



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Monday, October 21, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2024 Fall Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, October 21, 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 changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper: Motion No. 276, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, has been completed in whole or in part; Motion No. 368, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party, is out of date; and Motion No. 1029, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse West, is also 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: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukoner Appreciation Week and Small Business Week

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to two events happening this week: Yukoner Appreciation Week, hosted by the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, and Small Business Week, hosted nationally by the Business Development Bank of Canada.

These two well-loved annual traditions have historically been held independently of each other. This year, however, the chamber and BDC have joined forces to create a combined event that celebrates both our incredible local businesses and the Yukoners who support them.

From today until Wednesday of this week, a series of presentations, panel discussions, and networking opportunities will take place around town. This includes one-on-one advisory sessions for businesses to get personalized advice from experts, so I invite all businesses and entrepreneurs to take advantage of these opportunities, as they have been designed specifically to help make connections, learn about new initiatives, and grow ideas.

From Thursday to Saturday, Yukoners are encouraged to show their appreciation for local businesses by attending any of the many events around town. As always, if you're not here in Whitehorse, please make sure — whether you're in Dawson, Watson Lake, or Haines Junction — please make sure you're

supporting, a bit extra, your local businesses this week — maybe some early Christmas shopping.

Back by popular demand are the Business Showcase at the Old Fire Hall, the curated Sip 'n Shop experience, and Local Eats, the wrap-up event featuring some of downtown Whitehorse's finest dining.

This is an excellent time for locals to gather in celebration of our businesses while benefiting from great deals and possibly even winning prizes.

Mr. Speaker, local businesses are critical to both the economic prosperity of our territory and the social well-being of our citizens. They provide community spaces, create jobs, sponsor sports teams and local events, and do so much more. When we support these establishments, funds circulate throughout our local economy and have a greater impact on community vitality than dollars spent Outside.

We have so many fantastic business owners here in the Yukon and I'm happy to see many of them participating this week.

I also would like to recognize the partnership between the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and the Business Development Bank of Canada on this initiative. This joint venture embodies the spirit of collaboration conducive to building a strong economy. It demonstrates the ingenuity and acumen required by the business community to adapt with the changing times and the changing needs of Yukoners.

So, thank you to the chamber and BDC for coordinating these festivities and for all of their contributions to the community and its businesses.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to tribute Yukoner Appreciation Week and Small Business Week from October 21 to 26. What a great idea: to witness the collaboration of these two weeks honouring and supporting each other through the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and BDC. This is an exciting, busy time for local businesses, and we encourage everyone to get out and buy local.

"Buy local" sounds simple, and it can be. Before going online to shop Outside, check for the products at local stores and shops. One might be surprised at the value and products you can find right at home. Whether it's groceries, gifts, or from the service industries, local establishments give you customer service, good return policies, and a range of products.

Yukon-based artisans and First Nation crafters work tirelessly to provide us with handmade products, jewellery, pottery, paintings, slippers, mitts, and even dog treats. There is an amazing array of products for every budget.

As we celebrate this week, it leads directly into bazaars and craft sales for the Christmas season. This is a fun time to shop and visit with others as you peruse the displays.

There is a different focus each day this week. A few highlights are: starting today, business support sessions to Friday's Sip 'n Shop and Saturday's Local Eats. Many business workshops are happening, sharing ideas and plans. An online digital passport is happening again, and each business that you

visit gives you an opportunity to win many smaller prizes, with a grand prize donated by Air North of one return ticket within their system.

The small businesses that are participating are listed under the chamber's webpage and in local papers. So, get out to support them as they support the community. Get to know them as businesses open their doors with ideas of what their community might need. Be brave. If there is a business that you haven't been to before, go explore.

So, thank you to the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, BDC, Kilrich Building Centres, Air North, and all of the sponsors and organizers. We applaud you and wish you a successful week.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Yukoner Appreciation Week and Small Business Week.

Every October, these weeks are a chance to pause and pay tribute to the entrepreneurs who contribute so much to our communities. Small businesses provide local jobs; they bring energy, vibrancy, and uniqueness to our streets. Being a small business owner isn't for the faint of heart; it's for the brave, the patient, and the persistent.

Small business owners are doers and problem-solvers. They are invested in our communities and the people around them. Our small business community is dynamic and responsive. They sponsor sports teams, arts events, and fundraisers that support so many people in the Yukon. Small business owners are our friends and neighbours. We can all agree that it's important to support the local businesses around us and there are lots of ways to do it.

Before ordering from a huge online retailer, look closer to home. Spending more money locally keeps the money here in our community, and chances are that you will get a better and more interesting product too, and what better week to do it than Yukoner Appreciation Week, which starts today.

I counted over 50 participating businesses that have special offers on this week. While you are shopping, you can even get a digital passport for chances to enter into a draw for some pretty impressive prizes. We are lucky to have such an amazing diversity of small businesses here in the Yukon. Thank you to you all.

Mahsi' cho.

Applause

In recognition of Yukon Wildlife Preserve 20th anniversary

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the Yukon Wildlife Preserve's 20th anniversary.

For 20 years, the Yukon Wildlife Preserve has provided Yukoners and visitors of all ages with opportunities to see and learn about our territory's wildlife while providing a 350-acre home to over 12 iconic Yukon species. Wildlife on-site include Arctic fox, Arctic ground squirrel, lynx, elk, moose, mountain goat, mule deer, musk ox, red fox, thinhorn sheep, wood bison, and woodland caribou. Many of these animals were taken in by

the preserve after being injured or previously captured. Staff on-site work with veterinarians, biologists, and experts to ensure that animals in the care of the preserve are healthy and safe and can live a life of good quality on the preserve's grounds or, in some cases, be rehabilitated and returned to the wild.

In addition to their work of providing a home to these animals, the Yukon Wildlife Preserve offers programming year-round for kids, students, and groups, which allows for unique learning experiences while promoting physical activity. The Yukon Wildlife Preserve also offers programming for kids on professional development days, school holidays, or school breaks, providing parents with an option for their kids to continue their learning adventure outside of school.

While the Yukon Wildlife Preserve is an amazing facility and resource for young learners, it also hosts events year-round for the broader public. I encourage everyone to visit the Yukon Wildlife Preserve's website at yukonwildlife.ca to find out more about the wide range of events and programming they offer.

I thank the Yukon Wildlife Preserve for their dedication to providing these incredible experiences to so many over the past 20 years, and I know that the Government of Yukon is proud to support such an important establishment in our community.

Mr. Speaker, I know that beyond the success of the Yukon Wildlife Preserve, there is a team of dedicated wildlife and animal professionals, some who may be here with us today, and I join Yukoners in applauding you for this very special anniversary.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the 20th anniversary of the Yukon Wildlife Preserve. While this is the 20th anniversary of it operating as a not-for-profit society, it's also to recognize that the facility was founded by Danny and Uli Nowlan in the 1960s and, through their vision and hard work, became a valued part of the Yukon.

In the early days, of course, it was known as the Yukon Game Farm. Danny and Uli began acquiring and breeding northern herbivores. They also bred falcons and raised orphaned animals. Researchers, biologists, photographers, and filmmakers from around the world were drawn to this unique facility. When Danny and Uli decided to retire, the possibility of the animals and land being sold and this unique Yukon asset lost resulted in a surge of public support for the idea of buying the preserve and animals and keeping it going.

Many of the organizers who began that effort were my constituents and, along with other Yukoners, they formed a group that grew to hundreds of members. The group approached us for support and also attempted to arrange financing without government funding. In December 2003, the Yukon government announced a plan to save the Yukon Game Farm, or Yukon Wildlife Preserve, and in a budget speech delivered on March 25, 2004 by the then-Premier, announced funding for the preserve.

Here are a few excerpts from it: “A dedicated group of Yukoners known as Friends of the Yukon Wildlife Preserve were attempting to acquire the preserve but were not able to arrange the necessary financing...” and “The potential for the preserve to become a world-class wildlife conservation centre, a wildlife research and rehabilitation facility, a specialized education centre and national showcase for northern wildlife and a tourist destination is undeniable.” Further, “... the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board recommended that the Yukon Game Farm and Wildlife Preserve be maintained as a publicly owned facility supported by the Yukon government and run by a non-profit organization. Our government is most happy to comply.” For anyone interested, there is more about that in the 2004-05 budget speech, which can be found in Hansard on pages 1840 and 1841.

Since 2004, the Yukon Wildlife Preserve board, staff, and volunteers have all worked hard to make the dreams of its many supporters a reality. It is home to animals including lynx, elk, moose, mountain goats, mule deer, thinhorn sheep, musk ox, fox, bison, and woodland caribou. The Yukon Wildlife Preserve offers programming and tours to tourists and Yukoners, hosts educational visits from schools, holidays events, and so much more. It has been home to injured wildlife in need of rehabilitation, with many arriving as orphans and growing up on the preserve.

Thousands of tourists and local residents visit the preserve each year, learning more about the animals and enjoying the opportunity to see wildlife up close. As an example, last year, over 750 students attended school programs at the Yukon Wildlife Preserve in the spring.

So, in closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of the people whose efforts contributed to the development and operation of the facility since the mid-1960s, including everyone who has continued this legacy over the past 20 years and all of you who made the Yukon Wildlife Preserve the beautiful and iconic part of the Yukon that it is today.

Applause

MLA Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to congratulate the Yukon Wildlife Preserve on its 20th anniversary. What we now know as the Wildlife Preserve had its beginnings in the 1960s when Danny and Uli Nowlan first acquired the land. They had a dream to create a space where Yukon wildlife would be nurtured and protected. Over the years, the preserve also became a place for raising and rehabilitating orphaned and injured animals. The work done there drew the attention of researchers, biologists, photographers, and filmmakers from around the world.

In 2004, the Yukon government and the Yukon Wildlife Preserve Operating Society took over management of the preserve. With the full support of the community, it became the educational and research facility that we know today. There are educational programs for schools throughout the year. Researchers can book time at the preserve with a unique chance to study ecology, wildlife conservation, recovery for species at risk, and more. Each year, 8,000 people visit for the chance to see dozens of species in their natural habitats. The preserve also

continues its tradition of caring for orphaned and injured animals and, over the years, hundreds have passed through the Wildlife Research and Rehabilitation Centre.

Uli Nowlan speaks of how grateful she is that the Yukon Wildlife Preserve Operating Society has continued the life’s work of the Nowlans in such a beautiful and meaningful way.

So, thank you to all of the staff, board members, and volunteers — past and present — who are responsible for the past, present, and future success of the Wildlife Preserve. Thank you to you all for this beautiful place that is such an important and thriving piece of the Yukon and will be for many years to come.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under Tabling Returns and Documents, the Chair has for tabling the 2023 annual report of the Yukon Ombudsman, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, and the Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a legislative return in response to Written Question No. 41 from the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter directed to the Premier and the Minister of Community Services about the continued erosion of services and support for Dawson City, from outgoing Mayor Bill Kendrick.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House congratulates all newly elected mayors and councils and thanks outgoing councils for their service to Yukon communities.

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

THAT this House supports the court-filed proposed plan for tobacco compensation that would see at least \$100 million paid to the Yukon for health care.

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

THAT this House congratulate new local advisory councils:

(1) Al Foster, Kevin Kennedy, and Colin O’Neill for Mount Lorne;

(2) Erik Pinkerton, Gary Pettifor, and Michelle Murphy for Marsh Lake;

(3) Brent Ristau, Marg Blewett, Lindsay Cornell, Dustin Davis, and Stacy Robinson-Brown for South Klondike;

(4) Bonnitta Ritchie, Cheryl Goulet, Kevin McDonnell, Tara Leduc, and Glenis Allen for Tagish;

(5) Mario Ley, Tracey Andrew, Alida Munro, Michelle Roulston, and Tom Luxemburger for Ibex Valley; and

(6) all outgoing councillors.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to live up to the promise the Premier made in the debate hosted by the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce during the 2021 election and reinstate the practice of public bid openings.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consult with chambers of commerce, the business community, the legal community, and Yukon First Nation development corporations before proceeding with legislative amendments that will directly affect them.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to reinstate the community training trust funding for Yukon municipalities.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to review the *Elections Act*, which has not been reviewed since 2002.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Government support for food and beverage industry

Mr. Dixon: When the Minister of Finance tabled the government's fiscal and economic outlook a few weeks ago, he insisted that everything was rosy, that businesses were doing just fine, and that his Liberal government had diversified the economy so that it wouldn't be reliant on the mining industry anymore.

