs as well if they continued on in any form.

So, when the Leader of the Official Opposition states publicly that he disagrees with our decision to — quote — “take over” Victoria Gold and says to Yukoners that we now own the mine despite the fact that we don't — it's in receivership with PricewaterhouseCoopers — I'm left wondering whether the Leader of the Official Opposition is either naïve to the workings of the mining industry or purposely ignoring the facts because they don't fit his narrative. I will leave it to Yukoners to decide.

Regardless, to see that, again, the Yukon Party today has the same approach and positioning that left us holding the bag for failed mining projects — like Wolverine mine, which I know very well — taking on the role and checking today another mine — again, that was in a difficult position — and the same posture that was presented this summer not to do anything, to leave them — and, Mr. Speaker, fees right now are at \$47 million. There was \$10.5 million in security, so that's \$37 million to date that has been spent by Yukon taxpayers.

We had a report that we did after that so that it wouldn't happen again, and we used that advice when Minto failed and their board ran away. We ensured that the security that was in place has taken care of the costs for the remediation today, and we hope that there is an opportunity for Selkirk First Nation and other partners to take that site over without putting a burden on taxpayers. That was what was on our mind as we moved through to deal with Victoria Gold.

It is incredibly important to identify this approach of not doing anything, and I hope that we do get a sense over the fall of what the Leader of the Official Opposition would do — we haven't heard.

I think that it was interesting to see public refusal to all of the positions, I think, by the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. Of course, that might be some of the challenges that still resonate from the Supreme Court challenge around the Peel between the Leader of the Official Opposition — and, of course, in a different role at that point, but the battle that ensued with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun — I'm not sure. But, again, I think that it is incredibly important to understand that a mining industry, any mining industry that goes forward in this country, in this territory, will have to be grounded and anchored in reconciliation. The financial institutions know it and major mining companies know it. After this particular event, sitting with representatives from a syndicate of finance teams on the project said that the most important aspects will be that the environmental challenges are mitigated and that there is good work done with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. This will be paramount for the rest of the investment world to look back at this area. So, we will continue to work with and engage with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun.

We will continue to have conversations about what was behind much of the work, the things they have asked us to work

in the requests. We will be putting forward ways that we can help to address their concerns around capacity. We have to look at the future of heap leach. Everybody knows that all Yukoners want to see that, and the mining sector wants to see it. Again, we will work with them on the calls to do land planning. We want to advance land planning, and I will put that on the floor today. I know that the ministers involved want to get that moving, because we believe that it is paramount that these relationships between the Government of Yukon and the First Nation governments need to be grounded in cooperation, mutual respect, and a true appreciation and recognition of Indigenous rights.

Again, while we may not always agree — and we don't — at the end of the day, we are all working for the same outcomes: opportunities for people, safe and healthy communities, and a brighter future for youth.

Mining is a key economic driver in the Yukon. The mining sector, again, helps to sustain local retail and services, including grocery stores, hotel accommodations, and air services. Mining provides employment to a significant percentage of Yukoners outside of Whitehorse. As part of their efforts to work with communities, mining companies also contribute to non-governmental and non-profit organizations and fund educational and community events. We recognize the impacts of the industry on Yukon's people, economy, and environment.

I think that it is important to note when you look at the costs in front of us, when we talk about the next 10 years of energy assets that are required before talking about longer term projects — when you talk about the updating of our health nursing centres or long-term care in communities that have to be built or additional beds for our hospitals or facilities, the costs are extraordinary. It will be paramount that there is a continued thriving private sector, and mining must play a significant part in that in order for the Yukon Territory to be in a position to meet the needs of its citizens. I think that I will state that, and government will have to work to support the industry in every way that they can.

The Leader of the Third Party had lots of comments today — I think that it is important to note — after the Victoria Gold situation — supported the idea to shut down all operations in that area. I think that there were 14 companies, many of them with financing. Many of those companies went through all of the proper permitting, went through the proper consultation with the Yukon government and the government of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. They were out in the field doing strong work. Many of them were represented by Yukon families who have committed their professional lives to that sector — but inevitably supported the concept of shutting them all down, which inevitably would put all of those companies into bankruptcy for nothing they had done but only because of what had happened hundreds of kilometres away from them.

