



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 202

1<sup>st</sup> Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Tuesday, October 15, 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
<b>Hon. Ranj Pillai</b>	Porter Creek South	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
<b>Hon. Jeanie McLean</b>	Mountainview	Deputy Premier Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate
<b>Hon. Nils Clarke</b>	Riverdale North	Minister of Environment; Highways and Public Works
<b>Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee</b>	Riverdale South	Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
<b>Hon. Richard Mostyn</b>	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board
<b>Hon. John Streicker</b>	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
<b>Hon. Sandy Silver</b>	Klondike	Minister of Finance; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Tuesday, October 15, 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:** Prior to proceeding with the Daily Routine, the Chair wishes to inform the House of a change made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 1030, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane, has been removed from the Order Paper, as the motion is out of date.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Speaker:** Introduction of visitors.  
*Visitors introduced*

**Speaker:** Are there any tributes?

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of Circular Economy Month**

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize that October is Circular Economy Month. Circular Economy Month is an annual public awareness campaign that aims to educate and empower Canadians across the country to support an economy that promotes and protects the health of our planet and communities.

Mr. Speaker, building a circular economy is about moving away from continuous production, consumption, and disposal of products and finding ways that we can reuse, refurbish, and reduce the amount of the materials and products that we use in our everyday life.

Here in the economy, many small businesses are proving that our territory's economy can succeed through environmental action. Local businesses such as The Yukon Refillery, which has recently moved into a bigger location in the Horwood's Mall, are helping Yukoners get the products that they need while reducing waste through refill-and-reuse practices.

As part of Circular Economy Month, next week is dedicated as Waste Reduction Week, which calls on all of us to learn more about how we can increase the amount of waste that we divert. We know that Yukoners are working to increase the amount of waste that they divert. In fact, in 2023, Yukoners diverted just over 27 percent of their trash from the landfill through recycling and composting.

I also want to acknowledge the many organizations that are helping us to divert waste in the territory, including Raven ReCentre, P&M Recycling, Riverside Grocery, the multiple free stores at community transfer stations, and Lumel Studios' new

glass project. The Government of Yukon also applauds the City of Whitehorse on recently launching a fee-for-service recycling depot at the Whitehorse landfill to ensure that Yukoners can continue to recycle following the closure of Raven ReCentre's free public drop-off for paper and packaging this past September.

It is also encouraging to see the city take steps to implement a residential curbside recycling program, which will help better transition the territory to the extended producer responsibility framework. At the start of this year, the extended producer responsibility regulation, or EPR, came into force. EPR will provide a long-lasting solution to the issues facing Yukoners' recycling system and shift the cost of recycling from Yukon taxpayers and municipalities to product manufacturers and producers.

Over the next year and a half, the Government of Yukon will take steps to implement EPR in the territory and to work to ensure that Yukoners still have an option to recycle and reduce their waste. We look forward to continuing to work with partners to fully establish the EPR in the Yukon by the end of 2025.

I want to end by thanking all Yukoners and local organizations that are working to divert waste in the territory, and I encourage you all to continue to find waste solutions that will benefit our communities for generations to come.

*Applause*

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize October as Circular Economy Month, promoting sustainability and waste reduction.

The goal of Circular Economy Month is educating Canadians about creating products that are longer lasting and made with fewer materials. Reusing or refurbishing items at the end of their useful life are goals in circularity, helping to produce less waste.

Trying to create, produce, and purchase locally made items helps to reduce dependence on imported goods and resources, be mindful when making purchases, and select quality items that have a longer life.

Waste Reduction Week takes place this year from October 21 to 27. By following the schedule of daily themes within this week, Canadians can go through their homes to find different ways to repurpose, recycle, and repair items in their household and consider rehoming the items that are no longer useful to them — Repair Monday, Textiles Tuesday, E-waste Wednesday, Plastics Thursday, Food Waste Friday, Sharing Saturday, and my favourite, Swap Sunday. It could be a very productive week for many families. I encourage all Yukoners to take a look at their own habits this month, see what small changes could be made to help reduce waste, repair damaged items, or pass unused goods to others.

*Applause*

**MLA Tredger:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Circular Economy Month and Waste Reduction Week. Shifting from a linear economy to a circular one is not

about any one fix; it's about the entire system being redesigned. The hierarchy of zero waste starts with the best-case scenarios — rethinking, redesigning, reducing, and reusing.

These might be selling products with minimal packaging, designing goods to be easy to repair, or finding new homes for the things we don't need anymore. It might be garage sales or free stores at transfer stations.

There are non-profits that do everything from education to thrift stores to refurbishing used computers for people who need them. This has contributed as well. We have second-hand stores, stores that offer bulk goods without packaging, and businesses that make new products out of repurposed materials that all contribute to a circular economy.

Next on the zero-waste hierarchy is recycling for those products that we haven't been able to avoid consuming and haven't been able to repurpose. Recycling can't be just about checking a box to get waste out of sight and out of mind; we need to invest in recycling practices that are safe and sustainable for workers and accomplish the goal of getting materials all the way into new products. We also need recycling to be easy and accessible for everyone.

We appreciate all the Yukoners working hard to reduce their waste through little and big actions. If you are looking for somewhere to start, I saw that the Raven ReCentre is hosting their annual make-your-own upcycled Halloween costume workshop again this month. It looks like a lot of fun and I can't wait to see the results.

Happy Circular Economy Month.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Yukon Agricultural Association 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Yukon Agricultural Association — happy 50<sup>th</sup>. This is an incredible milestone and represents 50 years of community advocacy and leadership in agriculture here in the Yukon and across the north. I introduced vice-president Ann-Marie Stockley earlier. I would also like to recognize Cain Vangel, who is currently serving his third term as president of the YAA. They have shown a bushel load of dedication to the association and the sector. Cain's role with the YAA extends beyond the Yukon, and he couldn't be here with us today as he is representing the Yukon at the Canadian Federation of Agriculture meetings in Ottawa.

In 1974 when Ralph Mease, John Hoyt, and Paul Fletcher founded the Yukon Livestock and Agriculture Association — later changing the name to the Yukon Agricultural Association — there were just a handful of farms held together with twine and hard work. Although the sector was small at the time, founding members saw the importance of bringing their voices together to support and grow agriculture here in the Yukon.

In 2012, the Yukon Agricultural Association was able to secure and develop the land that is now the home for the association's fairgrounds on the north Klondike Highway. In addition to hosting popular agricultural events, the fairgrounds are serving as a site for the emergency livestock infrastructure project, which will provide the industry with much-needed

support for safe transport and sheltering of livestock in emergencies.

Over the years, the YAA has managed a variety of programs and projects that directly benefit the sector, including farm equipment, rental programs, acquisition of fertilizer bins, administration of funding programs, development of the Yukon farm guide, and so much more. They have hosted agriculture workshops and speakers at events on land development, land planning, vet services, animal welfare, and local purchasing. I've heard farmers say that the grass isn't greener on the other side; it's green where you water it.

The association has seeded many groups and activities over the years, including the Yukon Young Farmers, the Klondike Farmers' Forum, and the long-running North of 60 conference and banquet. YAA has also supported 4-H, our sprouting agriculture enthusiasts/future farmers.

In July this past summer, the Yukon Agricultural Association welcomed over 120 Canadian Federation of Agriculture delegates, representing major commodities in Canada. Delegates were impressed with our delicious Yukon fare.

Just this past week at the Magnetic North conference, food sovereignty was highlighted as a key economic pillar. I was told that, while the agriculture sector has challenges — you know, growing pains — the gross farm receipts have increased 40 percent over the past decade. So, thank you, Yukon farmers and the Yukon Agricultural Association.

A big thank you to the board members and the broader membership, past and present. As one of the oldest and earthiest non-profits in the territory, your commitment and dedication has allowed Yukoners to reap the benefits.

*Applause*

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, as our Agriculture critic, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party to congratulate the Yukon Agricultural Association on its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I have the honour of representing most of the farmers in the Yukon as their MLA.

Since 1974, the YAA has represented the industry. The YAA is older than I am, so I wasn't around to see the state of farming back then, but 40 years ago, most of the farms producing here now were either undeveloped land or newly developed farmland.

The industry has come a long way since, and the YAA has played an important role, including advocating for policies and actions that have helped the sector grow. Today, Yukon farmers, market gardeners, producers, and processors sell a wide variety of food, agricultural, and value-added products.

For Thanksgiving dinner this past weekend, my family and I enjoyed a wonderful meal, with most of the food on our table grown and raised by farmers in my riding. A locally raised turkey along with Yukon-grown potatoes, carrots, and cabbage made for a delicious dinner.

Yukon farms also produce beef, pork, chickens, eggs, milk, butter, elk, bison, goat, sheep, tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, berries, jams, grain, wheat and barley flour, livestock feed, hay, and the list goes on.

The YAA's work on behalf of the farming sector has resulted in a number of important achievements, and I will list a few. The two-for-one land pricing policy for new agricultural land was replaced with the one-for-one policy, and the YAA's work played a pivotal role in that change.

Our purchase of the mobile abattoir and equipment for the farm equipment rental program happened as a result of efforts by the YAA and, of course, the YAA lease on the Mayo Road, now called the Yukon Agricultural Association fairgrounds, came as the result of efforts by the YAA in asking us to help them find and acquire a suitable parcel of land. In addition to being used for fairgrounds, the lease allows the YAA to develop the land with infrastructure facilities that benefit the farming sector.

The YAA has also played an important role in working with government on programs including Growing Forward, Growing Forward 2, CAP, and SCAP and their implementation.

Congratulations on 50 years and best of luck for the future. We look forward to working with you to see the Yukon's agriculture sector have even more success in the years to come.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Yukon Agricultural Association. So many of us work on the assumption that when we need food, we can get it at the grocery store, and occasionally, there is a highway closure and we become uncomfortably aware of the fragility of the complex systems that bring food from all over the world up to us in the north. Those are the days that we consider what it might mean to lose those supply lines and what some alternatives might be.

Thankfully, there are others who think about this issue all of the time and we are unbelievably lucky to have people who have made it their mission to foster a sustainable agriculture industry right here in the Yukon, and I feel very lucky that some of them are here today with us in the gallery.

So, for 50 years, the Yukon Agricultural Association has been supporting farmers from across the territory. For me, the real measure of their success is the abundance of local products that are available to us, grown and raised in the north, and I won't repeat my colleague's list, but I can tell you that before I got to the end of it, I bet you someone would have something that wasn't yet on that list.

With the support of the Yukon Agricultural Association, we have seen northern food security flourish. We have seen people grow and create things that I bet most folks from outside the territory would have thought impossible, but here at home, we know that the only thing that is impossible is convincing a Yukon farmer that they can't do the thing that they set their mind to.

Congratulations to the Yukon Agricultural Association on 50 years of supporting agriculture in the Yukon. Thank you to all of the present and past board members, staff, and volunteers — we are so lucky to have you.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to subsection 22(3) of the *Yukon Development Corporation Act*, I have for tabling today the 2023 annual report for the Yukon Development Corporation. I also have for tabling the 2023 Yukon Energy Corporation annual report, and I also have for tabling a legislative return in response to written questions from the Member for Whitehorse Centre regarding the Yukon Energy Corporation.

**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?

## Bill No. 45: *Electoral District Boundaries Act* — Introduction and First Reading

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I move that Bill No. 45, entitled *Electoral District Boundaries Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 45, entitled *Electoral District Boundaries Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion agreed to*

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

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House congratulates the Yukon's Scott Berdahl and Portugal's Ella Cullen as the winners of the 2024 Young Mining Professional of the Year award.

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

THAT this House congratulates the Yukon Women's MidLife Health Clinic on its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Liberal government to abandon their plan to allow the use of facial recognition software, including deleting section 215 from Bill No. 44, *Traffic Safety Act*.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to begin negotiations with the Government of Canada on a new pharmacare deal.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to not proceed with building a new École Whitehorse Elementary School in Takhini until they have established support from the Takhini Neighbourhood Association, Takhini residents, and the general public.

I also give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of all procedures and policies related to the use of the Yukon Education communications e-mail account [publicschools@yukon.ca](mailto:publicschools@yukon.ca).

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

THAT this House condemns the Government of Ontario's decision to close supervised consumption sites in that province.

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

This then bring us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Carbon tax

**Mr. Istchenko:** A few weeks ago, the Premier of BC announced that, if his government were re-elected, they would scrap the consumer carbon tax if the federal government dropped their requirements to keep the tax in place. This was a significant announcement, because Premier Eby was the last provincial premier in the country who still supported the ever-increasing carbon tax.

That means that the Premier of the Yukon is the last remaining premier in the country who still supports the carbon tax. From coast to coast to coast, every other premier of all political stripes in the country has said how it is not the time to increase taxes on Canadians.