At least one local economist derided the minister's comments as comedic relief and suggested that the minister's comments deserve their own laugh track. For many in the business community, this was just the latest example of how deeply out of touch this Liberal government and this minister really are. The reality is that our economy is shrinking this year by a forecasted 2.3 percent. In all likelihood, we are in a recession and many small business owners are struggling mightily.

What is the Yukon government doing to get us out of this Liberal-made recession?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I want to first just share what has played out over the last number of years.

Under the leadership of the folks across the way, we were in a recession going into the end of 2016-17. What we have seen is the strongest economy over the last eight years in the country, and for the last five years, it is the fastest growing economy.

You know what? We have had some headwinds before. One was actually a pandemic that struck everybody in the country. When that happened, what we did was we saw the biggest growth of any region — a 10-percent GDP growth. The things that we did right from the start, which we thought were smart: We eliminated the small business tax; we reduced the commercial sales tax; and we continue to get behind businesses.

Right now, as we go into this year, we are going to continue to work with the private sector to ensure that we have the right advice. But right now, what we are dealing with — even after the challenges with Eagle Gold this summer — is, again, almost the lowest unemployment rate in the country, softer GDP growth — but again, looking at a great 2025 — and we see companies like Air North buying new jets; we see companies building hotels and a tourism industry that is strong.

For questions 2 and 3, we can talk about the other areas of diversification.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I don't have time to correct all the misstatements that the Premier made in his last answer, but there were a number of things that were factually incorrect there.

One sector that is feeling particularly squeezed is the food and beverage industry. Last year, this sector began ringing the alarm bell and wrote to the government to express how difficult things were. Here's what the Yukon Chamber of Commerce said in a letter to the Minister of Finance in May of last year: "We are unanimous in our belief that lack of action aimed at allowing some margin improvement for operators will lead to significant closures and job losses."

They went on to say — and I quote: "... we are at the brink of seeing a wide-spread reduction in restaurant and bar options available in the territory, along with the negative consequences associated with significant closures."

Does the Minister of Finance recognize that Yukon businesses are struggling and many are worried about the dire economic situation that the Liberals have put us in?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The answer to the last question — maybe the member opposite, because of the former responsibility of Economic Development, wants to challenge some of the statements. All I can say is that we were in a very difficult position economically at the end of 2016.

What I can say is that the letter that has been spoken about today — I'm glad that all the things in that letter didn't happen, if you look at the date of the letter.

I can tell you — I know there is a petition coming around and there are folks in the food and beverage industry who want us to reduce the reduction of alcohol by 25 percent, for their businesses, for sale. Our challenge is that we have gone back to

the hospitality industry and said that we have to make sure that we support all businesses equally. Some are not selling alcohol, but we want to make sure that we can work with them and support them. I'm open to a program.

But we have seen, from that letter that has been quoted, that we were going to see immense headwinds. There have been some organizations or some businesses that have closed — maybe one or two. But what was indicated there when that letter was written has definitely not come true and we still have a strong economy. Yukoners know it even though the Yukon Party wants to tell you the opposite.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, what didn't come true were any of the actions that industry asked this government for.

Yukon's bars and restaurants and the hospitality sector as a whole are important not just to our economy but to the vibrancy of our communities. The reality is that this industry is struggling.

Here's what the Yukon Chamber of Commerce wrote in a letter to the minister last year: "The entire food and beverage industry continues to face serious operating pressures that impact the ability of many (or most) operators to sustain operations. This industry segment provides significant employment in the territory and current circumstances mean that this employment is at serious risk."

Does the Premier appreciate the level of challenge that so many of these small businesses are facing, and if he does, will he agree to help them out?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Not only do I appreciate it, I actually have experience working in almost all of those industries — versus what is coming from the other side of the table. I can tell you that, in the case of the hospitality industry, we had the first of its kind in Canada — sick leave program — put in place so those private sector businesses that had never had an opportunity to support their employees could. Organizations across the country from business stood up and said: Look at what they're doing in the Yukon to support these businesses. When we talk about where we are at as an economy, yes, of course, we all know that when something as substantial as Eagle has a catastrophic failure, it's going to affect the economy, but we also see other areas where it's strong and we are seeing tourism come back.

I think we need to look at other things that haven't been looked at by our government or by the Yukon Party. We have to think about defence and the \$73 billion that is being spent. We have to position ourselves to be able to maximize the opportunity when it comes to that. We still have to look at tech and we still have to look at a knowledge-based economy, but we will still continue to see strong real estate and construction. Again, we will weather the next couple of months, and 2025 looks very, very strong.

Question re: Government support for food and beverage industry

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, in the letter that my colleague has referenced from the Yukon Chamber of Commerce's food and beverage committee to the Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation, there were

several tangible actions that the industry was requesting. First among them was an improved wholesale licensing discount that is offered to businesses.

Can the minister tell us what the government's position on this request is and whether or not he has responded to the urgent letter from the Yukon Chamber of Commerce?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that, as the Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation, it is my goal and the goal of the corporation as well to find an appropriate balance between the needs of the licensees and the need to return dollars to the government to fund critical services for Yukoners and our social responsibility as well.

I can also say that a variety of licensees worked with the Yukon Liquor Corporation on the pricing structure in 2021 in a series of detailed working group meetings, and pricing is very complex, Mr. Speaker. No single solution can be working well for all licensees. Folks will have different business models and different practices, but I will say that a substantial new pricing structure was implemented back then and it actually represented approximately \$1.1 million more revenue per year for licensees in their pockets.

We will continue to work with the industries — and a very important part of our economy — while always maintaining our social responsibility.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce made very clear what this request would mean for the industry and how important it was. They said — quote: "... in the absence of an improved wholesale discount we believe that significant business failures are likely."

So, can the minister tell us if he took the action that was requested and, if not, why not?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, yes, the corporation has the sole responsibility to import liquor products into the Yukon for resale. The Yukon Liquor Corporation sets pricing structures for our stores — for the Yukon Liquor Corporation stores — and also all liquor licensees. We will continue to work with those licensees to make sure that we are working in a way that makes sure that we maximize our social responsibility and also listen to the concerns of the industry.

We have lots of different implementations of policy in place, including transportation costs that are being absorbed by the Liquor Corporation for rural communities, and we will continue to listen to the licensees. But again, a one-approach-to-fit-all is not necessarily likely. We have a whole bunch of different business models and practices. We will continue to work with the groups in the meetings and make sure that we are always communicating that complexity when it comes to our price and the schedule but also willing to work with the individuals who present — whether it is through the chamber or individual meetings that we have with businesses.

Ms. Van Bibber: The group also requested a number of changes in the operations of the Yukon Liquor Corporation. All of the changes that the group requested were related to the physical flow of goods between the Yukon Liquor Corporation and the businesses that it interacts with. They included things like allowing direct purchasing from Yukon producers,

licensee-to-licensee purchasing, and off-site liquor production and storage.

Can the minister tell us if the government has acted on any of these suggestions put forward by this group in their letter to the minister last year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I know that the minister as well as the Department of Economic Development and myself have met a number of times with the hospitality group that talked about some of the improvements. I know that the corporation has looked a number of things — space is one of the challenges — but also integrating some of those and tweaking some of the systems in place.

The reason I'm up is because I want to be very clear. This is about a 25-percent reduction in wholesale alcohol pricing. That is what the Yukon Party is really pointing to. There is a petition that is coming to the House from a few licensees on this topic, but I want to say to the House today that I have also had a number of businesses call me that are in the same business, and they are incredibly uncomfortable with this. They feel that some of the businesses that are new overextended themselves and are eroding some of the other long-time businesses and their success by trying to really reduce the price of alcohol.

So, I just want to say today — before we see it — that there are a number of businesses that are not in line with the position of the Yukon Party or a position that I believe is on its way.

Question re: Health care system

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, last week, I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services about her plans for privatizing our health care infrastructure. The minister acknowledged that the request for proposals that she put out specifically included a request to look at options to privatize health care infrastructure, but she didn't really answer our questions. So, it is great that the minister has reduced her dependency on agency nurses by finally offering more permanent positions, but that doesn't really tell us why she wants to bring public/private partnerships to our health care system.

So, I am hopeful that, since we asked the question last week, the minister has a new briefing note that she can share with us today. Will the minister tell Yukoners exactly what parts of our health care system that she is open to privatizing?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I can say that we are open to privatizing none of the parts of our health care system services. I think that the EOI that is being referred to deals with health infrastructure only, with the ideas that the Premier mentioned last week looking to some other jurisdictions in the north to determine how they happen to work with private partnerships to determine improved options for building health infrastructure.

As the member well knows, the document that she is referring to is to determine a review of health infrastructure across the territory, including health centres, hospitals, hospital needs, and services of all kinds, for the purposes of the infrastructure that is required to deliver those services to Yukoners. That is the concept of considering a possibility of a private partnership or perhaps partnerships with other

governments to determine infrastructure improvement for the Yukon, which is absolutely desperately needed and has been ignored for a long time — too long. And health infrastructure is a priority for us going forward, as was mentioned in the spring budget of 2024-25.

Ms. White: It sounds like privatization to me.

Last week, the Premier stood up and confirmed that his government would be looking at options to privatize some aspects of our health care system. P3s are a failed experiment. We have seen it tried by Liberal and Conservative governments across the country, and the result is higher costs and longer wait times. Private companies do not invest in health care to improve patient outcomes; they do so to make a profit. P3s are especially dangerous for a small government like ours because the public maintains all of the risk, while the private sector gets all of the profit. One might compare it to how the mining industry is run in the territory.

Can the minister tell Yukoners why she wants to sell off our health care to the private sector?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, a lot of comments made there that are absolutely inaccurate. What I will say is that I think we had the president of the Yukon Medical Association ask everybody in the Chamber if they could put down their partisan attacks and work together. The same individual pointed to the success of the Northwest Territories government in building the new hospital in Yellowknife, which is exactly that — a public/private partnership.

Respecting the comments made by the doctors in our community saying that this is a way to look at actually building infrastructure, the option gets put on the table, yet right now, what we are seeing is an attack just because we are looking at an option.

The other thing that I think is important to note, which I touched on, is that, when you talk about chapter 22 and working with First Nation development corporations, is the member opposite — is it okay if we have a First Nation development corporation come together to help build something and provide a service? Is that okay? Maybe there could be a quick answer when you get up for the third question.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I am looking to protect public health care.

So, the examples of problems with P3s are extensive. In 2018, the Government of Manitoba commissioned accounting firm KPMG to do a study of using P3s to build schools. Unsurprisingly, KPMG recommended against it. The Auditor General of Québec found that the Montréal University Health Centre came in at \$1.8 billion overbudget as a P3 and that the private partner then sued the government for \$367 million.

Last week and again today, the Premier held up the Stanton Territorial Hospital in Yellowknife as a great example of a P3, so maybe he would be surprised to learn that the Northwest Territories' Legislative Assembly voted to have the Auditor General of Canada review the project. MLAs cited accountability issues, staffing concerns, and a number of building malfunctions as reasons for the review. The report is expected later this year.

So, with so many lessons learned from other jurisdictions, why would this government even consider the possibility of P3s in our health care system?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It was not I who highlighted the success. The doctors in the Yukon said to look at the success, so I think we have an obligation to look at it.

When I think about any public/private partnership in the Yukon, what I think about is embracing chapter 22. First Nation development corporations and trusts hold a tremendous amount of money. To put it on the table today, I think we should be looking at partnerships where Yukon companies, where all shareholders are Yukoners, where there are opportunities to partner together. I think that's the true intent and spirit of chapter 22.