I heard the call from Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, but again, it's a time when you have to say that these organizations have done nothing wrong, and they went through permitting, and they're all sitting there, and they've gone through a YESAA process, in some cases, Water Board. There have been representatives from the Yukon government, the federal government, and First

Nations on two of those boards making the decisions, and in the end — so, I think that says a lot. That approach would have significant legal and economic consequences. The conversations that we had — almost every board of directors would be forced to sue the Government of Yukon for stepping in for absolutely no reason. It would have put workers on the street; it would have resulted in dozens if not hundreds of lawsuits from companies that played a role.

As we talk about workers today — and to the Leader of the Third Party — there were 400 people. That would have put 400 people out of work, that one decision that you called on us for, mostly Yukoners who all would have been out of work. If you look between 2019 and 2023, we have not — none of us in this — some of us probably could have helped change it; most of us in this Legislative Assembly did not build what is here to deal with. We have had years; the previous government has had years. So, yes, we can go back and forth on it, but the reality is there is a structure and a system is in place, and we have committed as a government to making sure there's new mining legislation. No other government has made that commitment. We have sat down with 23 nations to change that structure, which was a commitment that was made by previous governments.

In that area right now, we're talking about over \$60 million annually that is part of our economy that the Third Party wanted to just shut down. Beyond these immediate and consequential impacts, a decision like that would require us to intervene in legal processes by which companies obtain permission to operate in the Yukon and that are enshrined in the federal territorial legislation and rooted in the UFA. The entire system that was birthed from the UFA, in one fell swoop, we were asked to just take away. I don't think — again, I need to share my thoughts with the Leader of the NDP of what that decision undermining established processes and laws would do for the clarity and certainty we have fought so hard for in the Yukon to provide.

So, I think it has been both parties who would have Yukoners believe that, again, it was a choice between the environment and the economy. They will tell their constituents that the only options are letting private corporations run wild or having no industry whatsoever. Again, our government takes a more realistic and more practical approach.

We do not believe that Yukoners have to choose between having a vibrant economy, having productive working relationships with First Nation governments, and protecting the environment for generations to come. I'm pleased that the work of the independent review board has begun. We look forward to the recommendations, which will help us to gain a fuller understanding of what occurred at the Eagle Gold mine site so that we can learn from this event and make any necessary changes moving forward.

Another issue that has been front of mind for many Yukoners, especially those living and conducting business in Whitehorse, is public safety. Too many people feel unsafe. There have been too many instances of buildings, homes, and vehicles being broken into, too much vandalism, and too much disrespect of the community. The government believes in the

principles of harm reduction, but harm reduction cannot only focus on keeping people who use substances safe; it must include the health and safety of the broader community. It is a definition that must consider the health of our entire community.

Over the past year, our government has taken decisive action to improve safety and support for all residents and businesses in Whitehorse. Some of the things that we have done is that we have launched our comprehensive downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan, expanded supervised consumption site hours, funded a new mobile outreach van, extended support to Safe at Home for housing options, operationalized the managed alcohol program, and on September 25, a number of new commitments that we will see in our budget, for which we hope to have support, especially, I know, from the Member for Lake Laberge. I hope he will be happy to see that we have additional RCMP officers for downtown Whitehorse.

We had 7.5 RCMP officers in the spring budget. I know that the opposition did not support that, but I think at this point, this is one place that we can come together. This is, again, as well for new safer communities, more SCAN investigators, funding to support the development of a downtown community safety and well-being plan, and again, at 408 Alexander Street for supportive housing, again, reopening part of the lower level of the Yukon legislative building, which will be done this fall, and we are launching a new security grant program for businesses and organizations to improve their safety measures.