So, why does the Liberal Premier of the Yukon still support increasing the carbon tax and making life more expensive for Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Well, currently, if a province or territory doesn't meet the minimum benchmark standards, the federal system is put in place. We're seeing what is playing out right now in British Columbia as far as their system that was implemented before the pan-Canadian framework. But unlike British Columbia — I'm talking about local politics here — the Yukon's carbon rebate program is revenue neutral. This means that individuals and households will get more on average than they pay into the federal carbon levies.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, when the NDP Premier of BC announced that he would no longer support the consumer carbon tax, he said that it was because it put too much cost pressure on the cost of living of British Columbians. He also said that he was still committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting low-carbon electricity but now just wasn't the right time to increase the cost of living.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is the position of just about every major political leader at both the federal and provincial levels

in the country except for two, and those two are Justin Trudeau and the Premier of the Yukon.

So, why is the Premier of the Yukon so bent on following the position of Justin Trudeau?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, again — comparing oranges to apples — when you take a look at the British Columbia system, it is a tax system that defers taxes in different places for our carbon-pricing mechanism — again, put in place before the Yukon Party signed on to the Vancouver Declaration, which all but committed the Yukon to a carbon-pricing mechanism.

Now, when it comes to our carbon-pricing mechanism, more people get back more money than what they put into it. Again, unlike British Columbia's carbon-pricing rebate, the Yukon's carbon rebate is revenue-neutral.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Just last week, the Premier of the Northwest Territories visited Ottawa to advocate to the federal government on behalf of his citizens. He used the opportunity to remind the federal government that the Government of the Northwest Territories opposes the carbon tax, and here is what he said — and I quote: “If the higher costs were the solution to reducing greenhouse gas, the North would have been the first region in Canada to start using green technology ... But the fact is that the technology isn't there right now.” He concluded his quote by saying that the higher cost of the carbon tax is just a higher cost.

So, can the Premier explain why he and Justin Trudeau support increasing the cost of living for Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, it's important to get the record straight. First of all, in the spring of last year in an interview on national television, one of the things that I asked for was the federal government to come to the table with all premiers. I don't think you're going to find a premier in the country who doesn't have a problem with some aspect of what's happening with the system that has been put in place by the federal government.

I appreciate the Minister of Finance identifying that it has been put in place by the federal government. This is a system that's in place at this point in time. I think there should be premiers back at the table. I want to be alongside my colleagues to actually go back and fix that. The previous premier sent a letter in, I believe, September 2022 requesting to go back to the table and make sure the system works for Yukoners and for everybody else in this country. I hope that whatever federal government is in place — I hope they have a plan for climate change. I think every Yukoner sees it. I mean, we went through flooding this summer; we went through fires. If you don't believe that this system is one that works, hopefully somebody comes to the table with a plan and a system that they can put on the table, and whatever stripe of political party is in Ottawa should be coming to the table with a plan and, based on what we've seen, provincial and territorial governments will meet them at the table to work with them.

Hopefully, we do see a plan in the future as well.

### Question re: Carbon tax exemptions for home heating fuel

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, just under a year ago, the Premier did an interview with a national news network to defend his position on the carbon tax. He told CTV News that his support for the Trudeau carbon tax was — quote: “... rock solid...”, and he rejected and disagreed with the carve-out of the carbon tax for home heating oil.

Approximately half of Yukon households heat their homes with heating oil and have benefited from the exemption to the carbon tax.

Now, despite this, the Premier disagreed with the federal government’s decision to exempt the carbon tax from home heating. Can the Premier explain why he thinks that Yukoners who use home heating oil should have to pay more to heat their home?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It’s interesting how one person can actually be in the interview giving the questions and have a completely different perspective on what the exchange was compared to a person who listens to it — whatever — six months later.

Look, in that meeting, I clearly — clearly — requested in that meeting — and I think I remember that the commentary at the end was that another panel came on after I finished and said that those were good points; maybe that’s what the federal government should do. What I asked for was to bring people back to the table, that it was long overdue that premiers, whether they be from the Northwest Territories, Newfoundland, or Saskatchewan, get back to the table to look at the system — supported the system — yes, we want to work with a system that deals with climate change, and the majority of the people in the country do.

Are there things that need to be tweaked within the system? Absolutely, there are. The federal decision to not get to the table, I think, is something that is disrespectful. We should be back at the table. I sat with my colleagues and said that this is a good topic for us for a First Ministers’ meeting, where we sit down with the Prime Minister. They have not come to the table.

What I also said about the heat pump or the reduction that we saw in the Northwest Territories — I said: I want the best deal in the country, and I went to Ottawa and said: You’re giving us the best deal in the country, and we are now negotiating the best deal in the country.

**Ms. McLeod:** The exemption for home heating oil was put in place on a temporary basis in order to roll out a new program to support the installation of heat pumps. That program has been in force for almost a year now in some parts of the country.

In his CTV News interview, the Premier said that he had requested a richer and more generous program, and it has now been almost a year since he made those comments. Why don’t Yukoners have access to a heat pump program like the one available in Atlantic Canada?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I appreciate that every question validates my next response. We have signed off on the agreement; it’s the best agreement in the country, and I will make sure that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources

adds a little bit more that he was able to do that we didn’t see in other jurisdictions — when he’s ready to do so.

**Ms. McLeod:** Now, after the meeting of premiers in Halifax last year, they issued a communiqué, and it said — and I’ll quote: “Premiers are unanimous in calling on the Prime Minister to ensure that federal policies and programs are delivered in a fair and equitable way to all Canadians...”

There are hundreds of Yukoners who heat their homes with heat sources other than home heating oil — like propane — who are treated unfairly under the Trudeau carbon tax.

So, why won’t the Premier of Yukon call for these Yukoners to be treated fairly and equitably and add his voice to all the other premiers who want to see the carbon tax exemption extended to other sources of heating, like propane?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is going to let me share that with him.

That is what we thought as well, so what we did was — like nowhere else in the country, an agreement has been signed, and the infrastructure money that is available — we have also made sure that the four percent of people who have propane are also going to be able to use the program.

We are happy to be able to share that with Yukoners today.

### Question re: Support for seniors

**Ms. Blake:** Last week, seniors who receive the Yukon seniors income supplement were shocked to find that their cheques were lower than usual. These seniors were given no prior notice about this change and no explanation as to why they were receiving less support than the month before. This supplement is specifically intended for low-income seniors. After many phone calls, one of these seniors got through to the social assistance office. He was told that the Yukon government clawed back part of his monthly supplement because the federal government was going to increase its monthly supplements for low-income seniors.

Why did this government not inform seniors about the cut to their income supplement?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, all Canadians aged 65 and older are eligible to receive old age security. In addition to old age security, eligible seniors will receive guaranteed income support from the federal government, and the Government of Canada calculates individuals’ monthly Yukon seniors income supplement based on their guaranteed income supplement amount and notifies the Government of Yukon of the eligibility. Yukon seniors income supplement is directly tied to the federal old age security and guaranteed income supplement programs.

The notification regarding the change of the amount that is paid to Yukoners under that system is coming. With respect to the changes that are made just as of October 2024, due to program rate changes, there has been a reduction with respect to the Yukon seniors income supplement, but there has been an increase with respect to the federal old age security, which covers that, plus additional funds.

**Ms. Blake:** Mr. Speaker, we are hearing from seniors who are concerned that this government has cut this critical support. To make matters worse, this cut was made prior to the

increased federal supplement being received. This decision adds an additional hardship for low-income seniors. This means that these seniors are in a worse position today than they were a month ago.

We have all seen the cost of living continuously increase, and we all know that people on fixed incomes have been hit the hardest. Why is this government clawing back funds from low-income seniors?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the Yukon seniors income supplement is directly tied to the federal old age security and guaranteed income supplement programs. When the federal programs increased old age security payments, it impacted the guaranteed income supplement. Just in October 2024 — so, just this month — these changes have been made. Some people are noticing the information coming on their notifications from the government. Most Yukon seniors income supplement recipients' payments from the Yukon decreased by \$76.81 in October, but federal old age security payments increased in October 2024, just this month, and most old age security recipients received an increase of \$118 between September and October.

**Ms. Blake:** Mr. Speaker, many seniors in all parts of the Yukon are struggling to afford basic necessities. Just yesterday, one of the many seniors told us that she was counting on that money to pay her propane bill. Another senior let us know that the social assistance office told him he should be happy about the federal increase.

The higher federal supplement should have been happy news for Yukon's low-income seniors. With the clawback, there is not extra help for seniors who depend on this monthly income supplement. Will this government reverse the clawback to the Yukon seniors income supplement and allow seniors to keep the increased amount?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Liberal government supports seniors to a great extent with respect to particularly low-income seniors and our opportunities to make sure that they are well cared for. This calculation is based on federal old age security.

Our government supports provision of services to seniors and to elders, as evidenced by the *Aging in Place Action Plan*. I certainly am interested to know the details of a particular case if there is individual hardship and I look forward to the member opposite bringing that to my attention.

Most Yukon seniors income supplement recipients' payments decreased by \$76 — almost \$77 — in October 2024, but federal old age security payments increased also in October — between September and October payments — due to program rate changes of increasing that program rate, and most old age security recipients received an increase of \$118 between September and October.

We're implementing measures to alert recipients when these changes will happen in the future, and I look forward to supporting seniors as we have done.

#### **Question re: Yukon River crossing at Dawson City**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, today will be the last day the *George Black* ferry will provide Yukoners with the ability

to cross the river in Dawson City. We have been told that this is among the earliest dates that the ferry has been pulled from the river. This decision to pull the ferry so early will make life very difficult for those Yukoners living on the other side of the river, as they will now need to wait until the ice bridge is in place to resume regular trips back and forth.

Can the minister explain why the ferry is being pulled so early this year?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question from the members opposite. I did receive a briefing on the last five years, and the pulling of the *George Black* ferry has taken place between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> over the course of the past five years. I inquired with my department this morning as to whether there was some flexibility in order to provide the residents of West Dawson with a little bit more flexibility in order to finalize their plans, and I'm advised now that the ferry will operate until about 3:00 tomorrow afternoon, but it's completely in line with the last five years' historical timing of the removal of the ferry.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, we've heard from the residents in the Dawson area who are confused by this decision. They wonder why the ferries that service the Dempster Highway — the two crossings further north in the Northwest Territories — will remain in the water and run into November, but the *George Black* ferry will be removed much earlier.

Can the minister explain the discrepancy between the timing of ferries being pulled from the river crossings on the Dempster with that of the *George Black* ferry in Dawson?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Once again, I would just emphasize that any discussion with respect to the ferry as to it being much earlier — it certainly isn't much earlier in relation to the experience that the crews of the *George Black* ferry have on the Yukon River at this time of year, with respect to the beginning of the ice coming down the Yukon River, and also icing of the deck and other elements of the operation of the *George Black* ferry, which create an occupational health and safety issue for both the hard-working employees, captains, and first mates on the *George Black* ferry and persons who would be using the *George Black* ferry in these last days.

Just to emphasize to those persons in Dawson who might be listening, the range has been between October 15 and October 20 over the course of the last five years. Those are the circumstances that exist in Dawson City, and that is the analysis that exists with respect to the ongoing safe operation of the *George Black* ferry.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** According to the minister's briefing notes from the Spring Sitting, the government is currently considering whether to refurbish or replace the *George Black* ferry. The notes indicate that a decision will be made in the spring of 2024.

Can the minister tell us which option the government has chosen: refurbishment or replacement?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** While regular maintenance is performed to ensure that the *George Black* ferry continues to operate effectively, we recognize that there is a need to be proactive to ensure continued operation for years to come. Highways and Public Works has been working to identify and



evaluate options for refurbishing or replacing the *George Black* ferry. Refurbishment would involve installing more modern engines that meet stringent emissions standards, as well as corresponding upgrades to the engine systems. Replacement would involve commissioning a newly built ferry that would have more space and load-carrying capabilities than the current ferry.

The department is exploring these options, and I expect to see the recommendation this fall. Mr. Speaker, once I have received those recommendations and provided guidance to my department with respect to the options, I will bring that matter forward to my Cabinet colleagues for a decision, but that's the decision — as the Member for Porter Creek North has accurately pointed out — so that we continue to have reliable service of the crossing of the Yukon River by the *George Black* ferry or potentially a replacement for years to come.

#### **Question re: Pelly River crossing at Ross River**

**Mr. Hassard:** So, last week, the government pulled the Pelly barge, which provides citizens with a river crossing in the community of Ross River. We know that there were maintenance concerns with the barge last fall when it was pulled.

So, can the minister tell us if any repairs were done to the barge last year, and what plans are in place for maintenance this winter? As well, is the government considering replacing the aging Pelly barge, and if so, when?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question from the member opposite. Certainly, the member opposite, as the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, will know the challenges that exist in the Pelly River from time to time — that there have been issues with respect to the water level in the Pelly River at that crossing, so those are certainly issues.

With respect to the operational time for the Pelly Crossing barge and the considerations that might exist for the Pelly barge going forward, I can certainly endeavour to get back to the member opposite with respect to — and provide him with as much information as I have with respect to the Pelly barge. Of course, the decision with respect to the operational season of the Pelly barge is not a political decision.

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that the minister entirely understood the question, but we will try again.