I don't know if there is a strong model for a nursing station on it or if there are ways to leverage a debt instrument; we do it. I mean, both governments, whether it be the work that we've done or the work that was done by the previous government — we did just that when we talk about how we financed energy projects. We're comfortable to do it there with the Energy Corporation. I think we should also be looking at opportunities, when it looks at the new infrastructure with the Hospital Corporation — to look at it and then bring it to the House and have that discussion.

I think we should be having Yukon companies work with the Yukon government when there are opportunities.

Question re: Department of Education sexual orientation and gender identity policy

Ms. White: In June, a school council member representing the Yukon Catholic Education Association made homophobic comments at a school council meeting, including saying that marriage is only between a man and a woman and that pride and homosexuality are the number-one deadly sin.

A teacher who attended this meeting raised the issue to the minister pointing out that this was an obvious violation of the sexual orientation and gender identity policy that is in place to protect 2SLGBTQ+ students, staff, and community members. The department confirmed that they expect school council members to follow the policy but was silent on how it would be enforced. After months without a meaningful response, the teacher finally went to the media.

So, has the minister met with this teacher to hear about her experience and make a plan for how school council meetings can be safe for everyone?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I certainly have put a lot of dedication toward working with the LGBTQ2S+ community and have spent a number of years working to change the culture around LGBTQ2S+ in the Yukon. All students, staff, and parents have a right to feel safe and to be safe in public schools — people of all sexual orientations, genders, identity, ancestry, place of origin, and everything in terms of inclusivity.

School authorities work with their entire school community to develop and implement proactive strategies that support the inclusion, respect, and dignity of 2SLGBTQIA+ students and their families.

In terms of school councils, school councils support two-way communication between a school and their school community by supporting decision-making and contributing to the success of students. Every school council may make rules for its internal procedures and meetings. This can include values, ethics, and code of conduct.

I will continue building on my answer as I go forward.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, it doesn't sound like the minister met with that teacher. But you know who she has met with? She has met with the Yukon Catholic Education Association, which that council represents, since that initial meeting. This became public when the Alberta Catholic School Trustees Association posted photos of them meeting with the Minister of Education and the Yukon Catholic Education Association.

So, let's keep in mind that this is the association that has a resource currently linked on their website that currently calls upon educators to guide — and I quote — "... young adults with same-sex attraction..." to "... avoid involvement in a 'gay culture' opposed to the Church's teaching, with its often aggressive and immoral lifestyle."

So, why would the minister meet with them but not with the teacher who experienced and stood up against homophobia in her own school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I will just continue a little bit around school councils and code of conduct, and then I will speak about partners within our community and our school community and how we work with all groups and those that are delivering school programs and different types of education within our system.

The department, in terms of school councils, will support a school council with the creation and implementation of a code of conduct if requested. The Yukon Catholic Education Association and the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees have a code of conduct available to view on their respective websites, and I would encourage the member to have a look at that. The Minister of Education has no authority to revoke any individual or publicly elected member from a school council. School councils participate in the development of school-based policies, rules, and procedures and shall consider any advice provided to it by the school administration staff.

Mr. Speaker, we have spent a lot of time over these last years — my colleagues and I — working toward the LGBTQ2S+ *Inclusion Action Plan*, and I'll continue to build on that as I go.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the disconnect is a little bit mind-boggling.

Last year, while the minister was holding up her LGBTQ2S+ action plan, students were being given textbooks that described homosexuality as disordered, and right now, while the minister is talking about how proud she is of her new policies, teachers are sitting through homophobic diatribes at school council meetings, and nothing is being done.

Does the minister hear how hollow her speeches sound? Does she realize how insulting it is to be told over and over

again that everything is great while, on the ground, students and teachers are facing homophobic attacks with no support?

I'll give the minister one more chance to take this seriously and address the real and dangerous situation that is actually happening on the ground. How does the minister intend to follow through on her promise to make school council meetings a safe place for 2SLGBTQIA+ staff and community members?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, our government has advanced LGBTQ2S+ action in a historic way. We introduced the first LGBTQ2S+ action plan that our territory has ever seen, and my colleagues and I have worked non-stop since we came through the door almost eight years ago to really understand the community and put in place the actions that will change the culture of our territory.

In terms of the textbooks and the issues around that, while Catholic schools have the right to provide religious education programs and lessons that teach Catholic values to their students, they do not have the right to provide teachings about sexual orientation or gender identity that are inconsistent with Yukon's laws and Department of Education policies. Catholic schools in the Yukon are public schools, and Catholic educators are Yukon public servants. All schools and teachers must adhere to all Government of Yukon legislation and policies. There is no room for homophobic or transphobic teachings in our public school system. I have been clear about that, and we have been working closely with our partners at the Catholic Education Association to see that this is the way it's —

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: Extended producer responsibility

Mr. Istchenko: Yukon businesses that sell materials like motor oil, oil filters, other lubricants, and antifreeze have alerted us to the fact that there are now additional fees in place as a result of the Liberal government's extended producer responsibility program.

Previously, the minister has said that the fees would not be charged until the program was implemented in 2025. So, can the Minister of Environment confirm that an environmental handling charge is now in place and being collected for certain hazardous products that come into the Yukon? Can he also tell us when these environmental handling charges began to be charged?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will get back to the member opposite with respect to that specific question. Thank you for that question.

The Government of Yukon is working with national producers, local businesses, municipalities, and industry representatives to establish the details of the extended producer responsibility framework and implement the program. The first step in the implementation process is producer-led stakeholder consultations to inform the development of stewardship plans. Some of these engagements have been completed as of August 2024, and one is anticipated to start soon. These stewardship plans will be reviewed and approved by the Government of Yukon. It is anticipated that these producer-led waste-diversion programs will begin operation in 2025.

Stewardship plan review and approval stage will allow our government to ensure that the final plans align with service level expectations, recovery targets, and our waste-diversion objectives. The Government of Yukon has maintained an ongoing dialogue with Yukon businesses and recycling stakeholders to address concerns and inform the development and implementation of the framework. We are committed to continuing this dialogue throughout the implementation of an extended producer responsibility framework in the Yukon.

I certainly have heard the specific question from the member opposite and will endeavour to return with the answer as soon as possible.

Mr. Istchenko: According to the website of Interchange Recycling, which is apparently the producer responsibility organization for the Yukon, the current fees that are being charged are two cents per litre for oil, 13 cents per oil filter, and five cents per litre for antifreeze. These fees have been in place since July 1 of this year, and payment for Q3 is due by this October 31.

This came as a shock to many businesses that thought that this program wouldn't be in place until next year — which is what the minister had said previously. So, how did the minister communicate to Yukon businesses that this new environmental handling charge would begin to be collected on July 1 of this year?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. As I indicated in my first response, I will get back to the member opposite with respect to that specific inquiry, because — as the member opposite has heard in the first response — full implementation of EPR is projected to occur in 2025.

Over the next year and a half, the government will transition the responsibility of managing non-refundable recyclables and a range of hazardous and special products to the producers of those materials. While specific details of the Yukon's new waste management approach will be determined during the stewardship plan development, review, and approval period, Yukoners can expect the same or better access to waste collection and recoveries services as they do now.

As the Department of Community Services works toward regionalization of waste service delivery across the Yukon, we know that some community transfer stations have been closed. Where possible, waste and recycling services should align to support an overall efficient system. So far, in the draft stewardship plans released, proposed service levels align with existing services and have considered any changes planned to happen during the transition period.

Mr. Speaker, that is why it is important for local governments and communities to participate in the remaining producer-led engagements that will take place over the coming months.

Mr. Istchenko: It is unfortunate that the minister is not on top of this file at all. An organization called Interchange Recycling advises on their website that all organizations doing business in the Yukon are asked to register with them and complete a Yukon participation agreement. Can the minister confirm if this is correct?

Are all businesses that sell oil, oil containers, antifreeze, and other hazardous materials required to register with this group and begin paying an environmental handling fee for those products? If so, can the minister tell us why there has been no communication with these affected businesses about this?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As I have indicated in my preliminary two answers, the extended producer responsibility program writ large is to be launched in 2025. With respect to the specific question that the member opposite has with respect to waste oil currently, as I said, I will get back to the member opposite.

Assigning responsibility for waste management to the highest available producer in the supply chain reduces the impact on smaller Yukon businesses. The small business exemption for packaging and paper producers with revenues of under \$1 million a year will also help reduce costs associated with products for small local businesses.

Most large producers in the Yukon are national companies that have already incorporated some collection and diversion costs into their product costs because many southern jurisdictions already have extended producer responsibility programs in place. For other materials, costs may be passed down to consumers via fees charged at point of sale or incorporated into the product costs. This supports the user pay and user responsibility principles of waste management.

I will just briefly commend the City of Whitehorse and the Department of Community Services with respect to their negotiations to implement a widespread blue box collection program.

Speaker: 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. 41: *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)*

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 41, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Clarke.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I move that Bill No. 41, entitled *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Environment that Bill No. 41, entitled *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill No. 41, *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)*. This bill includes several small but important amendments to the *Environment Act* and to the *Act to amend the Environment Act* that are needed to modernize the Yukon's contaminants framework. The existing regulations that we are currently relying on are outdated.

The spills regulation and contaminated sites regulations, which collectively form the contaminants regulatory framework, came into effect in 1997 and 2002 respectively.

Over the past two decades, much has changed in the understanding of specific contaminants. Also, new contaminants of concern have emerged; however, our regulations have not kept up with these trends.

To address this, we need to review our regulatory framework to align it with today's reality so that there is no gap between what we are able to regulate and what we should be regulating. The modernization of the contaminants framework started in 2014 when major updates were made to the *Environment Act*; however, the 2014 act provisions cannot come into force until new regulations are put in place to support implementation.

Mr. Speaker, primarily, the technical amendments that we are considering today support the completion of these regulations. We have established that the existing statutory provisions in the *Environment Act* and the *Act to amend the Environment Act* do not support certain provisions contemplated in the proposed contaminants regulation. To address these gaps in statutory authorities, further amendments to the acts are required before the regulation can be finalized.

This approach primarily achieves two goals. It enables the development of a comprehensive regulation that addresses all aspects of a modern contaminants framework, and it mitigates potential legal risks associated with implementing a regulation that is not well-supported by the act.

The proposed bill further clarifies some of the existing provisions to ensure a consistent contaminants framework that is clear to understand and easy to implement. Moving forward without passing these amendments would affect the scope of the proposed regulations, as key pieces may be left out of the regulation due to insufficient statutory authority.

Bill No. 41 is part of the broader process to modernize the Yukon's contaminants framework. Passing this bill at this time enables the department to complete the new regulation by the spring of 2025. The government remains committed to the protection of public health and the environment through better management of Yukon's contaminated sites and contaminants more generally.

There are approximately 555 known potentially contaminated sites spread across the territory. Of these sites, 208 are considered contaminated, 198 are remediated, and 149 sites are considered unknown and require further assessment. Collectively, these represent a considerable area of land with reduced usefulness and flexibility for economic activity or development.

Meanwhile, the growing population continues to exert more pressure on available land resources. If we can remediate and reclaim some of these contaminated sites, it would go a long way to meeting this demand. As you know, some of these sites are located in prime areas and would unlock significant economic value if redeveloped.

One of the important changes in the new framework that will help unlock the redevelopment of contaminated sites is the ability to transfer liability for a contaminated site from a responsible party to another person. These changes will make it easier for people who are sitting on contaminated sites to be

able to transfer historic liabilities to a new owner who is willing to clean up the contamination and develop the land.

Mr. Speaker, in as much as the changes that we are discussing today are technical in nature, they're essential for the implementation of the new contaminants framework, which will align our regime with other Canadian jurisdictions that have already adopted modern standards.

I will discuss the specific changes in more detail during the Committee of the Whole debate when we will be considering individual provisions of the bill.

In summary, however, the *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)* updates regulation-making authorities to ensure that proposed and existing regulations have sufficient statutory authority; it enables regulations to exempt certain releases or spills — for instance, minor spills and releases that fall below the reportable threshold — from a requirement to report a release under the act, thereby reducing red tape. It also enables the adoption of product protocols, guidelines, or other documents by reference in the regulations so that they are legally enforceable. It also authorizes the minister to engage external experts to assist with matters under the *Environment Act*, including technical external reviews. Finally, it streamlines permit provisions to ensure consistency across the legal framework.