We have heard from the people who live and work downtown about the importance of maintaining vibrancy in our downtown core, and I was very happy to sign an agreement to advance the development of Whitehorse's 5th and Rogers site to develop this parcel for residential and commercial use. We also heard loud and clear from residents about the critical role that a school has on the health and vibrancy of a community, and we have committed to ensuring that downtown Whitehorse has a school. We know we need — if we look at — I appreciate the comments today of solutions, but I also think it is important, when you look at the lands owned by Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and you look at the other potential densification, that you have a true understanding of the magnitude of potential growth downtown, likely that you are going to need a school in the location that was identified in the last number of days and likely that you are going to need another school downtown to be able to meet the needs of the demographic shift and population increase based on densification that is there. I think that 5th and Rogers is just going to be one example, as well as other areas that Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council are looking into developing.

We look forward to engaging with partner stakeholders and community in the coming months to understand the future needs of downtown.

I think that in closing, Mr. Speaker, I will just say that this budget is very disciplined — to the folks who are there — our spend has been a focus on education, health, public safety, and housing. We have stayed to those pillars as our most significant areas of investment. We are going to continue to do that. I look

forward to debating with the opposition around these spends. I would like to know from the opposition critic what they wouldn't want us to spend on in this supplementary budget. We will continue to make sure that we make those investments. That is really the story of our fall budget. Again, I look forward to vigorous debate on this as we move through to the vote on November 21.

Ms. Blake: I feel like it is my responsibility and part of my accountability to rise in the House not to speak to the budget by any means, but first, I apologize to the House for my recent journey over the summer, and I feel like it is my responsibility to assure Yukoners that I am back and I am stronger and healthier and more capable than I was before the summer began.

I would just like to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone in this House and those across the way for your support, your understanding, and your patience and encouragement with my recent journey. With what I have been through in the past few months, I have been able to really see the depths of addiction, and I have been reminded about what it means to live with the disease of addiction. I think that is something that I had to go through for my own learning, because before I went through my recent relapse, I didn't understand that addiction was a disease. I thought it was a choice or a habit or something that we just fall through, and it is not.

With my experiences of coming close to dying, I have been able to see and experience what it's like to go through the medical system from how the hospital was receptive to helping me to the specialist who stepped in to take care of me. I was able to see first-hand the immediate options I had in front of me to seek the help I needed at the time, because I had — it was likely a matter of minutes for me to decide whether I wanted to go down that path I was on or if I wanted to make that change when I had the choice to make the change.

I give my deepest gratitude to the Yukon government for funding my treatment, because without that, I probably wouldn't be standing here today. I have been able to sit in some of the hardest spaces within my community with people who live with addiction not because of a disease of addiction but because of trauma and colonization and the hard history that our people have gone through in this territory that continue to impact our people today, including myself.

My dad went to residential school; my mom went through the Indian day school. I journeyed through the child welfare system. I have family members who are stuck within the justice system. With the journey I have been through, it has really opened up my eyes and my way of thinking, and it has really put me in a place where I have the ability to sit and think and be more mindful of what I bring forward in this House so that I could be better able to shed light on the hard challenges that many Yukoners face in this territory, some of which we don't even understand.

I give my deepest apology to my community that I live with the disease of addiction. Again, I assure people out there that I will get through it because I have made it this far. Again, I give my apologies to all the leaders across the Yukon for any

shame that I may have brought to you as a First Nation woman in this role, especially to our young people out there who look up to me as the leader in this territory. I know I have made a mistake and I continue to hold myself accountable openly and honestly, daily, in all that I do.

Mahsi' cho.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I just want to start by recognizing the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. Over the years, I have seen a lot of strength and a lot of weakness in this House. The member just showed a lot of strength. The member doesn't owe anybody in this Assembly any apologies, but we are all better, blessed, and richer for the member's willingness to share with us a personal journey. I appreciate that and I thank the member.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by thanking everyone at the Department of Finance for their very hard work on the *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*, to my Deputy Minister Jessica Schultz and her remarkable team for their professionalism and their commitment to work for the territory and for all the work that they do with all the departments to make the budgeting process a positive place — if not a very difficult place — to deal with all of the conversations and all the pressures.

