



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 210

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, October 29, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2024 Fall Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, October 29, 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, as they are now outdated: Motion No. 659 and Motion No. 879, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.
Visitors introduced

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon fiddlers

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to all things fiddling that took place in Whitehorse this past summer. Fiddle music is beloved by so many folks across Canada. Here in the north, fiddle music has been a significant part of our cultural history. That is why the Yukon was honoured in August to host the Canadian Grand Masters Fiddling Competition for the first time north of 60. The bows were flying and the talent on the Arts Centre stage was absolutely exceptional.

Congratulations to Alberta's Ethan Harty for his third championship and shout-out to young Max Francis, who won the People's Choice Award and, at 14, was the youngest finalist at the grand masters. All competitors put on a lively and entertaining event that got toes tapping and spirits lifted.

During the grand masters, fiddling legends from across the north were inducted into the Canadian Fiddle Hall of Honour to celebrate their outstanding contributions to Canadian fiddling.

The Yukon's own Joe Loutchan, "Fiddler on the Loose", was one of those inducted. As Nicole Morgan put it — quote: "Joe lived his life following his passions, with tenacity and clarity of purpose. Whether in music or on the land, we watched him with admiration because he exuded the joy, confidence and fulfillment that flows from this way of living your dreams."

Gerald Edzerza was another Yukon fiddling legend recognized for creating connections and for the encouragement that he demonstrated for fiddling across the Yukon. Gerald had the grand masters competition dedicated to his honour. And

then, the entire community of Old Crow was inducted for their legacy contribution to Canadian fiddle music, honouring generations of Vuntut Gwitchin fiddlers, including Paul Ben Kassi, Charlie Peter Charlie, Peter Benjamin, Peter Tizya, Douglas Charlie, Allan Benjamin, Harold Frost, Ben Chuck Charlie, and Boyd Benjamin.

It was heartwarming and a real moment of Yukon pride to witness Joe, Gerald, and the community of Old Crow getting recognized nationally by their peers, joining the company of other greats in the hall of honour.

If that wasn't enough, at the same time as the national championship, our Yukon Fiddleheads hosted a Pan-Northern Youth Fiddle Summit. One hundred youth from across the north — Nunavut, NWT, the Yukon, and northern BC — came together for an incredible collaborative fiddle jamboree.

These young fiddlers composed an original body of northern work to perform during the grand masters competition. The youth fiddlers packed the main stage and the only thing spread wider than their performance was the audience's grins. In one evening, we had three fantastic events that showcased Canada's top musicians, the legacy of our fiddling past, and our inspiring future talent.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members of this House to join me in expressing our deep appreciation to all those who help make this happen. From Keitha Clarke to Boyd Benjamin, from Joe Loutchan to young Jack Walcher-Wegmann, thank you one and all for bringing jigs, reels, and music into our lives.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Yukon fiddlers — Gerald Edzerza, Joe Loutchan, and the Old Crow fiddlers.

The 34th annual Canadian Grand Masters Fiddling Competition, dedicated to the memory of Gerald Edzerza, was held in Whitehorse from August 21 to 24 of this year. Also part of the program was the Pan-Northern Youth Fiddle Summit. The jam-packed program hosted workshops, competitions, stage performances, and just sharing their joy of the fiddle.

A tribute to other fiddlers across the north was done, along with our Yukon's own Gerald Edzerza, or the "Tahltan Fiddler", Joe Loutchan, the "Fiddler on the Loose", and the Old Crow fiddlers.

Gerald Edzerza, a Tahltan elder, took up playing string instruments when he was young, but the fiddle became his favourite. Along with entertaining, he had two albums produced: *The Tahltan Fiddler* and *Old Time*.

Joe Loutchan, best known for his weekly Thursday evenings at The '98 Hotel, was called a Yukon legend. He played throughout North America and at many venues throughout Canada. He was a staple at Sourdough Rendezvous. He was humble, as he said that he didn't think of himself as a legend but just like anybody else.

There is a long traceable history of fiddlers in the north, and the Old Crow fiddlers have carried on the tradition of this music and passing down the legacy to the next generation.

The northern people and traders interacted. Old Crow took to the fiddle and adapted the French and Scottish tunes and

created their own style. They have versions of tunes that have been adapted to their community and style of dancing. It's Old Crow's traditional way. Whether playing a waltz, a square dance, or a jig, the fiddle is an important part of our northern sound. When the fiddle begins, your feet just start moving and everyone is encouraged to participate. The shy, clumsy, and even introverts have been known to cut loose on the dance floor when a fiddler is fiddling.

I had to look up the difference between the violin and the fiddle. They are basically the same instrument. However, it is called "violin" when you play classical or structured formal music; the fiddle is folk, country, and bluegrass and there is more freedom to interpret. So, "fiddle" is an informal and affectionate way to refer to a violin.