The proposed technical amendments, together with the outstanding 2014 contaminants provisions, will all come into force after the required regulation is made. There will be a one-year transition period after approval of the new regulation to allow members of the public, stakeholders, and the department to prepare for implementation.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude my comments at second reading, I would like to inform the House that public engagement was not required in this instance and was not conducted for these amendments, since they are technical; however, targeted stakeholders who would be directly affected by these changes were notified that this bill would be advanced at this time to support the completion of the regulations. Public engagement on the proposed contaminant regulations was completed in 2018. We recently re-engaged stakeholders and First Nation governments on the regulations so that we can update the 2018 engagement, given the passage of time since it was completed.

We are keen to move this important work forward. Passing this bill brings us a step closer toward implementing the modern contaminants framework that better safeguards Yukoners and our environment.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing the thoughts of my colleagues in the House this afternoon, and thank you very much.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I don't have much to say here about Bill No. 41, the *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)*, right now here in second reading. I understand that it's pretty much benign stuff that is a lot of housekeeping. I may have a few questions in Committee of the Whole; for now, I will just turn it over to the Third Party.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I will also keep my comments brief. We support the intent of this legislation. We think that it is very important that we take responsibility and care for contaminated sites. This was actually the subject of a recent Auditor General's report to the Parliament of Canada specifically on contaminated sites of the north, so I am glad to be part of this happening.

I do have some specific questions to make sure that the intent of this bill is being carried out in a good way, during Committee of the Whole, and we look forward to moving forward to that stage.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I thank the members opposite for their brief comments with respect to Bill No. 41, and I do look forward to further discussions in Committee of the Whole later during this Fall Sitting.

As a government, we acknowledge that identifying and managing contaminated sites is by no means an easy task. It often involves complex and sometimes conflicting technical, economic, legal, and environmental considerations. I am confident that the changes proposed in Bill No. 41 support this challenging work and will help bring about efficiency in the way in which we manage contaminated sites in the Yukon.

As indicated, I look forward to further debate and discussion at Committee of the Whole, and I look forward to the vote at second reading.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 41 agreed to

Bill No. 42: Act of 2024 to amend the Land Titles Act, 2015 — Third Reading

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

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

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 third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the rationale for Bill No. 42 is clear and is as follows: The proposed amendments will provide a legal framework in the Yukon for the registration and enforcement of statutory covenants. This will facilitate the creation of long-term affordability in housing developments by creating a tool to put in place restrictions on future uses of titled land.

The proposed amendments ensure that, when the government provides land or financing to support new affordable housing projects, we have tools in place to keep the housing affordable for the long term. Statutory covenants can also be used to support vulnerable populations through access to affordable housing options.

This bill will create a legal framework required to allow for the use of statutory covenants to run with the land as a valuable tool for the Government of Yukon to be able to draw on in the future. Statutory covenants will reduce uncertainty regarding the future use of affordable housing projects and support opportunities for future partnerships between the Government of Yukon and other interested organizations.

These amendments are an important part of our due diligence to ensure that, when public resources, such as land and money, are leveraged to support development of affordable housing, there are mechanisms available to ensure that the housing units that benefited from public investment will continue to serve the purpose for which they were created.

This is an important bill, Mr. Speaker, and I am seeking support of my fellow members of this Assembly to pass these amendments.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier in my remarks at second reading and in Committee with the questions that I asked there, we generally support the goal of ensuring that any company that receives affordable housing funding is required to fulfill the terms of that agreement and understand the concept of tying that to the title through the changes being made to the *Land Titles Act, 2015*.

As I noted in debate on this legislation earlier, we do have some concerns that some of the language appears to be overly broad and about where that could potentially go in the future. However, that concern is not enough to prevent us from supporting this at third reading. It may, however, require a further legislative amendment down the road.

I would also note that, as I have indicated before, we have concern generally with this government's pattern of tending to move toward giving Cabinet the power to make major decisions behind closed doors instead of debating them here in this Assembly and the fact that, by the minister's own admission, the Liberal government has brought forward six amendments to the *Land Titles Act, 2015* since taking office, which demonstrates the fact that it actually is possible to come forward with additional amendments if additional policy decisions are contemplated by government. The narrative that they have spun regarding the transfer of power to Cabinet through regulations in matters such as the *Traffic Safety Act*, for example, really rings hollow considering the fact that they have demonstrated themselves that it is possible to amend legislation and then come back with other amendments to that legislation, if necessary — but as noted, we will, with some reservations, be supporting this legislation going forward, because we do support the general goal of it.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak today on the amendments to the Yukon *Land Titles Act, 2015*. These changes are important for the future of Yukoners accessing housing. Statutory covenants, like the ones being introduced with these amendments, can improve access to affordable housing and bring the Yukon in line with other jurisdictions in Canada. The Northern Community Land Trust is already setting an example for other developments that could use restrictive covenants. This model addresses the need for housing for people who would otherwise not be able to qualify for mortgages. It provides options for home ownership to a wider range of people and families.

I look forward to hearing from the new homeowners who have been able to purchase homes from the land trust, and I look forward to future developments that will allow bringing more affordable housing to the Yukon. The Yukon NDP is pleased to support these amendments, and we thank the Liberal government for bringing these changes forward.

Mahsi' cho.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors outside of the usual proceedings.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Visitors introduced

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This is an important bill, and I am seeking support from fellow Members of the Legislative Assembly.

I appreciate the concerns put forward by my colleagues. I also appreciate that they are not of such concern that they will keep them from supporting this bill.

Modern drafting techniques, of course, include putting specific determinations that come as a result of legislation in

regulation so that they can be more easily flexible and more easily respond to the needs of Yukoners.

The member opposite has noted that, while six amendments have come forward since our time here in office to the *Land Titles Act, 2015*, he has forgotten to mention that the majority of those were to include First Nation governments and their ability to register their lands in the land titles system. They came forward individually from First Nations, and they were important amendments to this legislation.

These amendments here today in Bill No. 42 are an important part of our due diligence to ensure that, when public resources, such as funds and land, are leveraged to support developing affordable housing, there are mechanisms available to ensure that such housing and the units that come as a result of those, which benefited from public investment, will, in fact, continue to serve the purpose for which they are created.

I am proud of this bill and look forward to it passing here 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.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 42 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 42 has passed this House.

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 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, 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: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

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

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, in Bill No. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Women and Gender Equity Directorate

Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm pleased to rise today to present the supplementary budget for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

I'm joined by Sierra van der Meer, Deputy Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, and Hillary Aitken, the director of Women and Gender Equity. Thank you very much for being here today.

Equity for women and LGBTQ2S+ people is essential to fostering a fair and inclusive society. Equity promotes social justice, enhances economic growth, and ensures that all voices are heard and valued. The Women and Gender Equity Directorate is leading our government's equity work, managing funding programs, and leading various initiatives designed to achieve equity for all Yukoners, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation.

In addition to the funding programs, the directorate is doing this work through three major strategies. The first is the Yukon government's LGBTQ2S+ *Inclusion Action Plan*. Our government released this five-year strategy in 2021 so that we could have a clear map to guide us in making government programs and services more inclusive and accessible to two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual communities.

The directorate continues to lead implementation of the plan and is working with many different departments on these action items. We are making progress with 17 actions under this plan now complete and 53 underway or ongoing.

The second strategy that the directorate plays a key role in is *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ People Strategy*. This is, again, not a Government of Yukon strategy but a whole-of-Yukon document involving multiple partners and organizations.

These organizations have all committed to working together on implementing the strategy's implementation plan, which was designed to achieve the systemic changes needed to stop the murder and disappearance of Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit+ people in the Yukon.

While our government does not own the strategy, many departments have a role in the strategy and implementation plan. The directorate leads this work within Government of Yukon and also offers secretariat support to the Yukon advisory committee.

This year, we will host the third annual accountability forum in Carcross. This is taking place on October 28 and 29. I am really looking forward to having this third forum. We will also release the first annual report showcasing much of the good work happening across the territory.

Madam Chair, you will also see that our supplementary estimates include an internal transfer in 2024-25 of \$200,000. From the Prevention of Violence Against Aboriginal Women fund, we are doing this internal transfer while the effectiveness of the fund is reviewed. We have heard repeatedly that the Prevention of Violence Against Aboriginal Women fund — also known as PVAAW — has a high administrative burden for organizations, especially considering the fund's limit of \$25,000 per recipient each year. In light of this, we are pausing the fund for the 2024-25 fiscal year and using the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* to provide funding through a streamlined application process to Indigenous governments. This will allow us to support Indigenous governments to access funding with a lower administrative burden and higher fund limits.

Finally, the directorate is working closely with the Yukon departments of Justice and Health and Social Services on our government's implementation of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. This national plan reflects the shared commitment that the federal and territorial governments have made to prevent gender-based violence and create systemic change. The plan is focused on three priority areas: increasing prevention efforts, reaching underserved and at-risk populations, and stabilizing the gender-based violence prevention sector.

Under the agreement, the Government of Canada is providing \$16.4 million to Yukon over four years to support implementation efforts in the territory. The directorate will receive \$7.1 million of the federal funding over four fiscal years. The federal funding will enhance our government's existing funding for community partners, support coordination and leadership of Yukon's implementation, and enable stakeholder engagement, research, and knowledge mobilization.

We were pleased to announce the Yukon implementation plan under this national action plan in October 2023 after

signing the agreement in July 2023. However, because we did not receive the federal funds for year 1 until five months into the first fiscal year of the agreement, a carry-forward was required to give adequate time to complete year 1 activities. It is for this reason that our supplementary budget presents the directorate as having a net increase for 2024-25 of \$932,000 in operation and maintenance funding. This money is a carry-forward from the last fiscal into this fiscal. It is not new funding but funding that was committed to under the first year of the national action plan and that we did not fully spend. Much of this funding went straight to community organizations working on gender-based violence prevention and victim support. These organizations requested to carry forward some of their funding from the last fiscal year, so we are responding.

It is also worth noting that the funding is 100-percent recoverable from the Government of Canada and that the carry-forward of unspent federal funds will not affect Yukon government's share, cash flow, or other spending plans. This carry-forward funding includes \$607,000 for enhanced funding to existing partners through the Women and Gender Equity Directorate for victim supports and prevention and \$325,000 for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate to support coordination and leadership of Yukon's *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* plan and to support stakeholder engagement, research, and program review.

The funds will enable the Yukon government to fulfill its commitment to address gender-based violence and to provide more comprehensive and responsive support to the non-profit gender-based violence sector. This will also ensure that the Women and Gender Equity Directorate has the financial resources required to follow through on the development and implementation of the initiatives and commitments to Yukon's implementation plan, which forms part of the agreement with Canada. Non-profit partners will be able to fully execute their projects and plans, as proposed in Yukon's implementation plan.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to present the Women and Gender Equity Directorate's supplementary budget for 2024-25 in this session.

Ms. Clarke: Madam Chair, I would like to thank the officials for joining us here today and for the briefing they provided.

I have a few questions regarding the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. That \$932,000 carry-forward of funds from the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* — of that, \$325,000 is allocated for stakeholder engagement, research, and program review.

Can the minister explain who was involved in these stakeholder engagements?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The Yukon Women's Coalition is currently leading a sector-wide engagement and program review to identify gaps and opportunities in programs and services addressing gender-based violence in the territory.

In July 2023, Management Board and Cabinet approved the Yukon's implementation plan for the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*, which included a proposed program review and stakeholder engagement to ensure that all

gender-equity-seeking organizations and Yukon First Nations in the territory can inform future decisions on where to focus efforts to end gender-based violence in the Yukon.

In March 2024, the Yukon Women's Coalition extended a request to take an active part in the implementation of Yukon's implementation plan. Specifically, the Yukon Women's Coalition asked to be able to participate in the direction of the program review and stakeholder engagement.