Speaking about people who do remarkable work in keeping the workplace a positive place, I would also like to take this opportunity to celebrate an incredibly valuable member of our team in Finance, the executive assistant to the deputy minister, Miriam Smith. Miriam is not leaving Finance quite yet, but she is in the process of retirement. It's going to take a while because those are very big shoes to fill. She is now the executive assistant to Jessica. It's hitting us very hard that Miriam is leaving because of how imperative she has been. She is a beacon of hope; she is an optimist; she is a professional with everything that she does. Miriam has a storied history in the Yukon not only here in Whitehorse but in Faro, Dawson City, and her work with the Sourdough Rendezvous people and, most importantly, her time spent in Dawson City. I know it's fair to say that Dawson had the biggest influence on Miriam and who she is today as a superstar, but anyway, I did have the pleasure of teaching Miriam's kids as well when they were up at Robert Service School, so I got to know her first as a mom, and it was great to come here in the office and see her in Finance. It brought me a lot of joy.

The rapport and the working relationship between ministers and the Cabinet office and with deputy ministers — that's important hard work, and Miriam has brought a wealth of institutional knowledge to that dynamic, supporting the new ministerial advisors, sharing the information — and also with new deputy ministers — and the work that she does to support me as the Finance minister and others — “above and beyond” are the words that come to mind. We're very fortunate to have her, and I know that my team on the Cabinet side has always

been very appreciative of Miriam and the wisdom and humour that she has brought to us every day for over 10 years in the deputy minister's office. That was all welcomed, and she will definitely be missed. Thank you very much, Miriam.

Moving on, speaking about incredible folks in the Department of Finance — one of the things that I have really found interesting over the years as the Minister of Finance for the last seven and a half years is getting to see other jurisdictions' financial departments and how they operate, learning and growing together with other jurisdictions, and having that ability to have some healthy competition but also to have some perspective as to the trials and tribulations post-pandemic of other jurisdictions compared with us.

There has been a lot of opportunity for observation when it comes to working at the Finance ministers' table. I am currently the longest serving Finance minister in Canada, so I have seen a lot of ministers come and go. I would like to take the opportunity to give a special mention to Saskatchewan's Finance minister, Donna Harpauer, who has been the Finance minister since August 2017, so the second longest current Finance minister. With Saskatchewan now in an election period, Donna now has decided not to go for re-election. I am wishing her the best in her retirement. Having a great opportunity to have some shared conversations with her and the other ministers at the Finance ministers' team and, again, her since 2017, I have a lot of respect for how tough she is at the table and what an amazing minister and colleague she has been, so congratulations to Donna.

I have been sitting at a lot of those tables both during my time as Premier and also now in my role as Finance minister and other ministers to have very challenging conversations and to see what other jurisdictions are facing, like I mentioned. Suffice it to say that we in the Yukon are doing very well. As we are all grappling as a country post-pandemic with inflation and health concerns right across Canada, that perspective is very interesting and it's very good to have. And it helps us to take a look at policies in other jurisdictions and try to mirror those but also apply our knowledge to those tables as well.

Also, this summer, other than Finance ministers' meetings, another place where the Yukon really does represent well and has a long reach in policy and direction is at the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region, or PNWER, as it is known. PNWER is a public/private non-profit that brings together five Pacific Northwest states but also British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories — all to discuss shared priorities and challenges related to this part of the continent. It is a really unique table; it is a really unique organization, because to have private and public partnerships in there really dealing with very specific and then global issues — it is an amazing organization.

I first got acquainted with the work of PNWER as Premier, but then when I stepped away from that role, I had the privilege of representing the Yukon and our Premier on the international stage in that way, and in the summer, after being elected by the other jurisdictions last year as Canada's vice-president, this year, I was recently chosen in BC to be the new president of PNWER Canada. So, not dissimilar to the previous summer, I

had the pleasure of bringing Yukon's voice to the forefront on Arctic sovereignty and security at annual conferences alongside the Consul General of Vancouver James DeHart, Alaska State Representative Kevin McCabe, Northwest Territories Minister Caitlin Cleveland, and Professor Whitney Lackenbauer, who is no stranger to the Yukon.

Through PNWER, I have been echoing and amplifying our work that the Premier is doing as well on the Arctic security front and other challenges on the north — challenges like affordability, challenges like climate change, like electricity and energy, and I look forward to a successful, positive year with PNWER moving forward.