With young groups like the Fiddleheads and the Dawson City Fiddle Club, we are in good hands for the future of Yukon players. And with talent like Allan Benjamin, Ben Charlie — fondly known as "Ben Chuck" — and Boyd Benjamin, the "Flying Gwitch'in Fiddler", the Old Crow connection is strong.

Congratulations to all of the fiddlers, the winners, the participants, the organizers, and sponsors. We hope that the Yukon has captured the participants' imagination and perhaps they will come and play for us again.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the 2024 Yukon inductees to the Canadian Fiddle Hall of Honour: Joe Loutchan, Gerald Edzerza, and the community of Old Crow.

Joe Loutchan made famous Thursday fiddle nights at The '98 with Gerald Edzerza often joining him on stage. These fiddle nights continue on in their legacy and bring the joy of fiddling and dance to the community.

As a member of the Vuntut Gwitchin, I'm proud of the many fiddlers who have come from our nation. The fiddle holds a significant place in Gwitchin culture, carrying both historical and communal value. Introduced through early European influences, it was quickly embraced by the Gwitchin and became woven into our cultural expression. The fiddle's melodies are often heard at gatherings and celebrations, resonating in the hearts of the community as it brings people together across generations through the shared joy of music and dance.

The music played on the fiddle is more than entertainment; it embodies the resilience, adaptability, and storytelling spirit of the Gwitchin. Each tune connects generations, as songs are passed down and played in remembrance of loved ones.

The fiddle tunes have become a cultural language, expressing emotions, stories, and the Gwitchin connection to the land. We have fiddle dances that celebrate the seasonal changes and animal and bird migration. Today, the tradition of fiddle music remains strong, particularly at dances, feasts, and seasonal gatherings, where the rhythms symbolize unity and continuity.

By preserving and playing the fiddle, the Gwitchin honour our history, celebrate our identity, and maintain the cultural bonds that have sustained our community for generations. In

particular, I want to recognize a number of Vuntut Gwitchin fiddlers who have ensured that the joy of fiddle music is passed on to our future generations: Paul Ben Kassi, Charlie Peter Charlie, Peter Benjamin, Peter Tizya, Douglas Charlie, Allan Benjamin, Harold Frost, and Ben Chuck as well as the newest generation of Vuntut Gwitchin fiddlers, Wade Kaye, Boyd Benjamin, Shaylene Charlie, Jamie Tetlich, and Josh Tetlich.

We extend our gratitude on the recognition of the late Joe Loutchan and Gerald Edzerza and the community of Old Crow, who keep the medicine of fiddling alive in the Yukon.

Mahsi' cho.

Applause

In recognition of Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce 10th anniversary

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the 10th anniversary of the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce. For the last decade, the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce has been a fixture of the territory's business community, representing the interests of the Indigenous entrepreneurs and advancing their participation in the Yukon economy.

Working with Indigenous entrepreneurs from across the territory, they have a strong reach within every Yukon community and are well-connected to so many facets of our economy. They have maintained a focus on strengthening Yukon's economic potential in ways that ensure opportunities for First Nation-run businesses.

I thought it was important today, Mr. Speaker, to reach out and remember back to 10 years ago to get a little bit of history. I want to add today some thoughts from Brian MacDonald — who was there as one of the founders, now an ADM and lead senior negotiator with the Yukon government — about those days.

Brian shared with me that it was Brian MacDonald, Lynn Hutton, as well as Paul Gruner, Ron Daub, and Ben Asquith — some of those folks in the early years — and they started off with a coffee at the Yukon Inn. They thought it was important; the reason was that there was a common voice that was brought together for these organizations. They thought it was also very important for many of the CEOs that it was led by a First Nation leader, as it is today.

He reflected back to, after their first meeting, walking into the old High Country Inn and walking through the restaurant, and another chamber was meeting, and at one point as they walked by, one of the individuals and leaders there said: That has just formed the strongest chamber that the Yukon has ever had.

I just want to recognize those folks' early work and the vision that they had.

Today, the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce continues to be a key part of many high-profile initiatives, including investment attraction such as Roundup and the recent Building Bridges panel discussion, which aims to create partnerships between development corporations and local businesses. These contributions support the growth and development of Yukon businesses and educate those nationally

and internationally about the many great things that are happening here.

The chamber also sponsors events and awards across the territory, such as the Yukon First Nation hockey tournament, Adäka, and the Arctic Inspiration Prize. It is through their dedication, innovative thinking, and responsible decision-making that Yukoners will continue to see our economy prosper. I want to especially congratulate the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce president, Tiffany Eckert-Maret, and the team there supporting at the chamber as well as the board of directors for all the work that they do on behalf of First Nation-run businesses here in the Yukon.