In May 2024, the Women and Gender Equity Directorate and the Yukon Women's Coalition agreed that the coalition would coordinate the sector-wide engagement and program review, including supporting a contractor and extensive engagement and involvement of all members of the Yukon Women's Coalition and key partners.

The agreed-upon objective of this work is to engage equity-seeking organizations to guide the Women and Gender Equity Directorate's implementation of NAPGBV and explore the following: recommended criteria on ongoing operational funding; areas of common need across the sector and opportunities for sharing resources and efficiencies; gaps in service provision recommendations for immediate projects to build foundational capacity and knowledge; and recommendations for strategic investment in year 3 and 4 of the NAPGBV to enhance long-term stability in the equity-seeking non-governmental organization sector.

In September of 2024, the Yukon Women's Coalition submitted a work plan and budget to the Women and Gender Equity Directorate outlining \$79,800 for an external contractor from Boreal Logic and \$170,200 for distribution among Yukon Women's Coalition members to enable participation in the work, including recognition of time for engagement and research support.

In October 2024, a transfer payment agreement was signed formally outlining that Yukon Women's Coalition will lead the work under the NAPGBV foundation pillar, stakeholder engagement, research, and knowledge mobilization toward the implementation of the plan. The Yukon Women's Coalition will receive \$250,000 in fully recoverable funding for this work. The ultimate purpose of the work is to improve the long-term stability of the gender-based violence sector and meaningfully prevent and respond to gender-based violence in the Yukon.

The Yukon Women's Coalition has outlined the following timelines for deliverables: October 31, 2024, there will be a mid-project report, and January 31, 2025, there will be a final project report.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the minister for that answer.

In April this year, the minister mentioned a review of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. I know that the minister mentioned a few dates there, but does the minister have a timeline for when this program review will be completed?

Hon. Ms. McLean: That was the last part of my answer. The Yukon Women's Coalition has outlined the following timeline for deliverables: October 31, 2024, there will be a mid-term project report, and January 31, 2025, there will be a final project report.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the minister for that answer.

In the briefing with officials, it was mentioned that members of the Yukon Women's Coalition are required to individually perform an evaluation of their organizations. Can the minister explain who requires these evaluations? Why was it deemed necessary?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I just want to be — just to correct some of the information coming forward from the member opposite: We're not reviewing individual organizations. This project that is underway is currently — the Yukon Women's Coalition is currently leading a sector-wide engagement and program review to identify gaps and opportunities in programs and services addressing gender-based violence. They're not reviewing each organization. We are providing funding for the participation of this.

Just to be clear, we are also providing project-based funding to organizations within the sector that are reporting on the objectives and outcomes of those projects, but just to be clear, the agreed-upon objective of the work is to engage equity-seeking organizations to guide Women and Gender Equity's implementation of the NAPGBV and explore, as I've gone through — and I'll do it again — recommended criteria for ongoing operational funding, areas of common need across this sector, and opportunities for sharing resource efficiencies, gaps in service provision, recommendations for immediate projects to build foundational capacity and knowledge, and recommendations for strategic investment in years 3 and 4 of the NAPGBV to enhance long-term stability in the equity-seeking non-government organizational sector.

Ms. Clarke: These NGOs already have a limited budget and high administrative burden. Will they receive funding outside of their allocated budget, or will they be required to use their existing funds?

Hon. Ms. McLean: In September 2024, the Yukon Women's Coalition submitted a work plan and budget to the Women and Gender Equity Directorate outlining that they would need \$79,800 for the external contractor from Boreal Logic and \$170,200 for distribution among the Yukon Women's Coalition members to enable participation in the work, including recognition of time for engagement and research support.

Ms. Clarke: We understand that the federal government has previously conducted reviews on the plan. Can the minister confirm that is the case and why another review is necessary?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The work that is being undertaken right now, in partnership with the Yukon Women's Coalition, was a direct request from the Yukon Women's Coalition to be meaningfully involved in this work. We are working with them.

I have already gone through what the objectives are and the resources that are being provided to do this work and the timeline. Just to be clear, for the national action plan, there was extensive consultation on what would be needed in a national action plan. I don't know if that would be — that was to form a new initiative and new strategy for Canada. Yukon, as I have identified, entered into our agreement with Canada, and we submitted our implementation plan, and we are now working very closely with the Yukon Women's Coalition — as I have

stated — around the criteria. The last objective is recommendations for strategic investment in years 3 and 4 of the NAPGBV to enhance long-term stability of equity-seeking non-government organizational sector partners.

Ms. Clarke: I have one more question, and then I will give it over to the Third Party.

Can the minister share the schedule of engagement — or the engagement schedule — with the Women's Coalition that she and the Women and Gender Equity Directorate's staff have planned to ensure that those organizations are included in decision-making around this funding moving forward?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, the Yukon Women's Coalition is leading this work, so they are setting their schedule and how they are engaging with organizations. As I have outlined, the deliverable dates are: October 31, 2024, there will be a mid-project report, and on January 21, 2025, we will expect a final project report.

If the member wishes to gain more specific information around the schedule of engagement and any other information, I am sure that the Yukon Women's Coalition would be happy to provide that.

MLA Tredger: I'll start by thanking all of the officials for being here today and for those listening in on the radio or online — a lot of work to get to this stage, and I really appreciate all of that work.

I want to start by following up a little bit on the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* — the NAPGBV. The bilateral agreement with Canada listed out actions for year 1 of the plan, and I'm wondering if, going forward for year 2 — I believe that we're in year 2 now — if the Yukon has agreed with Canada on a new set of actions for year 2 and, if so, if those could be shared.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. The Yukon implementation plan on the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* has a number of set-out actions, objectives under — I think — four pillars — or five pillars; sorry.

We provided the table to the members in a technical briefing not that long ago. It identified year 1 and 2, and because of how the funding was allocated and when it was allocated, a lot of the resources were carried over to year 2. We're now, as part of the earlier debate, focusing on year 3 and 4 and setting out the continuation of some of the work that was already identified in here, plus more. That's where we're working directly with the Yukon Women's Coalition to establish those deliverables.

MLA Tredger: Thank you for that answer. I look forward to seeing that report from the Women's Coalition and understanding the specifics of years 3 and 4.

In the bilateral agreement with Canada, it sets out reporting dates. I believe there is supposed to be a report on July 31, 2024. In the spring, the minister said that, for the actions with carry-over funding, they would actually be reported to Canada on September 30.

Since those two dates have passed, I assume that reporting has happened, and I wonder if it could be shared with us.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yukon reported in July 2024. Canada's working right now to collate all of the reporting from across the country. We have not received that report yet, but we would be happy to provide our internal updates to the members in both oppositional parties.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. I would be very interested to read that.

I wanted to follow up on what the minister said in her opening remarks about — and it went by quickly, so I want to make sure I'm talking about the same thing that she was. I believe she said that the prevention of violence against aboriginal women initiatives fund has been paused.

If I'm correct about that, I was looking back at the spring budget and saw that we appropriated \$200,000 for that in the spring. I am wondering what has happened to that \$200,000. Has it already been distributed? I am hoping that the minister can elaborate on that.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I think that I will start by just going through the importance of addressing violence against aboriginal women. Violence against women is a critical issue that our government takes very seriously. We are certainly committed to making funds available for community organizations and Indigenous governments to prevent violence in their communities. We have heard repeatedly that the prevention of violence against aboriginal women fund, or PVAAW, had a high administrative burden for organizations, especially considering that the fund was limited to \$25,000 per recipient each year.

In light of this, as I stated in my opening, we paused the funding for the 2024 fiscal year to ensure that we distribute funding in a manner that aligns with the *Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ People Strategy*. The violence prevention funding is still available through the national action plan, and we are launching a funding program of equivalent value with access to more money and reduced administrative burden.

We have redistributed the money and moved things around a little bit within Women and Gender Equity to allow for this to happen so that we can be in a better position to meet the needs at the community level.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. I really appreciate the intent of reducing the administrative burden, particularly on small organizations. This is something that we have talked about many times in the debate on Women and Gender Equity.

I do want to drill down on that \$200,000 that was appropriated. It sounds like it hasn't been disbursed yet this year. What is going to happen to that \$200,000 since the fund is paused?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Going back to my opening comments — we work within a number of priority areas within Women and Gender Equity, and I went through some of those. The dollars — we have reallocated back into other priorities within Women and Gender Equity — so, within those priority areas.

MLA Tredger: Can the minister elaborate on what that money is going to do instead? I know that it is going to be part

of the priority areas. Can she elaborate a bit more on what specifically it is going to be used for?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, the Women and Gender Equity Directorate is a very small organization within the Government of Yukon — with important work that we do. We were able to allocate more dollars toward the accountability forum that will be happening at the end of this month. We supported the analyst positions that are now permanent positions for the directorate, and we have been able to make Queer Yukon whole in the dollars that they require to run their organization.

MLA Tredger: I have never actually been in the position of being in government, so maybe the minister can just help me to understand a little bit some of the rules around budgeting. Because that was appropriated by the House specifically in the spring for that fund, are there limitations on how money can be moved around within the department's budget after the budget has passed? At what level would they need to come back to the House for approval to move funds around?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, that is why we have that item before the House in the supplementary budget as part of the reallocation of dollars, and that is part of the debate today.

MLA Tredger: I appreciate that. Actually, that brings me to my next question, which was about Queer Yukon funding, because in the spring, they received \$200,000, which is about \$175,000 less than what they received in previous years. The minister had told me that this was going to be coming in the supplementary budget.

So, if I understand correctly, \$175,000 of the money that was in the preventing violence against aboriginal women initiatives fund has been reallocated to Queer Yukon funding. Can the minister confirm that?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We signed a transfer payment agreement with Queer Yukon for \$375,000. We are allocating and we have moved dollars around to ensure that we are able to cover that transfer payment agreement. That is what we are doing here today.

MLA Tredger: So, I am correct in saying that the \$175,000 that used to be in the prevention of violence against aboriginal women initiatives fund has been reallocated to Queer Yukon to complete their transfer payment; is that correct?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, that's correct. The remainder goes to the accountability forum and other priorities within the Women and Gender Equity Directorate.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister. I feel like I understand that better now.

I understand from what the minister said that the projects that used to be funded under the prevention of violence against aboriginal women initiatives are now being funded by the NAPGBV. It was a fully subscribed fund last year, I believe.

Can the minister tell me about how that fund worked in the past and how it has changed now? I really appreciate the intent to reduce the administrative burden, because that is a huge thing for small organizations.

I'm wondering if the minister can tell us about which initiatives used to be under that fund and what their process for being funded is through the NAPGBV.

Hon. Ms. McLean: In 2023-24, only \$100,000 of the \$200,000 budgeted was awarded to applicants, as no other eligible applications were received. Two rural Yukon First Nations were awarded \$25,000 each; \$25,000 was awarded to a First Nation organization in Whitehorse; and \$25,000 was awarded to an Indigenous women's organization, for a total of \$100,000. So, it wasn't totally subscribed.

This has been a long-standing issue around this particular funding program. As I have stated, we are launching a funding program of equivalent value with access to larger amounts of money and a reduced administrative burden. First Nations will be able to access up to \$100,000 for a project, which makes it more viable for them to actually achieve the outcomes that are desired.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. I really appreciate that information.

I want to turn now to asking a bit about the LGBTQ2S+ action plan from the Yukon government. I had a really excellent briefing on this with officials from the department. It was provided to a member of the Official Opposition and me. Thank you very much for that briefing; I learned a lot and it was really useful.

I want to follow up on some of the information that I got in that briefing, and I will repeat a few questions just so I have them on the record. I want to ask about a couple of the action items. I will start with one on page 7 of the action plan, which is about improving access to health care for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners. What it says is that, in the next two years, the government will improve access to information and resources to help LGBTQ2S+ families navigate family planning.

So, the action plan came out in 2021, so two years would have been 2023 and so I am wondering what has happened with this action.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, it's a very important question. I would ask the member to ask, when Health and Social Services is up for debate, directly to the Minister of Health and Social Services and we'll work with them as well to ensure that we have some information to provide at that time.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister. I will put that on the list for Health and Social Services. I'll leave a couple other questions then for them as well.