One option for the ongoing crossing of the Pelly River is the possibility of a permanent bridge. So, I am curious: Has the government done any work to consider the possibility of a permanent bridge, and has the government engaged with the Ross River Dena Council about any plans that they may have for such a bridge?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** The member opposite will know that, within the last five or six years, there was engagement with the Ross River Dena Council with respect to the person crossing that exists there across the Pelly River, and that is a built-for-purpose structure that was completed by our government, in addition to many other structures and infrastructure projects that we have completed during our mandate.

Once again, with respect to any potential plans with respect to there being a different type of crossing at the Pelly River, in

contrast to the current Pelly barge, I can certainly get back to the member opposite, but I have not been briefed with respect to any plans for there to be a bridge in the short to mid term.

**Mr. Hassard:** I'll remind the minister that the walking bridge he is talking about was actually built in the 1940s by the US Army, so it wasn't his government.

Last year, the Liberal government conducted a high-level consultation with the community of Dawson City about the future of the Yukon River crossing, so are there any plans to conduct a similar consultation in Ross River, including an engagement with the RRDC? If so, when?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite. As I have indicated, I have not been briefed on any short-term plans for my department to consult with the Ross River Dena Council with respect to an alternate crossing in contrast to the Pelly barge, but what I can say in the time that I do have available is that we certainly did consult with the Teslin Tlingit Council in the member opposite's home community with respect to the construction of what was at that point the biggest infrastructure project in the history of the Yukon — the Nisutlin Bay Bridge, which didn't get done by the prior Yukon Party government — there certainly was consultation with respect to that. There also was consultation with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in with respect to the Dempster fibre line, which was also a project that was probably a glint in the eyes of the Yukon Party between 2011 and 2016, but once again, that didn't get done either.

I can certainly go on. We are consulting with the Ta'an Kwäch'an and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation with respect to the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport with respect to a community development agreement, so we will not take lessons from the members opposite on consultation.

#### **Question re: School public address systems**

**Mr. Kent:** The issue of outdated or inadequate public address, or PA, systems in Yukon schools has been brought to the attention of the minister for well over a year now. It was first identified by several school council chairs at a meeting in early 2023. The chair said that up to seven schools in the Whitehorse area had little or no functioning PA systems, so can the minister tell us what has been done to address this issue since then?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I'm happy to rise today to speak about our schools and our maintenance of schools. Health, safety, and well-being of students and staff is our first priority. Effective communication during emergencies and regular activities is crucial for our school staff.

As systems age and technology changes, public announcement systems can become difficult to update and maintain, but repairs and replacements occur regularly. The Department of Education works with schools that are having issues with their PA systems on modifying their school emergency plans to ensure that there are additional methods for communicating in the school.

The PA systems are complex networks that take time to install and connect with phones and Internet. The PA systems are a priority, and the Department of Education has

maintenance contracts in place to address and repair any reported issues. Going forward, designs and requirements for new PA systems will be standardized for efficiency in daily operation and maintenance and repair.

In terms of schools that — I'll continue building on the answer as we go forward.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, we can't stress enough how important PA systems are to our schools. Besides being used for basic announcements, they can be a critical communication tool for use in the case of an emergency, as the minister mentioned. However, the minister has been aware of this issue for well over a year, and there have been seven schools in the Whitehorse area identified to have little or no functioning PA systems.

So, can the minister tell us: Of those seven schools, how many of those PA systems have been repaired?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I'll just go through some of the work that has been done and other work that is underway and work that is planned.

On April 1, 2024, a maintenance contract was established for the 2024-25 fiscal year to address immediate or pressing issues, ensuring timely responses and effective solutions. In 2023-24, we worked to address system concerns and source necessary PA system parts for Elijah Smith Elementary, Porter Creek Secondary, Selkirk Elementary, St. Francis of Assisi, and Christ the King Elementary School.

PA system projects for the 2024-25 fiscal year include: Hidden Valley Elementary School; École Émilie Tremblay. PA systems at the following schools are scheduled for replacement: Selkirk Elementary School for 2025-26; Tantalus School — community school — 2026-27; Watson Lake Secondary School — 2027-28; and Eliza Van Bibber School — 2028-29.

Again, we have completed a number of projects this year, and I can go through some of the history as well.

**Mr. Kent:** This issue was so important to the Selkirk Elementary School Council that they have written two letters to the minister, the most recent one in April of this year. The letter to the minister indicated that school council members are worried about the safety of students and staff without a fully functioning PA system. It also indicated that a representative of the school staff's health and safety committee attended a school meeting to outline some of the concerns from the committee, how the lack of a properly functioning system impacts day-to-day operations, and potential safety and risk scenarios.

A response letter from the minister to the school council indicated — as the minister just did in her previous response — that the system at Selkirk was scheduled to be replaced in the 2025-26 school year. So, can the minister tell us what Selkirk Elementary is supposed to do until then?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, in 2023-24, we worked to address system concerns and source necessary PA systems — parts — that included parts for the Selkirk Elementary School. This is an important aspect — as the member has pointed out and I pointed out today — in terms of our ability to communicate if there is an emergency and just to be effective in the school community. As I have indicated, we are working — a maintenance contract was established in 2024-25 to

address immediate and pressing issues, ensuring timely responses and effective solutions. This is a matter that I take very seriously, as I had indicated at the meeting last year with school councils.

Some of the PA systems that have been upgraded in the past — I'll go through some of those: Elijah Smith Elementary School was in 2018-19; Grey Mountain Primary, St. Francis of Assisi, Porter Creek Secondary in 2019-20; Holy Family in 2021-22; Del Van Gorder School in 2022-23.

Again, this is an area that we work on regularly to ensure that the systems are working —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

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. 42: Act of 2024 to amend the Land Titles Act, 2015 — Second Reading**

**Clerk:** Second reading, Bill No. 42, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that the Bill No. 42, entitled *Act of 2024 to amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, be now read a second time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 42, entitled *Act of 2024 to amend the Land Titles Act, 2015*, be now read a second time.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** This bill is presented to amend the existing *Land Titles Act, 2015* to provide a legal framework in the Yukon for the registration and enforcement of statutory covenants that can facilitate long-term affordability in housing developments.

The proposed amendments will enable the Government of Yukon to place certain restrictions to ensure that affordable housing projects remain affordable for a longer period of time. With the cost of housing at record-high levels, the lack of available affordable housing is a growing challenge here in the territory, as it is across Canada. We must work to respond in all possible ways.

In recent years, some organizations have asked for funds and land from the Government of Yukon to build affordable housing and have proposed to keep the housing units affordable through the use of restrictive covenants. This is a practice that is used in other parts of Canada on a more regular basis. Restrictive covenants are limitations on the use of property that are tied to the title — “run with the land” is the quote that's often used — and which can place conditions on how land and property can be used in the future.

Unfortunately, the courts here in Canada have not provided a consistent direction in enforcing some restrictive covenants, and a clear statutory framework is needed to govern their use here in the territory and provide consistency and reassurance for investors and for individuals concerned about the use of public funds.

This legal framework presented here in this bill will provide a reliable way to ensure that restrictive covenants can be an enforceable mechanism to ensure that housing built to be affordable, in fact, stays that way. One way that housing can be kept affordable for extended periods is by using a statutorily enforceable covenant, as is contemplated by this bill. The proposed amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015*, would ensure that, if the government provides funds or land to support affordable housing developments, developers or subsequent owners will not be able to turn around and sell at market value for profit, because the restrictive covenant will, in fact, be attached to the property title and ensure that affordable housing remains that way.

The proposed amendments would provide a legislative framework to allow statutory covenants to be granted in favour of and be enforceable by the Government of Yukon. It would also allow a list requirement to register statutory covenants. It would also clarify that, upon registration, the rights and duties set out in statutory covenants are, in fact, annexed or bound to the land and run with it, as is currently the case in other types of encumbrances, such as easements and mortgages being other kinds of encumbrances that can attach to property.

It will also be a legislative framework that ensures that statutory covenants will be enforceable against the person who made that covenant — the covenantor, which is a term regularly used in the world of land titles — at the time that they own the land and against future owners of the land. It is a framework that will list provisions that can be included in a statutory covenant, such as which obligations or restrictions with respect to the form of tenure, land use, resale price, rent amount, creating a binding first option to purchase, allowing for the establishment of buyers' and tenants' qualifications, or provisions for the management and administration of housing units. It is a framework that would allow an indemnity for the covenantee and a fair distribution of responsibilities. It is also a framework that will provide liability exemption to a person who enters into a covenant for a breach of that covenant if it occurs after the person has ceased to be the owner of the land. Lastly, it will establish a mechanism for the discharge of the statutory covenant.

Affordable housing, as we know it, is a critical matter for all Yukoners and, in fact, all Canadians. They consistently note that the availability of affordable housing and what that means to them and to their everyday living is absolutely important and critical as we move in these more uncertain times.

These amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* will help to make housing more affordable and accessible by providing an option to have more protections to ensure that public resources that are made available with the intention to increase affordable housing will, in fact, remain that way and will hopefully encourage future projects of the type that will lock in affordable housing as a main element of that housing.

I certainly look forward to questions as we go forward. Thank you for the opportunity to explain a bit about the amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015*.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief in my remarks at second reading. We look forward to asking questions about this legislation during Committee of the Whole, and we will be supporting it at second reading in the interest of allowing us to ask those questions at Committee of the Whole.

**Ms. Blake:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the proposed changes to the *Land Titles Act, 2015*. The amendments to the Yukon *Land Titles Act, 2015* represent a significant shift in how statutory covenants are handled within land ownership and development processes in the Yukon. These changes are expected to impact landowners, developers, and stakeholders involved in land transactions by streamlining registration and enforcement of covenants attached to land titles.

Key aspects of the amendments provide clearer guidelines on how statutory covenants can be registered and enforced. This transparency will benefit landowners, developers, and public authorities by reducing ambiguity around rights and obligations associated with covenants on land titles. The amendments appear to expand the scope of what statutory covenants can encompass, which may allow for a more versatile application in areas like environmental conservation, heritage preservation, and public infrastructure development. This could ensure that land use aligns more closely with public interest and sustainable development goals.

These changes could have substantial implications for land use planning in the Yukon, particularly in balancing private land use rights with broader public interest. Statutory covenants may now be more effectively used to impose conditions that support environmental stewardship, manage resource use, and protect cultural sites — important considerations for Yukon's unique landscape and Indigenous communities. These conditions could also provide important protections for affordability and ensure that more options exist for vulnerable people to find housing.

While these amendments are a step forward in modernizing land title governance, careful attention should be paid to the implementation phase. It will be crucial to ensure that these covenants do not impose unreasonable burdens on landowners or create unnecessary barriers to development, particularly in rural and Indigenous communities.

The consultations done so far with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Kluane First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and Carcross/Tagish First Nation to ensure that the amendments work with their final agreements is a very important step. Further consultations with Indigenous governments, landowners, and other stakeholders will be vital to ensure that the covenants reflect the diverse interests of Yukoners.

Additionally, the amendments must be accompanied by accessible resources to educate the public on their rights and responsibilities regarding statutory covenants. This will help to prevent legal disputes and ensure a smooth transition to the new regulatory framework.

In conclusion, these amendments to the Yukon *Land Titles Act, 2015* marked an important progression in land management policies, and their success will depend on thoughtful implementation and continuous engagement with affected communities.

Mahsi' cho.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a few words and talk about some of the groups who have done work to try to support having more affordable housing for lower income Yukoners.

I think of Habitat for Humanity. The group that I have been working closely with lately is the Northern Community Land Trust. We got them some land. The value of the land was probably around \$1 million or \$1.2 million. Their idea is to build affordable houses that will not increase in value with the marketplace but rather stay tied to inflation.

One of the things that the Department of Justice did is that they looked around at this and said: Hey, you know, there are probably not the rules in place that are going to allow that covenant to stay there over time, and the risk would not be with the group — the Northern Community Land Trust — but say that someone bought into that ownership program and then later on looked around and said: Hey, I can make more money if I sell at a higher rate, and to heck with what I said earlier.

So, these covenants are this way to make sure that there will be this protection for those programs to continue to provide the services that they intend all along.

I wanted to give a shout-out to those groups who are doing this, and the latest one is the Northern Community Land Trust, and I think that construction is underway right now for their project in Whistle Bend for 32 units of affordable home ownership. I know that the Yukon Housing Corporation has given money for that project as well to try to keep the cost down so that it will be more affordable.

This is a way to ensure that these programs, which are about housing affordability, will remain so for the long term. I just want to say thanks to the Department of Justice for bringing this forward. This is an important step. In fact, the Department of Justice had to take a bit of a leap of faith that this was going to get here into this Assembly and look to see it hopefully progress to law and still support these other programs to keep going, because there is such a demand for affordable housing out there.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I thank my colleagues for their comments. I look forward to answering any questions that might be the case that come forward when we are proceeding to Committee of the Whole with respect to this piece of legislation in Bill No. 42. This legislation will support governments and community organizations, non-profit organizations, and the private sector to work together to give them an option to provide affordable housing to Yukoners.

I look forward to this being an improvement to our current state of the law, and I look forward to the support from my colleagues to do so. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Blake:** Agree.