All suffice to say, as I look at the fiscal situation that we are in and as I look at the economic update that was presented, I have a different point of view than the critic from the Yukon Party when it comes to our financial situation, and I would like to spend my time speaking to that update and some of the comments from the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, the interim fiscal update is a key deliverable of our government, and it is used to update Yukoners regularly, unlike in the past, on the latest developments impacting the territory's economy as well as the government's fiscal picture. The update presents updated expectations to the Yukon's finances and its economy since the 2024-25 fiscal outcome was released in March — so, twice a year.

Some of the highlights of this year include that continued strong demand for workers is contributing to earnings gains and to an unemployment rate that is among the lowest in Canada. So, we have great earnings gains and we have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. We have ongoing moderation of inflation, something that is bringing some relief. We spoke here previously about kind of a fox-and-rabbit situation when it came to inflation-raising in other places and us coming along and then, you know, afterward, following that trend — a little bit of a staggered timeline. We are seeing the tourism sector very strong. It has rebounded from the height of the pandemic as evidenced by year-to-date visitation figures that are near record levels and continued growth in consumer spending and retail sales. We also remain optimistic in the Yukon's long-term and medium-term forecasts. We are also facing new challenges when it comes to action as a government — challenges like responding to wildland fire management and the needs there; responding to a significant fire season that we have seen this year and other years to make sure that we ensure the health and safety of Yukoners; addressing pressures in health care, insured health, and making sure that we support the well-being of Yukoners again; funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation requirements, including additional O&M funding for converting 10 beds at the Thomson Centre for acute care use; the necessity of advancing to the receiver for environmental protection the work at the Eagle Gold mine and, in this instance, funding advanced to help to make sure that we take care of the issues — the permanent issues — that are happening now.

When we look at the impact of Eagle Gold on the economy — the June suspension of operations there — it definitely resulted in a material change in the outlook for mining production. It's going to affect our royalties. The Yukon's real

GDP will have an expected contraction of 2.3 percent in 2024. The response to the heap leach facility — to the failure — is ongoing, and it's going to take some time to really know the extent of the impact to the local economy.

Beyond the impact of the territory's real GDP, the mining suspension is something that we're all very concerned about, including the loss of jobs, the efforts that we see, and the effects on goods and services that are provided to the industry. While the seriousness of these events cannot be overstated, they are unfolding at a time when the Yukon's economy continues to be strong and can absorb much of that impact.

In addition to low unemployment, a strong labour force, and ongoing wage growth, the Yukon's \$50-million contingency fund — which was included in the 2024-25 budget — is also reducing the impact of pressures in other areas. We have done a lot of planning in Finance, and a lot of that planning before the pandemic helped us during the pandemic. A lot of the fiscal planning that we've been doing over the seven and a half years of this administration has helped us to weather storms, and we are going to continue to do that: \$22 million for wildland fire management costs in response to a significant fire season; \$34 million for insured health, reflecting the wellness of Yukoners; \$10 million for various Yukon Hospital Corporation funding; and \$50 million for advances to the receiver for environmental protection at Eagle Gold mine. These are extremely important financial pressures and responses to those pressures.

What we hear from the Yukon Party is: You're spending too much. Don't spend any more, but spend more over here. We're happy about the money you're spending in these areas. Somehow, we are supposed to listen to both sides of those arguments and come up with something that makes sense as far as input from our colleagues in the Official Opposition. It's hard to follow the logic.

We know that there are gains in employment and the labour force, and we can get into those in the short term and in the long term as we continue the debate later on. I will say that Yukon's unemployment rate has remained low throughout 2024, and August rates of 4.2 percent represented the seventh consecutive month that Yukon had the lowest rate in the country, yet the opposition members are making people believe that we are in a recession.

The vacancy rate has been among the highest in Canada for some time, exceeding the national rate in every month in 2024 and in all but four months since the start of 2021. Through the pandemic, through very troubling times, we have elevated demand for workers. That is going to continue to reflect in earnings gained — up 6.1 percent in the first half of 2024 — the strongest growth in the country, yet the opposition, the Yukon Party, today in the Legislative Assembly is telling everybody that we're in a recession.