I did want to ask a question that's on page 23 of the action plan. It's a question probably for Justice, but I know that the coordination of the plan is happening within the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. I want to ask about a commitment to update estate legislation to include common-law LGBTQ2S+ partners. I'm wondering — because I know the department is tracking those items — if they can provide an update on what's happening with that.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, what my officials are sharing is that, after the briefing with the opposition, they reached out on this area on justice.

Items on regulations to support amendments to enduring power of attorney are underway. Then, on a broader note, the Department of Justice has done some preliminary analysis on what would be required to address the inequitable treatment of common-law spouses and the related disproportionate negative impacts on women and the queer community. The amendments required to adequately address these issues are substantial and would need to include amendments to multiple statutes under the *Estate Administration Act*, including significant changes to other laws administered by the Department of Justice, such as the *Dependants Relief Act* and the *Family Property and Support Act*.

To properly address these issues would require significant policy resources dedicated to support the analysis and to support the interdepartmental collaboration required for each department to harmonize other impacted legislation, such as the *Marriage Act*, the *Change of Name Act*, and the *Vital Statistics Act* administered by Health and Social Services.

We work within the Cabinet legislative committee, and that committee works to identify pieces of legislation that would be brought forward. Certainly, we can have this discussion, and it would be led by Justice. They are the lead department here, but as I have stated, in the response from Justice, there would need to be a significant amount of collaboration among departments to ensure that all of the changes that would be required, through a number of other acts that are administered by other departments, would need to happen. Again, this would be another area that the member could bring forward in the debate on Justice in this Sitting.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister. That was an interesting update, and I appreciated it. I will save the rest of my questions on the action plan for the specific departments involved.

I had two more areas I wanted to ask about for this department. One is that I want to ask about the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues — the name changed slightly — the advisory councils where the new legislation came in recently. I am wondering what has happened with regulations and when those advisory councils will be starting.

Hon. Ms. McLean: It's the Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Gender Equity or MACWAGE.

In August of 2023, the Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Gender Equity regulations were approved by Cabinet. In November 2023, recruitment of new members began with a public news release and targeted letters to partners. In April 2024, after receiving several applications, the department submitted recommendations for new members for the consideration of the minister; however, before appointments can be made and the council can operate, the updated regulations must be proclaimed by Cabinet. The *Government Organisation Act* regulations, which set out the responsibilities for the ministers of the administration of acts, must also be updated and proclaimed.

This information was prepared by the department in September, and I think it is imminent, and we will have that council operating. The council — I'll stop there.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister. Does the minister have a timeline of when those regulations will be in force and the council will be appointed?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm sorry; I did not hear that question.

MLA Tredger: I'll repeat my question. I appreciate everyone bearing with me when there's technology challenges.

Does the minister have a timeline for when those regulations will be in force and the council will be appointed?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, this is a matter that needs to go before Cabinet. Again, we have done all of our parts of this, and we were just waiting for a Cabinet agenda for it to be placed on and are following up on that to — but I'm not able to give the specifics about Cabinet agendas. I will get back to the member and others, and I'm sure there will be a news release and other information once that's finalized.

MLA Tredger: I look forward to the news release, and I will watch for it.

The last topic I wanted to ask about today is the strategy for murdered and missing women and Indigenous girls. I know that the annual report — I believe it's coming next week at the accountability forum, which I think is the appropriate place for that report to come. So, I'm not going to ask too many questions, because I know that information is coming next week, and I want it to go to the families first. But I did want to ask: I know that, in the spring, the minister had said that of the 108 action items in the action plan, 108 of them live with the Yukon government, and at the time, there were 38 that were undergoing or ongoing. If appropriate, can she share the updated numbers on the action plan now? If not, I will look for them in the report next week.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I know that the member will appreciate that this is a work in progress. We have never actually put together a report quite like this one, in terms of bringing together all partners and signatories and work that is underway related to the strategy and to the implementation plan. So, some rough estimation of work that — it's not yet started; I'll start there. We estimate that 29 percent are not yet started, that 56 percent are in progress, two percent are complete, and 13 percent are ongoing.

Again, I'm happy to — once that information is ready to be released — send it off to members of the Legislature as well.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for sharing that. Yes, once there is more updated information, if she could share it, I would very much appreciate that and will watch for it.

I will leave the rest of my questions in that area until we can have a debate at some point in the future after that report is out. That concludes my questions for this department for today.

I just want to say again: Thank you to everyone who is doing all that work in the department. It's really important work, and I really appreciate it.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate?

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

Ms. Clarke: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Porter Creek Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures
Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$932,000 agreed to
On Capital Expenditures
Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to
Total Expenditures in the amount of \$932,000 agreed to
Women and Gender Equity Directorate agreed to

Chair: The matter now 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*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Ms. White: Welcome back, of course, to the officials as we are debating Energy, Mines and Resources.

I'm actually not going to jump right back into agriculture. I'm going to go back to something that we discussed earlier, which was the website for the microgeneration program. I just really want to thank the department and the officials for making that change.

So, now if I'm looking at solar installations, the notification right now is very clear. I appreciate that because there is less confusion about what is being said there, so it's much clearer. It says that microgeneration program intakes are paused in certain areas. Applications are paused for

Whitehorse, Haines Junction, and the Southern Lakes area. Eligibility is determined by electrical grid connection, not by address. To check eligibility, it tells you where to go. And then it says that an update is planned for January 2025.

So, I appreciate that. I think it makes it clearer when people are trying to figure out what their next steps are. It says what areas right now are not open for applications. It is very clear.

I just wanted to make sure that I started off by thanking the department and the officials for hearing our comments, whenever that was — whether it was days or weeks ago or who knows — but recently. I do appreciate that.

I am just going to leave it there so the minister can also say nice things about his department and then I will get back into questions.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am always happy to talk about the work of the department. I know that they have been hustling in the background for a whole bunch of reasons — Victoria Gold would be a big one, but they do listen in to the Committee of the Whole work. They responded quickly. In fact, they said to me, when it happened: “Well, is it also on the Yukon Energy website?” And so, I have reached out to the member opposite.

I just should acknowledge that again today we have with us Deputy Minister Haney and Deputy Minister Moore. It is my privilege to get to work with two deputy ministers — not for good reasons, but it is good to have them both. I was thinking about it because of the particular pair of socks that I put on today. I was thinking about the work that this department does, and my socks have a slogan about working hard to help folks out. I remember sharing that with the department a couple of years ago in a kind of cheeky fashion. A shout-out to all of those public servants who are trying to make lives better for Yukoners.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that and I am jumping right back into agriculture. Last time we were here, we were talking about the government's 2020 agriculture policy that was setting goals of having environmental farm plans for 75 percent of Yukon farms. Additional to that, that same plan committed the government to evaluating supply management in the territory.

Can the minister provide an update on this work?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am working to get that updated information for the member opposite. For the sake of time, I know that the department is working in the background to get it. I can also say that the Yukon Agricultural Association is continuing to advance discussions with industry, and I will just see if I can get that information while I'm back and forth on my feet. If I do, I will provide the response when I rise next time.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I guess just a heads-up for the department: I have numerous questions, actually, on *Cultivating Our Future: 2020 Yukon Agriculture Policy*. One of the other objectives was that the government set out to explore cooperative sharing models of equipment and infrastructure. I will also say that there was discussion not that long ago about land sharing or cooperative models in Sunnydale in Dawson City.

Can the minister give us any update on what work has happened in the cooperative sharing models?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Again, I will have to get more information from the Agriculture branch to get more of the specifics. I know that, under the sustainable agricultural partnership funding, there were targeted initiatives where there were dollars that went toward supporting infrastructure which could be used more broadly. I think, for example, of the work that has been happening with the fairgrounds and things like that. I would have to dive back in and get a list. We just don't have it in our notes. In the transition of the deputy ministers, this has not come up recently.

I apologize that I don't have the information on hand. I will work to get it for the member opposite.

Ms. White: Just along that vein — and not expecting that there would be answers now — would the minister prefer that I put all the questions that I have about the policy in there?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. White: I will just go one by one based on the minister's comments off-mic.

In section 1.7, the "Livestock Husbandry and Animal Welfare" section, it says: "The public and industry expects a high standard of ethical care for livestock. The Government of Yukon supports a diversified livestock sector and all livestock species. Husbandry practices will provide a good quality of life for livestock from birth to end of life. Farmers are responsible for ensuring the basic physical needs are met. This includes nutritious feed, clean water, shelter and health care." Then it says that the Government of Yukon will create a livestock health and welfare committee to advise the chief veterinary officer and the director of the Agriculture branch.

Has the Government of Yukon created a livestock health and welfare committee?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: When we updated the *Animal Protection and Control Act* — I think that was last year — in 2023, I believe, we definitely worked with the community of practice as we went to develop that. What we did was we developed the national codes of practice for animal health. There was a committee that was struck, and I am just trying to get the name of that committee again — the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee. That committee was formed as we were working through the *Animal Protection and Control Act* and we have been working with them again on the implementation of that act.

If I can just back up one step, please — part of the question that was posed earlier by the member opposite was around shared land. We have been exploring several options around that — that is my recollection anyway — in various locations — some where it is going to be leased, some where it is sort of joint activity on land where we see it is appropriate to do multiple things on the land. So, there has been a range of approaches and some of it more on the cooperative side, but I think that a range of approaches has been used around land development, because the way that the Agriculture branch described it to me is that they anticipate that there is a range of users out there, and they will have different abilities to invest in equipment and start-up and things like that. So, the idea is to provide that range for users.

Ms. White: Continuing down — or I guess I'm going to back up, because I'm going to go to section 1.5, "Organic Farming". It says: "Organic farming is an important component of the agriculture industry, providing both economic and environmental benefits. Organic certification has been achieved by a number of Yukon farms. 'Certified Organic' products follow federal regulations with third party verification and are based on the principles of ecology, health, fairness and care. These principles apply to animals, soil, the environment and people, from workers and family on the farm to the customers who buy the farm's products."

The Yukon government will — and there is a list of things — "... promote and provide incentives for the growth of organic farming in Yukon ... work with industry to adopt a Yukon organic logo, ensure there is adequate capacity for organic verification in Yukon..." — and it goes on. So, where is government in terms of supporting the organic farming industry in Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm not getting all of the answers that I need for the member opposite, so, in the end, what I'm going to do here is suggest that we wrap these up and I will just try to get an update overall on the strategy and where that is.

With respect to organic farming, I think that we have been very supportive of it, but we have not been trying to push the industry in that direction. We're trying to support the industry if they wish to go in that direction. I know that when we had the Canadian Federation of Agriculture meetings here this past late spring/early summer, there was a national group on organic farming that was here. I had an informal meeting with them; they did a tour around the Yukon looking at the organic farm sites. They came by afterwards — after the meetings of ministers — to have a visit out at Marsh Lake. We had a nice informal conversation.

So, I'm just asking the department — the Agriculture branch — if they can provide a summary of the work that has been happening to date on all of these fronts, because I feel like I'm not getting the specific information that the member is asking.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I do appreciate that they are specific and definitely specific about one report within the minister's purview, but I think the other ones that I have on agriculture are a little less directed to that *Cultivating Our Future: 2020 Yukon Agriculture Policy*, so I'll just move on.

How many new agricultural plots of land has the minister released since taking over the file in 2021?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just going back to the organic farmers and support for — I know that one of the things that we do is support them through soil sampling. So, there are some test requirements that are needed to ensure that their soil is pesticide-free or whatever you can't have in order to get that organic accreditation — that's one of the ways in which we work.

I don't know how many lots we've developed. We've been busy following up on a written question from the Member for Copperbelt South on the number of residential lots. So, I'll work to get the number of agricultural lots as well, but I can say

that we know that land is one of the key issues around agriculture. As I said in one of my earlier responses, we've been looking for a range of ways in which to address that — for example, through leases. Typically, leases have a lower barrier to entry and can sometimes also support the expansion of current farming operations. So, we're looking for a range of ways.

I know that, in 2024, we worked on rezoning and access development for phase 2 of an agricultural subdivision in Ibex Valley. I went out and met with the local advisory council. Thanks to them, as always, for the chance to sit down and talk with them. There will be a couple of titled lots there of over 80 hectares for lease as well.