**MLA Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yea, nil nay.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for second reading of Bill No. 42 agreed to*

### Bill No. 40: *Act to amend the Clean Energy Act (2024)* — Second Reading

**Clerk:** Second reading, Bill No. 40, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that Bill No. 40, entitled *Act to amend the Clean Energy Act (2024)*, be now read a second time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that Bill No. 40, entitled *Act to amend the Clean Energy Act (2024)*, be now read a second time.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, thanks for the opportunity to introduce Bill No. 40, entitled *Act to amend the Clean Energy Act (2024)*, for this House's consideration.

In November 2022, the *Clean Energy Act* received assent and became the territory's first energy and climate change legislation. We are one of the few jurisdictions in Canada to have that. The *Clean Energy Act* is ambitious climate legislation that sets the Yukon's targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and lays the foundation for a net zero economy by 2050.

The *Clean Energy Act* encourages action, transparency, and accountability in meeting those targets by requiring the government to track and publicly report on our progress. Most importantly for today's purposes, the *Clean Energy Act* gave the Government of Yukon the regulatory authority to establish additional greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of Bill No. 40 is to add an intensity-based greenhouse gas emission reduction target for the Yukon's mining sector, known as the "mining intensity target", which we set last year for both placer and quartz. It is to reduce 45 percent of greenhouse gas emissions per unit of production by 2035. It also applies to post-production and abandoned mines, so that includes remediation. This target aligns with and works alongside our current territory-wide greenhouse gas target of 45-percent reduction outside the mining sector.

Mr. Speaker, all individuals and all sectors of our economy must play a part in reducing the Yukon's collective greenhouse gas emissions. In *Our Clean Future*, we committed to creating a carbon-emissions-intensity target for the mining industry. Greenhouse gas emissions from mining can vary considerably from year to year, making it hard to set an absolute cap. Intensity-based targets set desired levels of greenhouse gas emissions per mining activity or unit of material produced or moved. This will allow mines to reduce emissions intensity regardless of how many mines are in operation or how few. The Government of Yukon will be creating programs and policies to support the mining sector to reduce its emissions.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize the hard work that industry has done to date in reducing its emissions. I look forward to future conversations about how we can further support these efforts. The mining-intensity target is intended to set the Yukon's mining industry on the path to achieving the Yukon's 2050 net zero target for all economies. Adding the mining-intensity target to the *Clean Energy Act* ensures long-term government accountability and sets a benchmark for developing measures to reach the target.

Adding the mining-intensity target to the *Clean Energy Act* means that there will be annual public reporting on greenhouse gas emissions from the mining sector and on the actions taken to achieve reductions.

The wildfires that we witnessed this summer across Canada and last summer as well, including here in the Yukon — and flooding — are a reminder that governments must take action during this climate emergency. Legislating this new target within the *Clean Energy Act* strengthens and supports our ability to achieve key climate commitments and a net zero-emissions future by 2050. I am looking forward to further debate on second reading.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition will be voting against the amendments to this act here today. When we debated the original act, we were concerned about the revised targets that were contained in it and if they were indeed attainable. We also raised questions about the enforceability of the act, and the same concerns we had then hold true for these amendments.

The 45-percent reduction by 2035 for mining-intensity targets is difficult when there are a number of unanswered questions that we have, such as benchmarks for industry. The minister mentioned the development of incentive programs, but we have no idea what those incentive programs will be.

Renewable energy generation and grid expansion — while being considered, we are seeing difficulties with it and we don't have a definitive timeline. The Atlin hydro project and the Moon Lake project, of course, are two renewable projects located close to the Yukon grid that appear to be dead in the water or floundering at best. Viable options don't yet exist from a technology or affordability standpoint, especially for those in the placer industry. Officials told us at the briefing that there is no "what we heard" document available from the consultations.

These are just a few examples, but, of course, as with the original act, there are no ramifications or penalties associated with not meeting these targets. Again, as with the original act, there are too many unanswered questions associated with how we will get there, and the act appears to be largely aspirational — if indeed, actually, it does appear to be an aspirational target rather than any concrete action.

I will have a number of questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources when we get to Committee on this bill, but as mentioned, we will be voting against this act at second reading today.

**MLA Tredger:** I want to start my response to this piece of legislation by just talking a little about the context of climate change, because for so many people and especially young people, living in a time of climate change is to live in a time of anxiety and fear. It's to think often about that phrase: You'll die of old age and we'll die of climate change.

We have seen landslides; we have seen fires; we have seen floods; we have seen changes in the weather, in the wildlife, and in the landscape. Climate change is here and everything suggests that it's only going to get worse.

The Yukon government has declared a climate emergency. When I hear the word "emergency", what that brings to mind for me is bold, decisive, determined, sweeping action. That's what Yukoners are looking for when they hear "a climate emergency" — that's what they are looking for from their government. So, that is what I'm looking for in this piece of legislation — that bold action that can create us a future.

There are lots of details in it that I'll ask about in Committee of the Whole, but right now, I want to focus on the main purpose of this act, which is the mining-emissions target.

I want to go a little bit into the history of the mining-emissions target for the Yukon. Of course, when *Our Clean Future* was first brought in, the Liberals made the decision to not include mining emissions with the rest of the territory's emissions and targets — to give it special treatment compared to every other industry in the Yukon.

They decided to exclude mining from the absolute targets and to go with intensity targets instead. We're not looking at how much — the total amount of emissions from mining credits; we're just talking about how efficient those emissions

have to be. That was a mistake because, at the end of the day, it doesn't matter how efficient our emissions are.

I keep coming back to this idea of watching climate catastrophes and saying, "But our emissions were really efficient. This shouldn't be happening." It doesn't matter; what matters is how much carbon is going into the atmosphere and that's what we need to change.

That decision was made a long time ago and here we are today looking at intensity targets for mining. So, that's what I'm going to focus on, but I do just want to go back to that history and remind people that the decisions that were not in the interest of climate action have already been made when it comes to this target.

So, now what we're looking at is an intensity target of 45 percent by 2035. That's, of course, a departure — even ignoring the intensity versus absolute — from the targets set for the rest of the territory, which is 45 percent by 2030. That's a five-year difference.

The 45 percent by 2030 target came from the confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon NDP. We fought for that target not because we made it up and thought it was a good idea but because that's what the UN is calling for. I want to quote right now from the UN's website where they talk about climate change — and I quote: "The science shows clearly that in order to avert the worst impacts of climate change and preserve a liveable planet, global temperature increase needs to be limited to 1.5°C above preindustrial levels. Currently, the Earth is already about 1.1°C warmer than it was in the late 1800s, and emissions continue to rise. To keep global warming to no more than 1.5°C — as called for in the Paris Agreement — emissions need to be reduced by 45% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050."

So, why isn't that the target? Why isn't the target 45 percent by 2030, as is called for by the UN and what we're told is required to preserve a livable planet?

Have the Liberals decided that they're not worried about a livable planet? Have they decided that someone else will do the work and we don't need to?

So, that's going to be my main question in Committee of the Whole. Why have we decided to push mining five years later than everybody else and five years later than what is called for by the UN to preserve a livable planet? That will be my main question in Committee of the Whole, along with a more detailed conversation about some of the details of the legislation.

We will be supporting this legislation at second reading so that we can have those conversations in Committee of the Whole, and I look forward to them.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thanks to the members opposite for their comments. First of all, for the Member for Copperbelt South, there is a "what we heard" report. He may be referring to something different, but when we went out to engage on the

mining-intensity target, we did put out a "what we heard" report, so I'm not sure why there's a misunderstanding.

Let me just add a bit more of the history for the Member for Whitehorse Centre. One of the challenges around the mining sector here in the Yukon is that it has significant swings compared to the rest of the size of our economy. Think of Faro. When Faro was up and running, there used to be brownouts when the mill would fire up. I wasn't living here at the time, but I hear the stories about it. That's a pretty big piece of infrastructure. Then when Faro closed, everything changed.

I recall the previous government saying that we had met our emissions targets because Faro closed. We decided, in the conversation, that this was the wrong approach to take. Do you know what would have happened if we had absolute targets? It would have happened again, because when you have a mine like Victoria Gold close — in this case, a heap leach failure and not for any reason that anyone wants the mine to close or it wanted the mine to close — it just changed on a dime. I've seen it happen twice in our past under the previous government — where they stood up and said that they had reduced our emissions, but really it was because mining activity had reduced or significantly reduced. You need to be careful that you are not tying it to those sorts of actions. So, in this case, that we chose an intensity-based target means that we still have to reduce emissions because we need to do it across the whole of the Yukon. We can't take it as some sort of excuse about reducing the emissions.

In that time frame when we worked to set this target, in working with the industry — and in fact, working with our entire economy — the whole idea is that you have to put a legitimate plan in place and have a runway to get to those targets. You can't just sort of say, "I am going to do it next year" because the economy won't work that way. You need to plan, invest, and work toward — and so that is the reason for the difference in time around it. But maybe the member opposite will be okay with the closure of Victoria Gold.

The other thing that I want to note is that one of the biggest projects that we have right now around mining is actually the remediation. It is the remediation of the Faro mine. There are other type 2 mines — mines that are the responsibility of the federal government — and when they are cleaning up those mines, that also has to be considered. If we had set an absolute target, we could have gotten into a difficult — I would call it even a "perverse" situation where we would say that there is not enough room to clean up that site. So, I think that this is very important. It points to the fact that we definitely need to clean up Faro mine and we need to do it in a way that is going to reduce emissions as we do it over time.

I hear that we are in completely different positions. The Yukon Party has said that they are not going to be supportive of it — thank you for that information — and the NDP has concerns and is going to allow us to get to Committee so that we can get to the vote. That clearly doesn't mean that they are supportive of it overall yet. We will see how that goes. I can understand that we are in different positions.

I will note for everyone, for Yukoners, that these are steps in the goal to get to zero emissions by 2050. Once you get to

2050, that zero is absolute. It doesn't matter whether you are intensity target or not because you are all heading to that same destination. What I would love to hear is not what the numbers should be but what the action should be. What are the ways in which we will be able to work to reduce targets? To the Member for Copperbelt South, I will say that the key actions that we will be using are the exact same key actions that are outlined under *Our Clean Future*, and I have said that in this House before.

Anyway, I look forward to further debate on this bill, and I thank all of the members for their submissions.

**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. Istchenko:** Disagree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Blake:** Agree.

**MLA Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yeas, seven nays.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for second reading of Bill No. 40 agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 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:** Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

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

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Is there any general debate?

### **Department of Energy, Mines and Resources**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Madam Chair, it's not often that I imagine I'm going to get to say this, so what I would like to do is begin by welcoming the deputy ministers of Energy, Mines and Resources. To my left is Deputy Minister Lauren Haney, and to my right is Deputy Minister Paul Moore, whom we sort of dragged back from retirement to help, and it all has to do with Victoria Gold. In fact, the supplementary budget here today — if you look at it, the — whatever it is — \$48.5 million — really, that is Victoria Gold, and it's about the advance that we have put toward the receiver around the remediation work that is happening on-site. I'm sure that we are going to get into that conversation today.

Then the only other thing that is here in the budget is a small piece around our capital spend, which is for an agricultural barn project. Today, we had the tribute to the Yukon Agricultural Association, so it's kind of fitting. I'm not sure if that will come up during questions in Committee of the Whole.

Before I take my seat and welcome the members opposite to pose their questions, I just really need to say a big thank you to the staff at Energy, Mines and Resources. What happens when you have something like the heap leach failure at Victoria Gold is that it puts a lot of pressure across the whole system, and everybody has really been working hard. Public servants don't always get recognized for their work. It can be tough work and at times pretty thankless. So, I just want to make sure, if any of those folks are listening, that we say in this Assembly and put down into the Hansard how much that work has been important for the Yukon and appreciated for all of the effort to keep Yukoners safe and well.

I'll stop there. I'm looking forward to today's questions and answers.

**Mr. Kent:** I too would like to welcome Ms. Haney and Mr. Moore to the Legislature to support the minister here this afternoon.

I'm going to get right into it. Obviously, as the minister mentioned, the Eagle Gold heap leach failure and the money that is being advanced to that will be a topic of significant discussion, but I did want to just jump over to an energy question, based on some of the responses I heard or thought I heard in Question Period today.

Under strategic initiatives and partnerships division, there's a reduction of \$3.4 million, and in the explanatory note that we received from the department, it said the \$3.4-million reduction is due to the new low-carbon economy leadership fund agreement not being signed, and that's from the Energy branch.

My understanding from the briefing is that included things like the good energy program as well as heat pumps, and that's what drew my attention to this from Question Period today.

I'm just curious if the minister can tell us if there is any update on when this agreement will be signed with the Government of Canada. What exactly is included in this low carbon economy leadership fund that we should be watching?

I guess my final question is: If the heat pump program that we've talked about as part of the carbon tax pause that the federal government has put in place on home heating oil to allows jurisdictions like ours to catch up and purchase heat pumps. I am just curious as to where that is if it's not included in this fund.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Negotiations with the federal government have concluded. There is an agreement in principle that is now working its way through our side. We haven't yet got to an announcement. On the federal government's side, I can't speak for them, so I would have to check on that, but that's where we're at.