The impacts of Victoria Gold, according to economists, according to the people developing the interim fiscal and economic update through the partnership in our department, have said that it's too early to see what the results are of the complete impact of Victoria Gold, but we have the Yukon Party saying we're in a recession.

The recession that we were in was back in 2015, 2014, 2013. Those were some of the worst economic situations that we have had. Those were recessions because the Yukon Party again relies only on one industry, and commodity prices can really have a boom-and-bust effect on that industry — a great industry, by the way, and one that the Yukon Liberal Party supports.

We're talking about retail sales for a while here. In 2023, growth in the value of retail sales has been largely driven by higher sales volumes — growth of 4.9 percent in the first seven months of the year, well ahead of inflation of 2.1 percent over the same period, and the Yukon Party says we're in a recession — leading the country in growth. After leading the country in growth in 2023, local retail sales continued to perform well in that Canadian context, with growth over the first seven months making the Yukon the fourth highest jurisdiction in the country. The Yukon Party says we're in a recession.

The latest forecast shows that retail sales gain in every year, with growth projected to average 5.9 percent out until 2028. We're seeing a temperance in the inflation situation, a moderation of inflation. It's good to see; it has been a long time coming; it's good to see.

I could get into other markets, but I'll wait to answer questions specific from members opposite. We can get into spending that remains elevated, but it looks like 2024 will be another great investment in the building construction industry. The tourism sector, as my colleague from Energy, Mines and Resources spoke about earlier — key indicators in tourism sector performance in 2024 are tracking toward their best year since before the pandemic — since the height of the pandemic. Border crossings are up 10 percent from the prior year.

Crossings are the third highest ever reported for the first seven months of the year and near the number of crossings reported pre-pandemic. Air arrivals, as we mentioned, are strong and are up — I think 128,625 arrivals in the first seven months from the previous high of 120,347 for the same period in 2019. So, more people are flying into Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport in 2024 in the first seven months than they did before the pandemic in our booming economy at that time. Overall value of receipts for food services and drinking places is up 13 percent in the first seven months of 2024 versus the same period in 2023.

Overall, 2024 is shaping up to be a good year for the tourism sector, and we don't say these things blissfully unaware of the hardships that all Canadians and Yukoners are facing. Our business partners, folks in mental health, the folks in the mining community — we recognize all of those things — but I have to say that our financial situation is very good. We have the wherewithal to move forward in a positive direction for Yukoners. I am proud of the work that this team has done to make sure that we prioritize and also make spending in our departments extremely efficient. We are working in a whole-of-government approach. It has been a great seven and a half years and I believe that the work that we have done so far bodes very well, especially when we have the opportunity to take a look from the lens of other jurisdictions in Canada. The Yukon

is doing well and we intend to make it even better in the months and years ahead.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 215 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

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 215, entitled *Second 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.

Bill No. 215: *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, I'm very pleased to rise here in Committee of the Whole debate on Bill No. 215, also known as the *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25* or also known as *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*, for this fiscal year.

Before I do get started, I want to welcome to the Legislative Assembly Deputy Minister Jessica Schultz, and a shout-out to her team for all the preparation they put toward today and every single variance report in every single month.

As I often do with appropriation bills, I'll spend my second reading remarks outlining this government's vision and the intention in the future, as they are laid out in the supplementary budget, and then during Committee of the Whole, Madam Chair, I intend to dive into more of the granular details of this budget and the spending that is included in it. My intent is to provide members with additional context, which I'm sure will lead to more discussion in the coming months.

I would like to begin with an overview of the fiscal framework. As members can see from this bill and as they heard me describe during second reading, the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* will result in an increase of \$150.1 million in gross O&M spending, offset by \$20.7 million in recoveries. The net increase in O&M expenditures, after accounting for recoveries, is \$129.4 million.

There is also an \$8.8 million decrease in revenues. Capital spending will decrease by a modest \$299,000 to account for revised cash flows. Capital recoveries will decrease by \$4.2 million to reflect these updates. With these adjustments in spending, we will see a revised surplus of \$75.4 million, down from the March forecast of \$119 million. Year-end net debt is now at \$530.4 million, up from the initial projection of \$488.8 million last spring. There is also an increase of 46.6 FTEs, mainly to hire long-term care and school staff. I will now spend a bit of time diving into each of these items.