There are some on the Mayo Road that we did this year — five lots, I think. They are available on the Silver Trail. Just south of Whitehorse, there was an area around Gentian Lane where we did a lease to try to provide some of that access. We are still working with some back-and-forth based on feedback that we're getting there.

In the Klondike Valley, we are expecting to release nine acres of land through seasonal leases next year, so there is a range. I will stop there for now, but other things that we're doing is working to develop land, period. Some of it, we are looking to see as leased land. We are also looking at land-matching initiatives to try to leverage as much as we can with the land that we have.

Ms. White: Just to correct things, it wasn't specific questions about the *Cultivating Our Future* report; it was very specific questions about agricultural land development. I don't disagree, but my question — I'm veering away from the report, so I do look forward to a follow-up, though, on the government's commitments in there.

Can the minister confirm that there has been no net loss in Yukon agricultural lands since his time in office? By that, I mean that we are not losing farmland, for example, to a mini residential area or that farmland is staying farmland.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There is a policy in place that says that we should not lose agricultural land. I would need to dive in pretty closely to make sure, because I think there could always be exceptions. Let's take, for example, a couple of years ago; we had flooding in the Klondike Valley. When that flooding happened, there was an agricultural piece of property there. Those folks sold that back to us. We kept it as agricultural land, but we agreed that it shouldn't be agricultural land that has structures on it, because they are just going to be prone to that flooding again, so we're working through how to realize that or keep it productive.

There is probably a range of things out there. Also, if the question is back to my term in office, does that mean since 2016, or does it mean since I've had this role as Energy, Mines and Resources minister?

What I can say is that my predecessor at Energy, Mines and Resources also was focused on this issue. For example, we didn't take some big agriculture area and develop it as residential, as far as I know. Let me turn back to the department.

We have had an overall goal to increase agricultural land, and even that is hard. When people apply for agricultural land,

we want to make sure that it is appropriate, that it is not someone just trying to grab land, because I think that we saw, decades ago, that was something that was happening, and that was frustrating. We also saw — and I have heard from First Nations where they saw subdivisions created on agricultural parcels. That is very concerning to them — they have said to me.

We also know that we want to create more self-sufficiency here in the territory, so we are working to develop land; it is just a tough thing to do. When I talk with farmers, it is one of the conversations that we almost always have — about land and how precious it is and how important it is — if we can get more land available.

I will again endeavour to confirm my response, but overall, I think that our goal has been to increase the quantum of land, and I will check with the department to know what that looks like.

Ms. White: Just so that the minister — his department can hear this — sure, I am interested about net loss of agricultural land between 2016 and 2021 and 2021 to current. In large part, I do appreciate, for example, the flooding in the Klondike Valley, and I very much was involved in that file and how that adversely affected that person, but we do know that agricultural land is precious, and we have lots of places where it has been chopped up into almost unusable spaces. So, yes, I am just curious about what that looks like.

Does the Government of Yukon have a land buyback program for underutilized agricultural land?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am not sure if we have a policy, but clearly, we have done it. For example, when the issue happened in the Klondike Valley with the flooding, we did buy back that land in order to keep it as agricultural land, but I don't think that we have a specific program. My recollection is that it took a decision, even going up to Cabinet; it wasn't at the discretion of the minister.

So, I don't know that there is a program in place, but I do think that there are times when we look at the situation in front of us and we take a decision based on the reality that we're facing — that may be, for example, in dialogue with a First Nation; that may be due to some sort of disaster, but those are the types of ways in which — that I'm aware of this having been considered in the past.

Ms. White: I thank the minister.

Can the minister provide an update on the status of the elk management plan for farmers and how that new plan is being rolled out? Elk have — just to catch us up, elk were an introduced species in the territory as a hunting opportunity. They have turned into a nightmare for farmers. Some farmers are lucky. They are able to deal with the elk on a case-by-case basis. Many farmers are not so lucky and have to depend on the government's plan, but the elk have cost farmers so many hours and so much money, and so I wanted to know what the updated plan is and how it is being rolled out.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, we set up a steering committee, and we're again trying a pilot. It's trying to be more proactive than our previous attempt. The steering committee includes

Environment, Energy, Mines and Resources, also the Yukon Agricultural Association, and the Fish and Game Association.

We hired a coordinator — the pilot project coordinator — to work with property owners and hunters to implement measures to deter elk from properties and respond when elk are present.

I do continue to hear about conflict. I got a call the other day from a farmer whose fields are fallow — so it wasn't even a crop — but had previously put up elk fencing, but the elk were coming through. Those elk — they're big animals, they're tough animals, and they were doing a number on the fencing.

So, I was working to try to get the coordinator connected with the farmer to try to get hunters there to address the elk. It is still an ongoing issue. I still hear from farmers about it. I know that the Department of Environment is working on doing more evidence-based monitoring of the elk to try to get a handle on what is happening with the herd in the Takhini Valley.

Ms. White: Is that new plan publicly available? Can I find it online somewhere?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Well, what I can say is that, right after the session, this briefing note will be available, so I will make sure that is there. I think that this has been developed in conversation with the community of practice, so I don't know whether it is housed somewhere public. I would have to check on that, but the information should be shareable across all.

I mentioned about the Department of Environment doing more monitoring. They had another 20 radio collars put out. I know that, last year and this year, we have been putting out adaptive elk-hunting permits. We continue to support the elk fencing, but that has had some success, but it has its own challenges as well, so I will check with the department as to whether or not there is some public-facing element to this. But I would just say that, if there is information being sought, I will just encourage that the department share it with Yukoners, including the members of this House.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

I am just going to jump over to Victoria Gold and the Eagle mine. Victoria Gold, of course, had a responsibility with the community benefits agreements, so does the receiver have the same responsibility to honour the community benefits agreements that were signed by Victoria Gold?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, the Yukon government isn't party to those agreements and I'm not always aware of the specifics in them. My understanding of the situation is that, in principle, yes — the receiver, in its role of managing the site, is, in principle, working toward that benefit agreement. What I was told is that the receiver is in dialogue with NND around that.

I have said this when I have previously been on my feet: Our agreement with the receiver highlights the importance of providing local benefits to the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and its development corporation, the citizens of Mayo, et cetera. We have also requested that there be a look toward supporting the community.

Ms. White: I appreciate hearing the minister say that he has no part and the government has no part in what the receiver does, but there was lots of public communication and fanfare

around the fact that Victoria Gold was developing community benefit agreements and that this was how it was going to support the community of Mayo and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. Those agreements were celebrated by the minister and his colleagues.

Now that the mine itself — appreciating that Victoria Gold is not currently mining — but there is work being done on the mine site, and there is work being done on the mine site that is being done by companies that are not those that signed the community benefit agreements. I say this because there are First Nation businesses — businesses that belong to Na-Cho Nyäk Dun residents — that have not been honoured since they signed agreements with Victoria Gold and that are not working on-site.

So, I wanted to know: What role does government play? Is there a conversation with the receiver to be, like: Hey, you know, it's really important; you're on Na-Cho Nyäk Dun territory; we would like you to honour the community benefit agreements that were signed by Victoria Gold with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun businesses?

Where does government fall in that? I understand that the government is not the receiver, but the government has asked the receiver to go in to do this work. So, how do we make sure that we honour the First Nation businesses that at times took lots of risk to be able to amp up and to bring themselves up to be able to do the work and that are now kind of on the hook? So, what is the government's role in that?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, that these agreements typically exist between another government and a company doesn't mean that we, as a territorial government, wouldn't be concerned about it and wish to be supportive. That is one of the reasons why — within our agreement in how we are going to work with the receiver — we said that we are going to have this focus on them using local vendors wherever possible. I think that it even says that in their court report: that this is one of the things that they have said. I would have to check back whether it also said it, but my recollection is that it also said it in the court decision, but I would have to check that.

For example, when we have been talking with the receiver, we have talked about the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Development Corporation. We have talked about their business registry for those companies and people who are available who have certain skills for a mine site or a remediation site.

I know that the receiver, the Premier, and I met with lien holders, which included some of those very businesses. Some of them are Yukon business — they're not First Nation businesses — but there was a group there. We talked with them and we talked about this very issue. Then I watched the receiver as we went to the general assembly of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. The receiver and the government were there to sit down and answer questions, and this was one of the two main areas that came up as high-level themes. I know that there were specific discussion points and follow-ups that were happening, and so I think that work is underway.

I finally will note that our agreement also requires the receiver, PwC, to report on the provision of local benefits, which should be available in the coming weeks. So, they are to

report back to us about how that is going and that's one of the ways that we will look at it.

I will also say that whenever we're doing this work, it isn't specifically EMR. It might also be the Department of Economic Development that is doing the work. But I am aware of that; I do pass across these types of requests whenever we're getting information.

For example, the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Development Corporation was planning to hold a meeting with the business registry to talk through with those folks about opportunities. I made sure to get that information across to the receiver so that they could be supportive of that and possibly even involved.

So, I think it's important work even if we are not a signatory to those community benefit agreements.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

If a Na-Cho Nyäk Dun citizen or a business owner has concerns about their treatment since the receiver took over, who should they contact with those concerns?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will make several suggestions, and these individuals, whoever they are, can have several ways in which they can express their concerns.

First of all, I always encourage them to talk straight to the receiver — PricewaterhouseCoopers, in this case — but if that's not working, then the other avenues that I think are constructive would be, for example, to go to the executive director of the First Nation development corporation. We and the receiver are pretty tied in with FNNDDC so that we can get that voice to come through. Then the last one is — and we have received some of these calls, but it could be the deputy minister or myself to take those — I guess the Yukon government, let me say that. EMR is there on-site quite a bit, so we have an active role, but if the individuals went through the Department of Economic Development, that would be fine as well, because I know that team is also working on this part of the question.

Wherever the individuals or folks contact Yukon government, we can find a way to channel it into the correct groups, but those are my suggestions.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

I want to move on to the royalties paid by the Eagle Gold mine. In case folks are curious, you can go on the yukon.ca website and probably search and see how much royalties have been paid for quartz mining in the Yukon. It is eye-opening, to say the least. The reason I want to draw attention — we are going to go down past the Bellekeno mine that paid \$724,000 and get to the Eagle Gold mine.

The recording starts in 2019, and it says zero royalties paid and began operations; in 2020, it says zero, no royalty return required; company did not meet commencement of production threshold under the regulation to require a return to be filed. Then, we have 2021, 2022, and 2023. It says royalty return filed and under review for each of those three years.

I guess that I am trying to understand — does that mean that the Eagle Gold mine has paid no royalties to the Yukon government at this point? I highlight that because in stark contrast, the Minto mine did pay royalties in 2021 and 2022 and did file in 2023, and it says that it is under review. Is there a

reason — Minto is easy to understand: That one, at that point, had ceased operations, but 2021 until 2023 — the Eagle Gold mine — it says that the royalty return is filed, but it is under review.

So, can the minister help me understand that, and can he tell me how much was paid to the Yukon government from Victoria Gold for the Eagle Gold mine in royalties?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm just asking the department of finance within EMR to get us what those numbers are or were.

The issue is that, under our current legislation, there are rules that say that — the simplest way that I think of it is — and I will apologize, and if the department tells me that it is much more complex, I will get there, but there — you allow sort of, like, the construction cost to — thank you — just one second, Madam Chair.

Numbers are coming in, and I just want to make sure that I get them right; I don't want to misspeak. The company can write off certain things — for example, construction costs — and so there is always a back-and-forth, especially in the early years of the operation of the mine where that gets sorted out.

There have been royalties collected, and I will get the number here before we're done today. I don't know what happens now with Victoria Gold; I will have to ask the receiver this very question. But that is in general what happens.

So, to date, we have collected just under \$9 million over the past three years, and there is a reassessment on roughly \$3 million over and above that \$9 million collected. When there is a reassessment happening, what goes on is that there will be a threshold at which the mine and the government agree that money is paid straight away. So, what we have over the past three years is \$8.8 million in collected royalties and reassessment happening on \$3.1 million over and above that.