Really, when I talked with the federal minister and when we have had dialogue with our counterparts, it has been to acknowledge that, even with heat pumps here, it's not going to be meant to entirely replace heating systems, because when we get into the coldest temperatures, you are still going to need your furnace or whatever system you have now, so it is about trying to displace the amount of fossil fuels that will be used over time. That was part of how we talked about the importance here.

Part of the program is going to be to support lower income Yukoners. I think that the total cap is going to be for \$24,000 per household or per unit. The dollars in the decrease to the funding line item were just because of the delay in getting the program in place. We always anticipated getting it and that it would be an important program for the Yukon. As the Premier mentioned, we are not going to be differentiating on what heating system or heating fuel is currently being used.

It is going to come in as part of the low carbon economy fund and we have been working with local industry as well to help them to gear up for this. We think that it is going to be pretty important.

I think that there is also a piece in there — where this will work alongside of the building retrofit side of things where we are trying to provide a one-window stop. That includes making sure that when Yukoners come to apply for stuff, they don't have to apply twice — once for the federal system and once for

the Yukon system — so that it will be streamlined. That it will cut the red tape — I guess is the way to think of it — and assist Yukoners with getting through it.

Those are the nuts and bolts of the program generally, and we think that it is a very good program.

**Mr. Kent:** I think the minister mentioned that it is a cap of \$24,000 per unit or per household. I am just hoping that he can confirm that, and then if he can tell us how much of this \$3.4 million will be allotted to the heat pump program that he is talking about.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I was correct; it is \$24,000 — and I am being told “per household” for the heat pumps.

The \$3.4 million — it is not a portion of that, which is allocated. We had originally thought that we were trying to get the agreement in place when we first brought it in our budget for the spring, but it has taken time to get that agreement completed. The \$3.4 million is what we're reducing on the budget, given that we won't have that expenditure at this time, but we will, of course, work to promote the program and amp it up over time now as it comes into place.

I don't have a breakdown right now on what we are anticipating for the rest of the year, but the department is working in the background to get me that information, so if I get it while I'm on my feet today, I will be sure to add that information for the member opposite.

**Mr. Kent:** If the minister could tell us how much is in the low carbon economy leadership fund now, noting that there has been a reduction of \$3.4 million because the agreement wasn't signed when the supplementary estimates were put together. How much is in there now that's being reduced by \$3.4 million and will presumably be bumped back up to \$3.4 million?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Originally, what we had in the mains for the spring under the low carbon economy leadership fund — I have always had the acronym LCEF. I don't know where that L went. Anyway, the low carbon economy leadership fund was \$6.9 million. The \$3.4 million is the portion of the budget that we don't believe that we are going to get at yet, but I still think that if we think of it in terms of heat pumps making it into households, we imagine that this is going to be a well-subscribed program. So, what we have remaining for this year is \$3.5 million under that program.

Sorry, Madam Chair; I'm rounding the numbers ever so slightly, so it's \$6.896 million.

**Mr. Kent:** Of that \$3.5 million that is left for this fiscal year, can the minister tell us how many applications have been submitted so far and where we're at in that expenditure? I mean, we're just halfway through the fiscal year now, so I'm assuming that some of that money has already been spent. So, if he has some details on how many applications have been submitted and how much of that money has already been committed this fiscal —

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'm going to have to ask the department to check into where we are at in the expenditure on the \$3.5 million. Most of the expenditure is more summertime rather than in winter and spring, because most of it is for retrofit programs. There are some dollars that go to renewable heating.



The heat pumps weren't in there yet. We know that there has been quite a bit of expenditure on both First Nation government buildings and municipal community buildings. We use it under the good energy incentive program.

I'll have to ask the department to dig in and give me a sense of where that expenditure is right now to date and what we are projecting for the end of the year. The general projection was to come in with the \$3.5 million, so I'll just have to ask where that expenditure is at right now.

**Mr. Kent:** I will look forward to receiving that update from the minister. Just to be clear, the heat pump program is not accepting applications yet.

We are still waiting for — I will quote the minister back to him, and he can correct me if I am not accurately reflecting what he mentioned off the top, but he said that there is an agreement in principle and it is still working its way through the Yukon government process.

I am not sure if there is a Canada process that it still needs to go through. So, there is no heat pump program in place as of yet, although there is an agreement in principle under the low carbon economy leadership fund, and what we have left for this fiscal year is \$3.5 million — rounding to \$3.5 million. However, some of that has been spent, and the minister mentioned that the majority of it gets spent in the summer and fall. Winter and spring — kind of where we are heading here for the balance of the fiscal year — there may not be a whole lot of money left in that program this year for the heat pump program.

I am looking for the minister to confirm if I am making correct assumptions.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The member is mostly correct. We do have a heat pump program right now; it is just not the one that is going to get us that \$24,000. That is the one that we have been working to negotiate with the federal government. There are people who go into the Energy Solutions Centre, and they get information about heat pumps. There is a rebate around those things, but it is not this really great one that we have been working toward getting. I know that there are heat pumps being installed — I have seen at the energy fair that was held — maybe it's last fall — up at the Transportation Museum there were companies that were showing their wares and talking about the installations. Okay.

Yes, I will get back on information of what has been spent of the \$3.5 million remaining in the budget, but as soon as the new program is signed — what typically happens is that we will announce these projects and then people will come in and they will start applying for them and lining up installers and things like that to get ready for — typically once the snow clears and people are ready to start doing that work around their homes.

We haven't gotten to an announcement yet. What we have is an agreement in principle, and as soon as we have done that extra piece of diligence, I have no doubt that we will tell the public about it, because we think that this is a very good program, and we believe that Yukoners are going to take good advantage of it.

**Mr. Kent:** So, just to follow up then, does the minister have any idea when he does expect it to be signed? He said

there is a heat pump program in place right now so that people can go into the Energy Solutions Centre and apply for it, but are they being told to hang tough because it's going to be exponentially better and that it will be up to \$24,000? Are they provided with that information when they apply now, that they may want to wait for the richer program? Or is there any sort of retroactivity if people have applied within the last — well, since the federal government announced that the carbon tax on home heating oil would be suspended?

I'm just curious if there is any retroactivity being considered if individual applicants are being told that this \$24,000 per unit program is coming forward, and then if the minister has any idea when this is going to be signed off.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, first of all, the current program provides, I think, up to \$8,000 right now. So, it's not insignificant, but it's certainly not the \$24,000 that we're heading toward. I'll check what the rules are around retroactivity. We've always worked with Canada to try to get as much flexibility as we can out of all of these programs. I'm confident that there is not retroactivity for work that has already taken place. I'll check if there is retroactivity around applications that have been made right now where the work has not taken place. That is certainly worth a good look, and I will see what we can get.

I know that the folks at the Energy Solutions Centre are always trying to keep people informed. I'll ask them about whether they have given folks a heads-up or not. I think that we have been pretty public around our dialogue with the federal government about working to get this in place for Yukoners. The Premier certainly has been talking about it pretty openly.

Yes, we will just always do our best to try to support Yukoners as much as possible with the agreements that we put in place.

**Mr. Kent:** So, just that final question: Does the minister have any idea of when this will be signed off and the \$24,000 per unit program implemented?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Yes, I think we are talking weeks. I don't have an exact timeline, but it's just running through the process internally right now, so I anticipate it pretty soon.

**Mr. Kent:** I'm sure that we may come back to that issue, but I do want to jump over to the Eagle Gold mine and the situation that we find ourselves in there.

As the minister mentioned, there is a significant amount of money that is included in the supplementary estimates. Of the \$51.871 million increase to Mineral Resources and to geosciences services division, \$53.5 million of that is an increase for Eagle Gold emergency response and revised Minto mine work plan. Of that, \$50 million is for Eagle Gold and \$3.5 million for the Minto mine work plan, and there is a reduction for Wolverine and other type 2 mine revised work plans of \$1.6 million that takes us to that revised amount.

With respect to the \$50 million that has been transferred — going through the initial report of the receiver — so, on page 38 of that report, there is a revised budget for the period from August 14, 2024 to November 12, 2024. The total estimated expenditure for that 90 days is \$62.216 million. But then if you jump ahead to page 39, the interim statement of receipts and

disbursements from August 14, 2024 to September 20, 2024, the disbursements are \$13.636 million.

I'm just curious if the minister can tell us if he expects that \$49 million — and we're rounding off here, but the additional \$49 million that has been estimated for expenditures — to be spent between September 20 and November 12.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I know that we are going to end up with lots of numbers floating around today, so I want to be very careful as I share that information. As part of the court order, we were required to advance funds for the receivership to ensure that the receiver would have those adequate funds. But as we have always stated, the first place the receiver is going to turn to when looking for the dollars to pay for this remediation work is through the assets that they got on-site — available cash assets — so I think that was a little over \$24 million, so that's where the expenditure starts.

The \$50 million is sort of meant to align with the first phase of the work, which is the emergency response phase. One of the things that the receiver has said to us — and what we have asked for — is that we get the planning and estimations for what the subsequent phases are. For example, after the emergency phase, we will have what is being called a "stabilization phase", and then eventually it will be the rest of the work plan to do that remediation work. It isn't just the dollar projections that I'm looking for; I'm also looking for the time projections as well, because all of those things will matter.

Even though that \$50 million is there and we anticipate that it is roughly correct, it's a very dynamic situation on-site. Things change all the time depending on many factors, which I'm sure everyone can understand. This is a heap leach failure and there's a lot to navigate through. It is the current estimation and it's about correct — the \$50 million.

**Mr. Kent:** Just so I don't jump back and forth between the revised budget — the 90-day total budget — versus the interim statement of receipts and disbursements, I will focus my next set of questions on that interim statement of receipts and disbursements for the period from August 14, 2024 to September 20, 2024. It's on page 39 of the receiver's report, just so that the minister can have a look at it.

When it comes to the receipts, it says that \$15 million has been provided from Yukon government so far. A sweep from the company's bank accounts — \$5.617 million. A sweep from the company's gold trading account — \$22.144 million. And interest to earned — \$79 million — for a total of \$42.84 million on the receipt side.

So, when we jump down to the disbursements — I will just go line-by-line on this with the minister — it says that the program management costs are \$459,000 for that one-month period. So, is that just the receiver, or does that also include the lead environmental consultant? Is it just PricewaterhouseCoopers, or does it also include Parsons? If so, what is the breakdown between the two?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The line that is talking about the program management costs in the table that the member is referring to — the \$459,000 — is all PricewaterhouseCoopers at this point in that table, because Parsons hadn't yet invoiced for dollars. These are always going to be a snapshot in time,

and there are always going to be dollars outstanding and they will always catch up. So, PricewaterhouseCoopers — I am going to start to say PwC just to shorten this up — has issued their first report. It came on October 1 or maybe October 2, and I think that they were anticipating putting out a second report roughly in a month's time, and so we will start to see those things start to fill in.

But to answer the member opposite, that line is for management costs of PwC.

**Mr. Kent:** So, that is \$459,000 from August 14 to September 20 — just a little over a month, maybe five weeks or so. I am just curious if the minister can tell us now — it is my understanding and it was confirmed at the briefing that the lead project person for PwC is paid at a rate of \$925 per hour. Can the minister tell us how many individuals from PwC are working on management, and is that rate consistent for all of them, or is there a scale that he can give us as far as the hourly rate that is being paid to the individuals from PwC?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** How I've been informed about what goes into the project management costs — it's, of course, whoever is managing the project, but it also includes their professional services that they would have internally and maybe bring in from external — those things would be accountancy professionals, because they have to go through the financials of Victoria Gold. It would be legal professional services and it would be engineering professional services, so there is a range in there. I'm sure that they all come in at a range of different rates. I don't know those individual rates.

So, the number that is on page 39 in the table that says "Project Management Costs" includes all of that professional work that is done around the management.

**Mr. Kent:** I'm just hoping that the minister can confirm that the lead for PwC is paid at a rate of \$925 per hour.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'm not aware that it is publicly available information.

**Mr. Kent:** As I mentioned, that number was confirmed during our briefing and I was just hoping that the minister would be able to confirm it here this afternoon for the record. But if he needs time to check in and see if that is publicly available, we would also appreciate the rate sheet for others from management. As mentioned in the overall 90-day budget, the program management costs are estimated to be \$6.305 million. That is a substantial amount, so we're just kind of curious about, on an hourly basis, how much those individuals are being paid.

Obviously, this is public money and it is money from the mine operations that I mentioned on the receipt side of things, so I think that it's important information for Yukoners to know, especially since this was obviously a contract that wasn't tendered. This didn't go out for any sort of public competition, so it's important for Yukoners to know how much these individuals are being paid — if it's at \$925 for everyone or if that is a scale depending on the individual who is working on the project.

But I will move on. I'm going to jump over the Water Board security payment of \$420,000, because it looks like that

is the amount that was requested in the revised budget. We may have some further questions on that going forward.