Let's start with O&M. Madam Chair, O&M obviously is the biggest change outlined in these supplementaries, which is seeing the \$150.1 million in new spending. While this number appears large, it is driven primarily by a few factors. Three departments make up the majority of this new spending: \$52.4 million in O&M spending is driven by increases in the Department of Health and Social Services, primarily related to increases in Insured Health Services, Continuing Care, and additional funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Across Canada, health care systems are experiencing higher than anticipated pressures as demographics across the country are changing. Of the \$52.4 million, \$34 million in additional funding ensures that the department can meet the needs for Insured Health Services to address pressures primarily due to increased patient volumes.

As part of the increases for Health and Social Services, \$10 million will be used to ensure that the Yukon Hospital

Corporation has the financial resources that it needs to deliver services. The remaining amount is split between additional funding for Continuing Care and Community and Primary Care to ensure that they have the resources they need to continue to serve Yukoners.

As mentioned during the second reading speech, it also includes funding to support the downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan to continue to work with community partners, Yukon First Nations, and local businesses to create a vibrant, inclusive, and safe downtown Whitehorse.

Another significant operation and maintenance cost is for mining assessment and remediation. \$50 million is being directed toward responding to the failure of the heap leach facility at the Eagle Gold mine. Since June 2024, the government has been closely monitoring the situation and is acting to address the impacts to land, water, people, and wildlife. This funding is being advanced to the court-appointed receiver for the immediate needs to stabilize and monitor the site. Funding advanced to the receiver has a net zero impact on the surplus and net debt, as the Yukon government has a priority to recover these costs.

Additionally, \$1.9 million in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources will be directed toward the Assessment and Abandoned Mines program area for expenditure adjustments based on current forecasts. This is 100-percent recoverable funding and is for costs related to the assessment and remediation of the Minto mine and adjustments for other mine sites.

The final significant portion of O&M funding is \$23.1 million for emergency management in the Department of Community Services. This funding, residing under the Protective Services branch, reflects costs for significant efforts to protect Yukoners from fire activity, support for wildfire response efforts in other jurisdictions, and response efforts to flood events in Old Crow in May. It also includes support for the First Nation FireSmart program, preventive costs to improve fire resiliency in Yukon communities, as well as for flood hazard mapping and supporting activities for flood-prone communities across the territory.

When combined with all emergency management efforts, which include flood-mapping work in the Department of Environment, we are including \$24.5 million in emergency supports.

Madam Chair, while these are the most significant items contributing to O&M increases, there are several other notable items included in the supplementary estimates which I will briefly cover. \$6.9 million will be used to support Yukon learners. This includes significant funding through the Government of Canada's early learning and childcare infrastructure fund to help increase the number of early learning spaces across Yukon. Funding will also be used for teachers at Yukon schools and support staff for the new Whistle Bend Elementary School, which welcomed students in August 2024. Other changes include an increase in legislated post-secondary student grants, such as the Yukon grant, to reflect higher student costs and more Yukon students taking advantage of this financial assistance.

\$5.7 million is included for corporate interest expenses in the Department of Finance. As I have explained in the past, while expenses are borne by all Government of Yukon departments, the line of credit for short-term borrowing and associated expenses resides within the Department of Finance. \$4.7 million will be used for corporate funding requirements. This includes funding for employee future benefits obligations based upon updated actuarial valuations — Workers' Safety and Compensation Board premiums for government employees.

\$2.4 million will be used for the Government of Yukon-First Nation relations commitments. This includes First Nation capacity funding for consultation and engagement, bilateral negotiations, and implementation of final and self-government agreements as well as funding to further major Yukon projects in partnership with First Nation governments. This will also include funding to the Council of Yukon First Nations for continuing support of the Yukon residential schools missing children project.