Ms. White: I guess I will leave this here. I'm curious as to why the government's website isn't updated and it just says: Royalty return filed and under review. It doesn't say \$8.8 million was collected. It says zero, actually. It says: Total of zero dollars — which is substantially different from \$8.8 million.

I have committed to my colleague the Member for Copperbelt South that I would cede the floor at this point. So, I look forward to getting back to my final questions the next time we are here.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will just check in with the department about that. If there is information that we can share, I will try to make sure that the website gets updated.

Mr. Kent: I thank my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King for giving me the last part of the day here to ask a few questions.

I wanted to start out just quickly asking about the three-year pilot project that was designed to "... help government institutions connect with local businesses to get healthy and nutritious food grown here in the Yukon." So, that is a quote from a 2021 press release. That was issued on August 30, so we have passed the three-year deadline. I'm just wondering if that pilot project has been completed or if it has been extended and if the minister can tell us how much was

spent through the contractor to access local food products through that three-year time frame.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The pilot project has ended, but what has been happening is how to take the lessons of the pilot project and apply them, for example, to our online marketplace. That's the piece that I was talking about earlier when discussing how to increase the government's purchase of locally produced foods.

We are piloting some products there — for example, eggs, flour, and potato chips. We've been looking to dig in on some specific products because we had been hopeful that there would be more uptake overall.

The other thing is that just recently, you may recall, we give a tribute to the Yukon Agricultural Association. While I was there, one of the things I had said in that tribute was that, over the past decade, gross farm receipts have increased by 40 percent. That's a significant jump.

There was also a number that I was asked to get for our senator for her debate in Parliament around the production of local food, and it has significantly jumped here in the Yukon. It's very difficult to measure it, because lots of people just have a garden and grow some food and eat that food. That isn't easily quantified.

But in terms of farms and what they have produced, the overall production has been going up significantly and it has been displacing food that previously would have been purchased by importing it into the Yukon.

Mr. Kent: I'm just looking for the number from the pilot project. How much was expended on local purchases during that three-year pilot project? I'm wondering if the minister can get that for us. I know we've talked about it previously in Question Period and in debate, and the number wasn't very high.

In the media release from August 2021, it does say that the Government of Yukon spends approximately \$3 million annually on groceries, food, associated food prep, and serving supplies through a number of the facilities — schools, continuing care, correctional and health care facilities, and that type of thing.

I'm just wondering how much was spent during this pilot project specifically on local food purchases.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The number that I have is \$124,000. Again, we felt that this was not significant enough and that's why there was this work to try to dive in and find solutions around it.

There is this group that was created with Highways and Public Works, Agriculture branch, and, as a starting point, Health and Social Services because of their purchasing power in particular around continuing care and their relationship with the hospital.

Mr. Kent: So, I just want to confirm that this is \$124,000 of what would approximately be a \$9million expenditure overall from government; that's what was spent through this pilot project.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, \$124,000 over the three years.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, I appreciate that. I am sure we will have an opportunity to perhaps follow up with the minister later on in the Sitting with respect to that expenditure level and that particular program.

I did want to jump back to mining and the Eagle mine. I thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King — I was going to ask about the CDA and she asked about it. I do have a number of questions that I've addressed to the minister through ministerial statement responses and I submitted a written question today — another written question on various aspects of what is going on at the Eagle mine.

There are just a couple of things I wanted to touch on, though. The water treatment — in the minister's final response on the ministerial response from last week, I believe he said that the water treatment wasn't underway yet. I just wanted him to confirm that and give us a sense of when he expects water treatment to start on the site.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member for his written questions. I did grab them on one of the breaks earlier.

We gave a direction about a month after the failure, and we are seeking to have water treatment in place. That was true then; that is true now. Those directions haven't changed, as far as I know. This was one of the ones that we believed that Victoria Gold was investing quite a bit of effort into, and it wasn't successful. Again, I said somewhere — I think in the ministerial statement — that I would share or table the graph that shows the days when that water treatment was discharged into Haggart Creek and what happened to the cyanide levels in Haggart Creek for those days, and it is pretty clear. I would say that Victoria Gold was not successful at getting the water treatment in place, but I would also say that they were making significant effort on that front.

Water treatment is always complex. It is not easy to sort of tease it apart and identify where there are challenges. The receiver, when they came in, and in dialogue with our folks who look at issues on-site and Na-Cho Nyäk Dun as well, made the choice to bring in another professional group to deal with water treatment. I know that they are working hard toward water treatment. I am advised that, right now, what we believe the timeline is for getting to that water treatment is about a month away, but I always know that these are complicated questions. There are always challenges around them, so I want to be careful to not explicitly say that it's going to happen on this date, but that is the work that we are doing to make sure that the receiver and who they bring on to do this work are ultimately successful.

I will leave it there. I am sure we have more questions on this issue.

Mr. Kent: I can wait for the response from the minister to the written question — the specific response — but I just wanted to confirm that it will be three months and a bit after the receivership in the middle of August before there is water treatment in place on the site. I just wanted to make sure that I got that number right.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, if what the member opposite is asking is from the time since the receiver was appointed to when we currently anticipate water treatment, it is three months

there and about. There are four priorities on-site. It is geotechnical stability — the stability of the slide and the protection of that slide — water storage on-site, getting at the groundwater and dealing with the contaminants that we know to be in the groundwater, and then water treatment.

Of those four, our concerns with Victoria Gold, when they were in place, were more on the other three than they were on the water treatment. Now, they did not achieve water treatment, and I will show that through that graph, but I will say that wasn't the one that — we believed them to be working on it; it was the other three that were more of a concern for us.

Mr. Kent: I did want to — and I know we touched on it in my last question the last time Energy, Mines and Resources was here — but I'll just talk a little bit about industry perceptions. We talked about the bulletin that was put out regarding what was being talked about at the Beaver Creek Precious Metals show, and then we've heard some stuff from Denver Gold as well.

I know that last year, when the minister and the Premier were on the trade trip to Japan and India, the Minister of Finance went to the Beaver Creek precious metals conference in their stead, and I'm just curious why no Yukon government elected officials went this year to the Beaver Creek precious metals summit. Perhaps the minister can tell me, if he knows, the last time an elected member or member of his Cabinet did not attend the Beaver Creek precious metals show in September.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, this is not a conference that I have been to myself. It's typically more, I believe, the Department of Economic Development. I think that this year we sent our senior advisor on investor relations and passed the executive director of the Chamber of Mines to go to the conference. I will check in with the Premier about that. Having not been there myself, I am not sure what the decision point was around that, but as the member himself notes, we have been to that conference many times in the past, and I am sure that we will be going again.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that, and we will follow up with the Premier on that particular issue.

I just wanted to use my remaining time here today and just kind of jump around a little bit. I'm curious if the minister can give us an update on the court case — the Yukon government versus the YESA board with respect to the Michelle property. I know they filed suits on the recommendations, and I'm just curious if the minister can give us any idea of where we are at with that and if he has idea of when he expects some sort of conclusion to that court case.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We are seeking a judicial review of this situation, and I understand that it should be heard by the courts next month.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that from the minister. We will look forward to hearing more about that in November.

I did want to ask a question about the microgeneration program. I noticed in the legislative return that the minister tabled today in response to a written question from the Member for Whitehorse Centre, he mentioned that the initial pause was

supposed to have been done in May, and then it was extended to the middle of January, I think, of 2025.

I'm just curious if the report was concluded in May — that we were expecting — and if there was any consultation with some of the service providers that would provide solar panels or access that program — if there was any consultation on the extension of the pause in accepting new applications for that program.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will do my best to answer the question, Madam Chair.

I think that the extension was due to the analysis work that was sought — being led by ATCO and Yukon Energy. I know that there is sort of an internal and an external working group. The internal working group would include Energy, Mines and Resources, Yukon Development Corporation, and Yukon Energy Corporation. I think that the external working group includes ATCO, but I also know that they have had several conversations — the main company that has been involved in this is Solvest. I certainly know of several conversations that have happened. I don't think it was so much a conversation around: What do you think? Should we extend this? I think it was more a conversation around: We're not going to be able to get this analysis work done in time — and then letting them know.

In my last conversations with Solvest — I'll have to look it up again recently. But we were looking to try to make sure that the data that came out of that analysis work would be something that could be shared with them. There is a back-and-forth happening; I would have to check in with the Development Corporation to understand how frequent that is.

Mr. Kent: I will look forward to receiving some of that information from the minister. I did want to just quickly touch base on the response to questions that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King and I raised during the budget briefing on the supplementary. On the second page of the document that the minister sent us earlier today, it talks about the low carbon economy leadership fund. It goes down to say that, so far this year, Energy branch programs have used the Government of Yukon's funding to support 61 residential retrofits, 36 heat pumps, 570 window replacements, and 614 Energy Star appliances, in addition to other rebates.

Can the minister tell us how much of this year's budget has been spent? Is there still room for additional applications to come through for those programs? Just as a supplement to that question, I am curious about where in the budget we would find the line for subsidies for electrical vehicle purchases. I think that it is \$5,000 per vehicle. That's for the vehicles. I know that there is a further subsidy for e-bikes. I am just curious if the minister can tell us how much has been spent so far on the programs that he identified in the letter. How much has been spent on electric vehicle subsidies — I guess if he needs to break it down on how much was spent on e-bikes and how much was spent on EVs — and then, I guess, how many additional EVs are on the road in this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will try to move quickly here. There is still room for more applications under the low-carbon

economy fund. I think that between \$2 million and \$3 million has already been allocated.

With respect to electric vehicles, the rebates are different, I think, for small and larger vehicles — I'm seeing a no; I will check on that — do you know what the number is?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: \$5,000, thank you. But there is also a rebate for electric vehicle chargers, so there is that ability as well. As of June 2024, the end of June, 441 light-duty vehicles and 22 medium-duty zero-emission vehicles and four electric motorcycles were registered in the territory. Those are the numbers that we have. To date, the rebates that we have spent on electric vehicles is \$543,000.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that from the minister. That is probably a topic that we can explore further when we get into the *Clean Energy Act* amendments. We can dig into those numbers a little bit more there.

There are a few questions that I just want to get on the record here. I know that we are expecting the Commissioner here this afternoon as well. The first one is the commitment under the confidence and supply agreement that the Liberals have with the New Democratic Party to reform the land lottery process through public engagement. I am curious if the minister can give us an update on the status of that work.

I am also looking for an update on the status of the geothermal legislation. Can we expect that to be tabled in the Spring Sitting? Is that what the target is for the minister? I know that is something that is included in his mandate letter from the Premier to accomplish during this term.

Finally, looking for an update from the minister with respect to the Beaver River land use planning process. Is that dormant, or is it an active file? Is the government actively pursuing that work?

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

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt South 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

Chair: 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.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of Yukon, in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to bills which have passed this House.

Commissioner Webber enters the Chamber accompanied by her Aide-de-Camp

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Good afternoon.

Speaker: Madam Commissioner, the Assembly has, at its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the Assembly, I respectfully request your assent.

Clerk: *Act of 2024 to amend the Land Titles Act, 2015.*

Commissioner: I hereby assent to the bill as enumerated by the Clerk.

Anyway, you have a wonderful day and a good week. I listen to you every so often and I do read your notes every day. Thank you very much.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:22 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled October 21, 2024:

35-1-169

2023 Annual Report — Yukon Ombudsman, Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner, Yukon Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner (Speaker Harper)

The following legislative return was tabled October 21, 2024:

35-1-150

Response to Written Question No. 41 re: micro-generation program (Streicker)

The following document was filed October 21, 2024:

35-1-261

Dawson City concerns about services that support residents and business community, letter re (dated October 18, 2024) from William Kendrick, Mayor of Dawson City, to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Premier, and Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (White)

Written notice was given of the following motions October 21, 2024:

Motion No. 1058

Re: wholesale liquor discount (Dixon)

Motion No. 1059

Re: Yukon Liquor Corporation's flow of physical goods and products (Dixon)

The following written question was tabled October 21, 2024:

Written Question No. 60

Re: Eagle Gold mine (Kent)