The day-to-day site operations — \$6.13 million has been expended so far of an estimated \$21.8-million budget to November 12.

So, I'm just curious if the minister can tell us what type of work is entailed. Is this for some of the former Victoria Gold staff who are still on-site? Can he just give us a sense for how many individuals that covers off as far as the number of people employed?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Look, let me go back to the briefing. I mean, I have two of the people who were here at the briefing with colleagues opposite, and they passed me a note regarding this specific question — that the Member for Copperbelt South had requested a breakdown of the costs and the project management costs line item. I will read out what was prepared.

I had even approved that all of this be sent over to members opposite. I don't know whether it had gotten there yet.

PwC is not willing to provide a specific breakdown, as the revised budget in the court report continues to be refined and does not reflect actual costs incurred because of invoicing delays.

Basically, they are saying that information about individual rates is not publicly available, that the program management costs include receivership costs for professional fees and disbursements, and they reference lead environmental consultant, although I've already noted that, in the current line that's in the table and being referred to, the lead environmental consultant had not yet invoiced. The report came out on October 2, and they took their cut-off as September 20.

As I said earlier, these numbers will continue to be refined as invoices are paid. There will always be invoicing lags. The cost of the receivership will continue to be reported to the court through the receiver. The member is suggesting that this wasn't an open and public process. No, it was a court process. The court heard our application, and the response is from others like Victoria Gold, like the lending syndicate, and like the First Nation government of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. The court gave this direction. I will trust that process.

Let me move on to the next question that the member asked about, which was regarding the site operation and day-to-day cost. What's in that cost are staff wages, but it also includes fuel, electricity, and that sort of thing, so there will be the consumables that are part of that. In terms of the number of people who are on-site — roughly, the size of the on-site contingency is about 150. Most of those are Eagle Gold or past employees of Victoria Gold. I don't have an exact number, but I would say that more than a hundred and maybe even more than 120 are the Victoria Gold staff. The lion's share of that cost is going toward the day-to-day operations. There will also be some contractors there on-site. I would have to ask to get a breakdown of the numbers, but that is the rough lay of the land.

**Mr. Kent:** Jumping back then to PwC, the minister, when I asked about whether or not this was an open tender or any sort of public process to retain them as the receiver, the

minister mentioned that it was a court process. So, the court hearing was in the middle of August — August 14, I believe.

Can the minister tell us when PwC was retained by the Yukon government to start to look at the potential for receivership? It's my understanding that was done in late July, but I'll let the minister confirm whether or not that was the case. My understanding is that July 26 was the date that the receiver was retained and that there was no bid or asking for prices from others — it was just PwC that was asked to come on at that time, but I'll leave it to the minister to confirm that for me.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The first thing is that we have not retained PricewaterhouseCoopers — PwC; the court has — okay? So, there is no contract with us; this contract — it is the court. It's entirely true that we applied to the court — and sorry — then the starting date for PricewaterhouseCoopers and for Parsons, as the lead environmental consultant, will be August 14. So, that is the day that it starts. That is the date of the court hearing; that's the date when the decision is taken.

There is — leading up to our application — there was dialogue to see about availability for an accounting firm like PricewaterhouseCoopers, but that's the — there is no agreement in place with us before or after; it's through the court. Now, I'm going to refer back now to the court proceedings, and the judge put out a document talking about — let's see if I can get a heading here — “Endorsement of Justice Conway”, which was released the day after — on August 15, 2024. I'm going to refer to paragraphs 21 and 25.

In paragraph 25, the judge states — and I quote now: “Third, I accept...” — Yukon government's — “... submission that there must be an orderly, transparent, and accountable process for these remediation efforts. A court officer, having control over the situation and required to report to the court for the benefit of all stakeholders, is the best way forward.” So, that court officer is PricewaterhouseCoopers — PwC. That is where that lies. Because there is always so much tension and concern around these situations, it's pretty typical that, when the court hears these things, they put a stay on proceedings, and that is why it is typically a very concise court case rather than a long, protracted one.

Now I'm going to quote from paragraph 21: “There has already been tangible environmental harm from the Failure Event and a serious risk that further irreparable harm will occur.” Yukon government and First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun — “... no longer have confidence in management of...” — Victoria Gold Corporation — “... to complete the necessary remediation work.”

Then, in that same paragraph: “Since no mining activities can occur before the remediation is addressed, it is appropriate to appoint professionals to step in and oversee the remediation while seeking to preserve the...” — Victoria Gold Corporation — “... business for all stakeholders. While I acknowledge that receivers are to be appointed cautiously, the urgency and magnitude of the situation warrant that appointment.”

So, the receivership came into place on August 14. That is when PricewaterhouseCoopers was put in place by the court.

**Mr. Kent:** So, just to be clear then — I want to give the minister a chance to get this on the record — there is no invoice

from PwC to the Yukon government for the period up to August 13, 2024; there is no invoice that exists for that; there is nothing that PricewaterhouseCoopers billed the Yukon government for prior to the receivership — is that what the minister is telling us here today? I want to give him a chance to put that on the record.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'm not aware of anything. I'm asking the department to check back and to confirm, but I'm not aware of anything.

**Mr. Kent:** I'll look forward to hearing back from the minister on that. Yes, I'll look forward to hearing back.

Just back to page 39, the emergency work, \$6.087 million disbursed up to and including September 20, 2024. Is this strictly for contractors doing work on things like the berm and the pits for water storage, or are there other emergency works that were required under that disbursement?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The \$6 million in that line covers off things like berm, water storage — so, the ponds — groundwater wells and measurements, and the water treatment plant work, so it's sort of those four main things. There also needed to be work — part of the \$6 million went to camp upgrades. Again, as I stated in the House the other day, the main camp is directly below where the berm stopped. Because there was the risk of a secondary failure, there needed to be a camp provided for out of that path, and there had to be some work to get that upgraded for the level of work that was coming.

**Mr. Kent:** If the minister could get a breakdown of those emergency works — by a line item — I would appreciate it. He probably doesn't have it with him here this afternoon, but if he could get back to us with that, I would appreciate receiving it — just exactly what made up that \$6.087 million and if they are expecting to spend the \$27.7 million by November 12 as was included in the revised budget that the receiver tabled.

I am just going to jump down to the Yukon government costs. There has been \$336,000 disbursed for that. Can the minister give us an idea of what type of expenditures are related to that?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, it is a range of costs. These would include works that we had contracted. Leading up to the receivership, we had put in place a lot of contracts — for example, CoreGeo, which is doing drilling and groundwater monitoring. There was SRK, which is doing some of the engineering advice and geochemistry advice. There is Minnow, which has been doing water quality work. Those are contracts that we had put in place previously to continue to do work and then they are in there during the period of the receivership. There would also be legal costs that come in there. It's that sort of list that makes up the \$336,000 or so.

**Mr. Kent:** If the minister can provide us with a breakdown — if he is getting some information back to us today with some of the other things, maybe he could provide us with a breakdown of those Yukon government costs — the \$336,000 — and what makes up the slightly over \$2 million in that three-month budget.

I do want to ask about the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun costs. There have been no disbursements made, but the 90-day budget by PwC is for \$1.83 million — if the minister can

just let us know the kinds of things that this is designed to cover off for costs to the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I meant to say it last time that I will work to get a breakdown of the numbers — including the Yukon government costs, for sure. Whenever I'm talking about the receiver and their numbers, I am always going to need to check in with them and make sure what the appropriate level of granularity that they would go to is, but I will work to put that request in front of them and get that information to the members opposite.

The current question is around the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and what this projected \$1.83 million is going for. I just want to note that we have not been invoiced from the First Nation at this point in time. We started off by offering some money, but I think — a transfer payment agreement; pardon me — but they declined it at that point. I think that was their prerogative, but we are budgeting, because we anticipate — we know that there are costs that are being incurred and that these are costs as a result of the heap leach failure. Generally speaking, I will refer to them as sort of “technical support and services” around that failure.

Think of things like experts around groundwater, experts around the ecology of the system if you are bringing contaminants into it and where you need to monitor, where you need to protect — those sorts of questions. There is a range of expertise similar to the types of experts that we would retain to advise us around the situation. Just as a fellow government that is deeply concerned with the situation, it's that range of expertise that we are budgeting toward providing at some point, but as I note, to date, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun has not put in an invoice or a request for these funds at this point. I think they are looking to take that decision down the road, and we respect their right to do so.

**Mr. Kent:** When it comes to these expenditures and sourcing, does the government have any requirements for the receiver to source local contractors — whether they be contractors from the community of Mayo or the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun? When they are purchasing things, is there some sort of a requirement to do as much local purchasing as they can? Is that part of the agreement that the Yukon government has with PwC?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Coming out of the court order, Madam Chair, there is a memorandum between the Yukon government as the interim lender and the receiver, PricewaterhouseCoopers, about how the receiver will conduct procurement over their time in the management of the mine. It includes provisions for preferencing local contracting and local hire. There is a provision in there for them to report back on how that is doing — to both us and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun.

It will include references to work with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun's development corporation. We also had a meeting with the lien claimants. I think it's now a few weeks ago, but PwC was there in attendance, and we talked about what the situation was and what the priorities were around the remediation work.

I think that if we look on page 20 of the court report, we will see a reference to hiring local contractors where possible.

**Mr. Kent:** When that reporting is done by PwC, I am sure me and others in the Legislature as well as contractors and suppliers in the Yukon will be interested in seeing that. So, if there is some sort of a breakdown on how much has been spent and then, of that, how much has been spent locally, I am sure that will be information that people will be interested in, for sure.

I know that government started to work on the receivership issue before August 14. Obviously, there was a lot of work put into it. There were affidavits gathered, and I understand that there were hundreds, if not thousands, of pages of documentation presented in the court that day. Also, I understand from a previous briefing with officials — not the budget one but a briefing on Eagle — that there was no work done with Victoria Gold Corporation prior to the receivership. They essentially found out 24 hours or so beforehand that they were required in court the next day and that the Yukon government was seeking to put them into receivership.

The minister has talked about the CCAA — which stands for *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* — the process that Victoria Gold was looking at exploring. I was just doing a little bit of research on this before, and I found an FAQ on CCAA.

So, the question that is posed: “Is a company that has filed for protection from its creditors under ... CCAA in receivership or bankruptcy?” Then the answer on this website is: “In a word, no. A company (also referred to as the ‘Debtor’) that has filed under the CCAA for protection from its creditors is not in receivership or bankruptcy. Rather, it is filed under the CCAA in order to devise a plan of restructuring and compromise for its creditors that avoids the company going into receivership or bankruptcy, with a view to keeping the debtor company operating, increasing the amount that may ultimately be paid to creditors and preserving the Debtor’s employees’ jobs.”

So, this is from PricewaterhouseCoopers, the PwC website, where I found this information. I am just curious why the government was so reluctant to allow the company to go into CCAA and opted instead for receivership.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, I agree with the member that the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* — CCAA — is about bankruptcy protection.

It’s to say that we have some financial difficulties; we want to be protected from bankruptcy. But it doesn’t say, for example, that there is solvency — that there is cash available to continue to pay your employees or to, for example, clean up an environmental situation.

So, I will say that — on day 2, I remember being on a call with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun where we talked about what our role as government needed to be and that what we were going to do was work with the company to try to address the slide and the environmental risks that were there but that we would at all times need to be preparing in case the company was not able to do so.

So, did we look ahead of time at this court case? Of course, we did. We had to be considering that responsibility should Victoria Gold go into CCAA — *Companies' Creditors*

*Arrangement Act* — which is bankruptcy protection. What would have happened if they had done that? Let’s say that we had not applied to the court. What would be the difference for us? Well, there are sort of two differences right in that moment.

The first one is — and we now know that there weren’t funds to keep the mine going the way that some of the public-facing statements of the management of the mine said at that point — at least when it was revealed what the dollars looked like, that didn’t appear to be the case at all. Then when the court was hearing this, Victoria Gold itself said that they wanted to file for this bankruptcy protection. In that moment, what is typical for companies that file for bankruptcy protection is — it’s not really typical that it means they get out of it, because they need revenue somewhere. What is typical in that moment is that there is a priority for who is going to get paid out, so the priority charges in this case, for the most part, was the banking syndicate. They are the ones who come to the front of the queue. For the dollars that are remaining there for Victoria Gold, they are the ones who would get paid first.

But after we go through this receivership process in the court, the Yukon government becomes the debtor in possession and we now become the priority location for where those funds will go.

So, if you’re talking about taxpayer protection — if Victoria Gold had chosen to go into bankruptcy protection, it’s the banks that are in the front of the queue. It’s not those lien holders like Air North or North of 60 or all those companies that are owed money; they are further down the queue. Now the queue is taxpayers first and then back to all the lien holders.

The other thing is that our other main priority was remediation. That was the job at this point. We were hopeful that this would be done by Victoria Gold, because whenever you transition management, there is a time lag. You just don’t snap your fingers. It takes a lot of effort to step in and get things up and running, so there’s a challenge there. But we deemed — and again, just to state it clearly — that we had lost faith that Victoria Gold was going to complete that remediation in a way that we directed to happen. So, this is why I will argue that this was protecting the taxpayers as well as the environment.