As in previous years, the government's fiscal planning considered the impacts of unforeseen challenges by including a \$50-million contingency in the budget 2024-25. The contingency fund reduces the impact of these rising costs by helping to cover cost pressures for the emergency response to floods and fires as well as emerging costs in health care. In total, \$22 million from the contingency fund has been directed toward the former, while \$28 million has been allocated toward the latter. This fund is being exhausted as part of the first supplementary estimates.

Finally, in O&M, there are some notable increases in recoveries: \$20.7 million, or 13.8 percent of the new O&M spending, is recoverable and helps to offset some of those additional costs. Most notable is \$6.4 million and \$6.3 million in new recoveries in the departments of Health and Social Services and Community Services respectively. The \$4.3 million in new recoveries also exists in the Department of Education, while the Department of Environment will see \$2.5 million in new recoverable funding.

I will now outline the changes in capital included in the supplementary estimates. This segment will be brief, as these estimates only include a few adjustments in this area. In total, the government will see an overall \$299,000 reduction in capital spending on a gross basis in the first supplementary estimates, reducing capital spending for the year to \$483.7 million.

There is also a \$4.2 million decrease in recoveries, which results in a net increase in spending of \$3.9 million. This is primarily the result of adjustments made to align with revised project cash flows and timelines. Specifically, changes in capital spending include: a decrease of \$3.2 million for the construction of the new school in Burwash Landing as a result of changes to cash-flow timing; a decrease of \$600,000 for the creation of new campsites to align costs with revised project timelines; a \$1.9 million increase for the completion of the mental wellness unit at Whitehorse General Hospital; and \$1.9 million for long-time and acute care bed optimization at Whistle Bend Place and at Whitehorse General Hospital.

Moving on from capital, the first supplementary estimates include an increase of 46.6 full-time equivalents — FTEs. These additional budgeted positions are primarily to hire new long-term care staff in support of additional care beds at Whistle Bend Place, making up to 21.8 from this total, and seven positions for the Aging with Dignity initiative. We have also included 10.8 new FTEs for schools, including teachers, clerical, and custodial staff, to respond to additional enrolment numbers. Other new positions include 2.0 FTEs for the Emergency Measures Organization, a safer communities and neighbourhoods investigator, and an increase of 4.0 FTEs related to a shift in the Capital Planning Office from Highways and Public Works' capital budget to Finance in the O&M budget.

Before I conclude my remarks, I will provide an overview of the changes in revenue as part of the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*. Revenues are projected to decrease by \$8.8 million primarily due to a revenue forecast update from Canada which revises the projection for corporate income tax downward by \$6.7 million as well as a reduction in royalty payments from Victoria Gold of \$2.5 million. The former is the result of following federal revisions in corporate income tax by proportionately adjusting the territory's projections down to accommodate revised projections from the federal budget 2024. This change reflects the amount collected nationally from corporate income tax as well as the proportional amount collected here in the Yukon. This reduction of \$6.7 million will see revenues adjusted from \$41.13 million to \$34.46 million. The latter stems from a decrease in revenue in mining royalties that are not expected to be realized this fiscal year due to the suspension of production at the Eagle Gold mine. These decreases are partly offset by a \$350,000 increase in revenues for drivers' licences due to recently increased fees.

Madam Chair, this concludes my Committee of the Whole remarks for the 2024-25 *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*. As I mentioned during my second reading remarks, these estimates present our commitment to responding to the needs of Yukoners while maintaining fiscal responsibility. These adjustments ensure that critical programs and services continue to receive necessary support, allowing us to adapt to changing circumstances and new priorities.

I encourage all members of this House to engage in a thoughtful and constructive debate on these estimates. Your insights and questions are invaluable in ensuring that we have allocated resources to the best interests of all Yukoners. I thank everybody for their time and attention today. I do look forward to answering any questions that you have, but seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled October 3, 2024:

35-1-162

Yukon Human Rights Commission complaints — Investigative Report — Yukon Ombudsman (Speaker Harper)

The following legislative returns were tabled October 3, 2024:

35-1-144

Response to Written Question No. 50 re: Yukon grant (McLean)

35-1-145

Response to Written Question No. 51 re: registered childcare spaces (McLean)

35-1-146

Response to Written Question No. 52 re: registered and licensed early childcare educators (McLean)