Finally, I will also say that if you’re trying to think about mining and trying to think about how you get back to mining — the possibility of it even — you need to make sure that this site is cleaned up appropriately. I just can’t imagine that we would issue a licence for someone to mine there unless the environmental risk, especially of the groundwater, is dealt with and unless we understand what caused this accident and how we could prevent such an accident in the future. Those are the things that need to happen.

When we met with the lienholders, one of the key takeaway messages that I heard from them is that there is, of course, a loss that they hold because they were owed money for services or goods that they provided and Victoria Gold didn’t pay them, but there’s also a loss of that potential of work in the future. They asked us to make sure that we worked hard to get this cleaned up fairly quickly. I have already said that it’s important that we work quickly or that the receivership work

quickly, because those environmental risks increase over time. That is the reason why.

I appreciate the question from the member opposite, but I will state very clearly for Yukoners that we believe that this was the best course financially, environmentally, and from a taxpayer protection perspective.

**Mr. Kent:** I have many, many more questions for the minister with respect to this and some of the other aspects of the supplementary budget, but I am going to ask one more now before we break and then, after the break, turn the floor over to my colleague from the NDP.

When we started this session, we asked the government in Question Period about the decision to put it into receivership. At the time, the Premier characterized the Official Opposition as an outlier when it comes to putting the company into receivership and that industry and bankers thought it was the best course of action. While I agree that some in the industry felt that it was the proper course of action, it certainly isn't unanimous, and the Official Opposition isn't the outlier when it comes to this. I have heard from a number of companies since this was done and some of these individuals are on the pro-receivership side, and some felt that the government should have allowed the company to file for CCAA and look to restructure based on that.

One of the documents that I have in front of me is a research note dated September 12, 2024 from Paradigm Capital. It's comments from the Beaver Creek gold conference. In this, it says that the most talked about issue is — and I quote: "How the Yukon government has bungled the Victoria situation. There was enough support for Victoria to fix the problem and carry on mining and contributing to the economy. This support was there from multiple different sources, we gather. Instead, Yukon government forced Victoria into receivership, shaking investor and corporate confidence in its claims about being supportive of mining."

The document goes on to say some other things with respect to the situation at Eagle Gold, and I'm happy — I'm sure that the minister has seen this — to provide him with a copy. I just want the minister to confirm that there are others who believe that the receivership wasn't the right course of action and correct what the Premier asserted in the initial Question Period of this Sitting that the Yukon Party — the Official Opposition — stood alone on believing that receivership wasn't the correct course of action.

Madam Chair, I understand that we're going to go to a break, but perhaps the minister will get a chance to answer that after the break. I do want to thank the officials for being here today. Hopefully, we get a chance to continue this discussion on a future date or perhaps later today, depending on the number of questions that the Leader of the NDP has.

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

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*. Is there any further general debate?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would like to thank the Member for Copperbelt South for his questions. I will just follow up with his last one and then one other point.

Of course, there will be people who disagree with our decision, especially people from industry. I never expect there to be 100-percent agreement one way or the other.

I don't want to go here, but I will note that the report that the member opposite was referring to has, as one of its authors, a family member of the CEO of Victoria Gold — not maybe the best source or not a source that doesn't have a perspective.

From the analysis that I look at — so, the way that I weigh things is I ask myself: What advice did I get from the department and from the folks who are working most closely on this file? When I say that we had lost confidence, that's based on the reports that they have given to me about that work. I've even heard my deputy minister say the same thing in public.

It's partly that; it's also partly: Hey, if we left Victoria Gold in place, where would we land? What is our best understanding of where things would get to? There isn't certainty around those things, but there is a degree of confidence. I will just continue to say that, from an environmental perspective, I think that we are further ahead now; I also believe, from a mining sector perspective, that this is the right path, and also, from a fiscal responsibility perspective, I'm confident that's the case.

The member opposite also asked about whether we had invoiced PricewaterhouseCoopers ahead of August 14. Again, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has double-checked — no, there is no invoice. I will reach out to the Department of Finance to see if there is some other place where this might have happened, but I'm not anticipating that — again, looking forward to further questions.

**Ms. White:** Madam Chair, I thank the minister and, of course, echo the welcome to the officials and, of course, the words of encouragement to the department knowing that, since June 24, it has been a really hard time. I understand that, and I echo the minister's sentiments.

I'm just going to go to the minister's mandate letter specifically around obviously, you know, his responsibilities as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Can he tell me where he is in supporting the development of legislation to regulate geothermal energy development in the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Geothermal legislation will — I think of it in the same vein as resource-based legislation. Probably, the closest to it would be oil and gas, but you are not going to be bringing oil and gas up to the surface, but it is similar in the sense that you are drilling for energy, for resources.

We had a commitment under *Our Clean Future* to developing legislation. We did some of the preliminary work. I think that we put out a "what we heard" report about a year and a half ago. Whenever we are thinking about resource-based

legislation — because under the *Devolution Transfer Agreement*, we agreed with First Nations that we would develop resource-based legislation, working with them. That list included the *Quartz Mining Act*, the *Placer Mining Act*, the forestry act, and the *Lands Act*, but we think that it also includes this, because we think of this as resource legislation.

When we talked with First Nations as a group, they outlined for us questions of capacity. Actually, what they outlined for us is that they wanted the priorities to be new minerals legislation and lands legislation. We had gone quite a way down toward getting to some amendments to our *Lands Act*, but then, when we established the new minerals legislation tables, First Nations asked us to go back and <sup>reset</sup> the lands legislation and to sort of put it back to that same level of engagement with nations — but it is really demanding on those nations. It takes up a lot of time — that work.

So, we are currently not advancing it as the priority at this time, and we are looking to keep the focus on new minerals legislation and resource lands legislation.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. Again, I am just referencing his mandate letter, which was issued to him by the Premier on March 2, 2023, so just over a year since that was issued. It's interesting to hear that about geothermal energy. It doesn't sound like we are really moving ahead on that.

The next bullet point says, "Continuing to support the increased production and procurement of high quality, local food products and the increase in demand for Yukon meat products." It says, "Your work should incorporate the guidance of *Cultivating our Future: 2020 Yukon Agriculture Policy* and supported by the Department of Highways and Public Works." Where is the department or you as minister on *Cultivating our Future: 2020 Yukon Agriculture Policy*?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Earlier this summer, I asked to pull together a briefing between the Minister of Health and Social Services and I to discuss how we could advance the procurement of locally produced foods, in this case, for places like our long-term care facilities but also possibly the hospital. It was funny, but I came in there like: We need to be doing this; this is important. And then the department said: Yes, this is what they had been doing in the background, and here is the work that has been happening.

So, there was a pilot program launched this summer with local food producers creating sort of an online marketplace. It was working with Highways and Public Works because of the procurement side of it but also with a focus of Health and Social Services where we had their procurement folks sitting down with the Agriculture branch and some members of this pilot program.

We do have in place some policies, but they haven't been producing the results that we wanted. We are looking to find a way to get it moving further. Just recently, we heard as well that the Department of Education is working on a food program with the federal government, and I reached out to deputy ministers to make sure they were talking about the potential of local produce in that campaign.

**Ms. White:** So, based on that meeting this summer with the minister of health, where are we in supporting the

agriculture industry and getting local food into those bigger things?

I think we discussed that the first time in this Assembly — definitely more than since March 2023 — about the importance of supporting that industry and its growth. So, where are we? What kind of numbers are we seeing? What quantities are we seeing of locally produced food in those institutions?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'll have to go back and check in with the Agriculture branch to ask the specific question about how the pilot project is going and what the tangible results are or what their milestones are.

I know that we — there were some — I have some numbers over the years for dollars that were spent in continuing care facilities, but they — because those numbers weren't producing the results that we thought they should — that's why the pilot project was created. My last update is from this summer, so I don't have numbers from this fall yet to know how the pilot project is going.

I will have to check in with the branch to get a sense.

**Ms. White:** I do look forward to that. I think it's important. If we really want to see the agriculture industry thrive, we need to support it. The biggest single buyer is the Yukon government.

We can talk about markets or we could talk about gate sales — farm gate sales — but that is not the same as having a regular order of hundreds of pounds of potatoes or three cows per quarter or however that would look. I think it's important that we talk about growing that industry.

I'm going to keep following along on that mandate letter.

On page 4, it says: "Advance land use planning by completing the Dawson Regional Land Use Plan..." which is interesting, because I, along with other members of this House, have definitely or recently received communication from the Chief of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation honestly highlighting their concern and, well — I mean, I can say "concern" without getting too much into it.

The Dawson regional land use plan was put out in the summer of — the recommended plan was — pardon me — in June 2022 was released and passed on to the plan parties — so, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Yukon governments. In September, it became public when the parties started their consultation on it. It says on the website that, after their consultation, they will either approve it or recommend a final round of changes back to the commission. It's important to note that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation has supplied their feedback, but the Yukon government has not. It's not a short amount of time since that has happened, so where is the Yukon government in providing their feedback to the Dawson Regional Planning Commission?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Just going back to the earlier questions around the local agricultural pilot project, what they did was they identified — they talked about trying to figure out what some of the sticking points were, so they identified various products like, for example, flour and eggs, and they are part of the pilot project. I'm being told that there are four producers available on the Highways and Public Works procurement system as part of that pilot project. I will work to

find out how — you know, how we're measuring success or not or how that's working.

With respect to the Dawson regional land use plan — you know, first of all, I will thank the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government for submitting their plan, but — and I know that Hähkë Taylor, the Chief of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, has been talking about this publicly and writing letters to us. I mean, one of the things that seems to be missing in some of those letters is an acknowledgement that we have an obligation to consult — and if Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in can waive that — but we also have that obligation to consult with the White River First Nation, which we have done and is now complete.

Also, one of the challenges for us was that, just as the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in tabled their report, they placed in front of us 80 more changes that — even though we had a working group that was saying: Hey, we're going to have full disclosure about what's going on — just on that last day, they gave us a whole bunch more that we had a responsibility to work through with them or to respond to as a government. So, that took a lot of effort.

What I will say is that everyone I have met working on this file from the departments of Energy, Mines and Resources, Environment, and Tourism and Culture and from the Executive Council Office — everyone on the government side is hustling to get a response from us while also fulfilling our obligations around consultation.

It is close, I look forward to submitting it, and I look forward to the next stages. I think it is fair to say that we had been hopeful to provide a joint submission, but clearly, we did not achieve that. Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in made the choice to submit individually and we respect their decision. Our response to the recommended plan is coming very shortly.

**Ms. White:** Does the minister feel — knowing that the recommended plan came out in the summer of 2022 and then was made publicly available in September and now we are in October 2024 — is that timely? Is that what other First Nations should expect when we talk about land use planning — that government can take more than a year to respond to the commissions?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I wouldn't believe that the member opposite is trying to criticize the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government, but if I take that language exactly as is, they too took more than a year. So, what I think is that we should be making significant effort toward it, and what I am trying to say to the member opposite and to Yukoners through this dialogue is that I know that all of the folks working on land use planning within the Government of Yukon are very committed to land use planning and have been very diligent in their work and I'm sure will continue to be so.

Yes, it has taken time. I know that we began our consultation with White River this spring. It finished about a month or a month and a half ago. Now that this is completed, the submission is just working through our side now. I say that it is close and, while I appreciate that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in made the decision to submit on their own, I would have

preferred — and we had been seeking to try to do that through more of a consensus model.

It is important to make sure that we are addressing some of the pressures that come about without having a plan in place yet, so that's exactly why we put in interim measures. We said that, okay, the draft plan came out, and they said: Here's the land management units around the Dawson regional land use planning area. And they said in the draft plan: Here are the areas that we think should be slated for protection. We immediately put in withdrawals from staking on those areas. The plan continued to work, and then the recommended plan came out and we immediately put in withdrawals on those areas. Wherever they made the recommendation that there should be protection or conservation, we put those in.

So, we have put interim measures in place around this. If the member wants me to say that I hope for land use planning to move faster — absolutely. If what they're saying is: Would I criticize the Yukon government for being slow? No. What I would say is that the officials have been incredibly diligent and there was a lot of work that they were responding to that was presented to them by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in.

**Ms. White:** September 2022 was when that plan became public and the minister is saying that, in the spring of 2024, consultation wrapped up with the White River First Nation. I am just looking for clarification on that.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What I'm saying is that late in the year in 2023 — I think it was November — Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in gave us a significant document where they outlined another 80 changes that hadn't been discussed previously by the senior liaison committee nor the technical working group that was working jointly to try to advance land use planning together.

Those 80 differences were significant in nature. They required a great deal of work on our part. We did that work diligently. We began our — we needed to address those. We needed to prepare our own draft around where we were going, and then we needed to consult with the White River First Nation and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in.

What I'm saying is that the consultation with the White River First Nation began, my belief is, in May of this year. It concluded somewhere in — I think it was late August of this year. Since late August — so, let's say for the past month and a half — we've been preparing our final submission.

I will say that I have written to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to give them that indication at all times. The Minister of Environment and I have co-signed letters to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. I have spoken directly to the land use planning council about these timelines, and I just think that they include consultation with First Nations, which is an obligation on our part. So, I will say that when — you know, of course, we want to advance it more quickly, but we're not going to not fulfill our obligations around consultation.

**Ms. White:** I'll just highlight that I think having a chief reach out to not only the minister but opposition parties with concerns highlighting all the communication that they have had since 2022 is not usual, and I would say that, in terms of reaching out and including the opposition parties, that's a concern. I think the minister should be concerned, because that



is highlighting a nation's concern over the land use planning process and the timeline.

I can give the minister a chance to respond to that, but it's a statement; it wasn't really a question.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I saw the correspondence. Of course, the same day that the chief wrote that letter, he also wrote a letter to me and the Minister of Environment, which maybe the member opposite doesn't have yet. It was completely — well, it was a different tone, but yes, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have made it clear that they wish for us to submit quickly. They feel that we should have done it already, and I wish I had that sort of magic wand, but I don't. I will continue to say that we need to fulfill our obligations around consultation. I will say that it was all made more complicated because Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in also, right at the same time as saying that they were going to submit, they gave us a significant document with a significant number of changes. I know that maybe it would help the member opposite to see the correspondence going the other way.

Do I respect that Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in feels that we should get that response in? Absolutely, but it would be a mistake to think that the public servants in the Yukon government are not committed and dedicated to a land use plan here. They are and we are. We are just doing our diligence. I guess what I would say to the chief is I apologize that it has taken this amount of time.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. Is there a timeline when that can be expected?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What we've continued to say to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in is that our intention is to submit this fall. I can say that I am in daily dialogue to see how our submission is progressing through the Cabinet approval process. I am very hopeful that it is imminent.

**Ms. White:** I am sure that the minister can forgive me when I am trying to get a sense of what "fall" means, when I was told that there would be a building opening in downtown Whitehorse in spring and that actually meant closer to fall, if we look at it. Winter starts on December 21. Do we anticipate that the government's submission will happen prior to solstice?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** That is my anticipation. Can I just say it this way? I am trying for this month. That is the effort that I am putting toward it. We are working to get it out as quickly as we can. I appreciate that everybody — Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the public — would like to see our submission.

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

So, [yukon.ca](http://yukon.ca) currently states that the microgeneration program intakes are closed. Applications are paused for the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes area while work is underway to ensure grid stability. It says that applications are expected to resume in January 2025. I am just looking also for clarification.

Does that mean that applications in other communities are still open, and is that being advertised by the government?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The closure was only ever for the Whitehorse area and surrounding areas. I am not sure if I have an exact boundary. I will try to get that if that is important for the member opposite, but what I can say is that whenever there is an electrical outage, whether it is on the Yukon Energy side

or on the ATCO side, there is always analysis that is done to ascertain the cause of that outage. The utilities became concerned that some of the outages that they were experiencing they believe to be related to the intermittent nature of solar and thus the microgeneration program.

We got to this place seven years ahead of schedule, so it's like the microgeneration program had been successful faster than was anticipated and so some of the growing pains need to be addressed. One of those is around things like when you have an islanded grid, you need to be careful about things like frequency. I have said in the past and will continue to say that, when I saw the numbers, the Yukon had the second highest uptake of solar of any of the Canadian jurisdictions — provinces and territories — the second highest, and we live north of 60.

When you have an islanded grid, the utilities are warning us and wrote us letters saying that we have to be careful; we think that this is causing instability to the grid. So, they are off; the pause is in place, and we will hear what the results of the work are — early in 2025 is now when they anticipate getting the results back to us. I want to be careful; it does matter what that study finds. If it finds that there are solutions — for example, some of the industry folks have recommended some potential solutions around things like inverters. There is a phrase — if you have a meter on your house, the utilities see up to that meter, but they don't see behind the meter. They don't see what's going on, and those solar microgeneration systems are in behind the meter, so it's difficult for the utilities to get a sense of that.

It will matter what the study finds, so I don't want to say to Yukoners that we know it's going to be restored in January. The goal is to understand what the next steps will be at that point. I'm hopeful, of course, that we will get back to the program, but I do think that we need to be careful to listen to the utilities regarding grid stability; it's pretty important to make sure that the system is reliable.

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

I have questions or clarification on language. On the website, it's a different colour on the top of the page and it says: "Micro-generation program intakes are closed. Applications are paused for the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes area while work is underway to ensure grid stability. Applications are expected to resume January 2025." The reason that I'm reading that off — it just says that applications are expected to resume in January 2025 and it doesn't have the nuances of what the minister just said, which is that it's all based on what the studies come back and say.

Knowing that the minister hasn't said that they are going to be resumed in January 2025 and that it's all dependent on those studies, I guess I'm asking if it makes sense to clarify that statement on the page, because right now, my thought is that I could reach out to a solar company, I could get a quote for my house, and I could make the application in 2025.

Is the minister open to entertaining an edit to that page just based on his previous answer?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I appreciate the comment and I will check in with Yukon Energy to make sure that my

understanding aligns with what they are saying on their site. I think it's very important that we make sure to communicate well with Yukoners.

One of the things that I will say for the member opposite if she is planning to apply is that one of the things under the microgeneration program always has been that you need to get the approval of the utilities. There's a sign-off there. I can't just authorize it; I need them to be supportive of it too. That proviso is put there because of this very situation where we need to make sure that it's not causing problems for the grid.

So, I definitely appreciate the point and will follow up on it and request that the utilities either get my understanding lined up to what their statement is or get their statement lined up to what the reality is.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I just ask, if a change is made to that website, that a note can be sent to opposition parties so we know that it has been changed.

Just moving on to electric vehicles — actually, I'm just going to go back for a second.

I think the fact that Yukon far exceeded what the expectation was for the microgeneration program is actually a success — the fact that people were so willing to participate in something that was thought to be something that would take longer to do.

I think early adapters and people who are willing to go out before it starts are really important. I say this in the same way — and I've said this here before and I will say it again — I got a heat pump installed in 2016 and my rebate was \$500 and it cost me \$32,000 to do, but I was keen on both helping the Energy branch track the energy use of that machine but also knowing that I was going to break up with oil.

Knowing that we're moving hopefully toward a \$24,000 rebate makes me wish that maybe I was a little less keen in my early adoption. It would have changed things quite a bit, to be perfectly frank.

I am just looking for clarification around one of the comments that I think I heard the minister say earlier around heat pumps. I think that the minister said something about it not being the primary source or that it should be a backup source or that there needed to be a backup source. Can the minister clarify that for me, please?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am just going to say this right up front: I don't think that we're going to be able to be retroactive to that far back. I will say as well that heat pumps have an upfront cost, but they tend to be pretty efficient. One of the advantages of them is that they help to make your heating more efficient. They don't do it at all temperatures. What I was referring to earlier in my comments is that heat pumps have, depending on the model and a few other factors, a sort of temperature cut off where they stop really performing. What I was saying is that you can put a heat pump in and they may take over the bulk of your heating load, but you still need something else in behind there for those days in the Yukon when it is cold. So, if you currently have as your primary heating source an oil furnace, propane heat, or whatever your heat is or maybe one of those sealed units, like a Toyo stove — whatever the name brand is — I'm not trying to sell anything here. Whatever your

current primary heat source is, when you bring in a heat pump, you probably need to keep that heat source in place for those days when it is too cold for the heat pump to work.

This is what we were saying to the feds, and that's what I meant when I said a "primary source".

**Ms. White:** Just so the minister knows, there is one cold weather heat pump specifically that is installed in most of the Yukon homes where heat pumps are installed, which is the Mitsubishi Zuba, because it has a built-in electric furnace, so once it hits below minus 30, it flips over to an electric furnace.

I will also point out that it is not a small unit, and I can't imagine having both an oil furnace and a heat pump installed, because that would take up most of the basement. I mean, there is technology that exists. I would also say that the advancement in that technology — the unit that I have installed is not the units that are going to be installed now. The units that get installed now have defrost things at the top of the unit defrost so that you never have to worry about the blades freezing. Mine is a generation or two ahead of that, so it has a roof over top of it just for that specific reason, but I do not have another system. I have the heat pump that has its own electric backup in it.

I am going to electric vehicles. Does the minister have a sense of what percentage of new vehicle sales were electric in the last fiscal year and what that number might be right now?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I agree with the member opposite. Technology is changing rapidly with heat pumps and with batteries and lots of technologies, and we are working to stay ahead of that, but not all heat pumps have their own primary heat as well. Let me just leave it there. I think that there are going to be times when you do want to move all the way over to a system, and there are going to be times when you want to have a blend. That's fine.

I don't have a number of percentage of sales. What I do have in front of me is that, as of June this year — so let's call it halfway through 2024 — we had 441 light-duty and 22 medium-duty zero-emission vehicles and four electric motorcycles registered in the territory and lots of electric bicycles.

The last time I heard — but I really haven't checked the number in quite a while — the Yukon was third after British Columbia and Québec, I believe. We were second in solar after Ontario, but with respect to electric vehicles, Yukoners again have done very well at early adoption.

**Ms. White:** When does the Government of Yukon expect to start charging a fee at their charging networks?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'll answer this in a couple of ways. I don't know the date. I do know that I asked that this be brought forward more quickly than had originally been planned. I know that we recently passed a regulation that allows businesses, First Nation governments, development corporations, and municipalities to charge fees at electric vehicle charging stations that they own, so this is work leading toward that. I'll have to get an update on what the timeline looks like.

The two edges of this sword are: It has been an incentive to get those early adopters moving, but it is also that we should all pay for our energy use. So, that's the difference.

When I talk to new electric vehicle owners, their sense is that, compared to internal combustion engines, they are saving many thousands of dollars a year in operating their vehicles. Now, it matters where you live; it matters what you are using your vehicle for — there are many things.

Just this weekend, I talked to a neighbour who had purchased an electric vehicle, and he said that his savings year over year were in the range of \$5,000 a year. That is really quite impressive.

**Ms. White:** I also appreciate the minister's sentiments, but when an electric vehicle is not of an affordable price, you price out a lot of folks who may be looking for that affordability, and then you throw in free charging. I appreciate that it's a double-edged sword.

Of note, I would say that a press thing that came out today from the Yukon Bureau of Statistics' information said that 87.1 percent of the Yukon's energy this year was generated by hydro but, 12.8 percent of it was from thermal generation. The reason why I ask about the charging of electric vehicles is that I see lots of folks come and park in government spots and charge up on government's dime as opposed to charging at home. I think it's fair. I mean, we set up the system like that right now and I think it's just a matter of, at one point in time, people paying for their energy use and that includes electric vehicles.

So, I guess I will wait for that press announcement to come out.

We spoke about this previously this year or possibly last fall, but it was about the lumber drying yard on the highway toward Carcross. I cannot remember the name of it, but I wanted to know if there was an update for that.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will note that in *Our Clean Future*, there was a date that had been set for starting to charge for <sup>vehicles</sup> and I believe it was 2025. Anyway, I'll look back. Moving that ahead a bit is not changing things drastically.

I appreciate those early adopters, including some of the people here in this room whom I know have been early adopters.

I think that the zoning amendment — sorry, it's the Kookatsoon gravel pit. It's just south of Kookatsoon Lake. It's no longer used as a gravel pit; it has been rezoned. We haven't issued any permits yet for wood activities that I'm aware of. I can check in with the department to see. Anyway, currently that is the status. It has been zoned and not permitted.

**Ms. White:** Will residents of the area be notified when it is permitted — when it does go out and there will be changes to that gravel pit?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Yes, I have directed the department. I was just briefing my new deputy minister on that same direction, that if there is going to be a permit considered, that there be a public-facing process so that we can receive feedback.

I have already had a lot of public engagement with the folks of Mount Lorne about what we have been anticipating at this point, but we talked about how we would try to set this precedent so that, in the future, there would also be that ability

for the public, residents, and the local advisory council to provide their feedback on any permits that are issued over time.

**Ms. White:** I think that the minister's constituents would appreciate having the heads-up before anything happens there.

So, the government's 2020 agriculture policy sets out a goal of having environmental farm plans for 75 percent of Yukon farms. How many farms are registered so far in the environmental farm plan?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Can the member just repeat the question? I missed one of the words that she was saying.

**Ms. White:** It is the environmental farm plan. There was a commitment in the 2020 agriculture policy that sets out a goal of having environmental farm plans for 75 percent of Yukon farms. I am curious: How many are currently registered in that?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will have to check with the branch just to get that information for the member opposite.

**Ms. White:** I don't think that this is probably a bad spot to wrap it up for today, so, Madam Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

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

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

### Chair's report

**Ms. Blake:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 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:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.*

**The following sessional paper was tabled October 15, 2024:**

35-1-164  
*Yukon Development Corporation Annual Report 2023*  
(Streicker)

**The following legislative return was tabled October 15, 2024:**

35-1-147  
Response to Written Question No. 42 re: power generation  
(Streicker)

**The following document was filed October 15, 2024:**

35-1-260  
*Yukon Energy 2023 annual report* (Streicker)