Applause

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce as well as they celebrate their 10th anniversary. Yukon First Nations and Yukon First Nation businesses have contributed greatly to the economy in the Yukon for as long as we can remember, but we have seen an incredible surge in business ventures in the last decade. For this, recognition and many thanks are owed to the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce for their support and advocacy for those entrepreneurs and businesses looking to get their start or build capacity in the territory and beyond.

The YFNCC provides support and services for Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs to help them be successful and to enhance our First Nation business community. They foster economic development and create awareness around the huge impact that Yukon First Nation businesses are having in our economy. They are an invaluable resource, working to provide individuals and businesses who wish to work with Yukon First Nations with the appropriate contacts and information to get them moving in the right direction.

The YFNCC sponsors events throughout the Yukon to promote businesses and organizations, fundraise, and support all communities. I have been a proud supporter of this organization since the beginning and I'm happy to see how far they have come in just 10 short years.

To the board and staff past and present, congratulations on this milestone, the first of many. Thank you all for your hard work, dedication, and advocacy.

Applause

MLA Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the First Nation Chamber of Commerce on their 10th anniversary.

I want to join my colleagues in celebrating the success of this organization. In 10 years, they have done remarkable things. I think that we can all agree that the economy of the Yukon looked very different a decade ago before they started their work. We live in a territory full of such an incredible range of First Nation businesses, and the First Nation Chamber of Commerce helps to make that happen through their advocacy and representation. We all benefit from the result.

I would like to quote from a message from their president, Tiffany Eckert-Maret, that speaks to their vision and their

success — quote: “Our grandparents dreamt of a future where Yukon First Nations had a greater control over our economy, and while our journey may be far from over, and we are excited about the future and the opportunities it holds.”

So, congratulations on 10 years, and here is to many more.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any 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. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges Veterans Affairs Canada to continue its investigation into the miscalculation of long-term care payments for veterans and to correct the error.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House congratulates Premier Scott Moe on his successful re-election, forming a majority government in Saskatchewan.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House congratulates Premier David Eby on his successful re-election, forming a majority government in British Columbia.

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

THAT this House supports calling witnesses from the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform to appear before Committee of the Whole to answer questions regarding the final report of the Yukon Citizens' Assembly.

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

THAT this House congratulates Premier Scott Moe and the Saskatchewan Party on their fifth consecutive majority government and supports his continued opposition to the carbon tax, leaving the Yukon with the only premier in Canada in favour of it.

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

THAT this House congratulates Premier David Eby for winning the British Columbia election and supports his campaign promise to axe the carbon tax, leaving the Yukon with the only premier in Canada in favour of it.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to update the cost estimates for expanding the surgical services area at Whitehorse General Hospital and adding more bed capacity.

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

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the third-party investigation report conducted by Associated Engineering into the propane leak at Whistle Bend Place on January 19, 2024.

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

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the following document: the terms of reference for the Takhini neighbourhood traffic study.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform appears as witnesses in Committee of the Whole prior to the end of the 2024 Fall Sitting.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Property crime in Whitehorse

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, it seems that not a week goes by without a new business getting hit with property crime, theft, vandalism, and, even worse, more serious crimes like armed robbery.

The businesses that have been hit over the past year are too many to list. It has become clear to the business community that the Liberal government needs to be doing more to make our community safe and to stop this wave of crime that is hurting so many Yukoners.

Does this Liberal government think that it's doing enough to stop this incredible crime wave across the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. The Government of Yukon continues to prioritize safer and stronger communities across the territory. Certainly, one way is through funding to support First Nations in their safety planning projects, and we remain committed to ongoing collaboration with the Government of Canada and with the First Nation governments as well as our municipalities and our community safety members of the community. Their well-being and the planning processes which we are involved in are unique to the territory and they are incredibly important with respect to providing safety in downtown Whitehorse.

There are members of the business community who have been engaged in our downtown safety action plan. They continue to be engaged by members of both the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice. It is incredibly important that we recognize the seriousness with which they are dealing in our community. I am very proud of the response of the RCMP in and around downtown Whitehorse

and believe that the businesses' concerns must be taken into account with the seriousness they deserve.

Ms. Van Bibber: Last week, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business released a report about the impact of crime on small business. That report was presented to all political leaders in the Yukon in a letter entitled "Rising crime weighs heavy on Yukon small business owners", which I will table later.

According to the letter — and I quote: "There is a widespread belief among business owners that current government efforts to address crime and safety are insufficient, with (78%) indicating a lack of effective collaboration among government agencies." Does the minister think that the efforts of the Liberal government so far have been sufficient, and if not, what are they doing to improve the situation and crack down on the rampant crime that we see and are witnessing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just want to touch on a few things as well that the Minister of Justice and of Health and Social Services, as well as other departments, are doing. I think it's important to note — and I know that the member opposite is very focused on this — I will be looking for a vote of support for the supplementary budget on these key items that the business community completely supports from our discussions, which is the funding of two additional RCMP officers and members to complement the current Whitehorse detachment and support for one additional investigator for SCAN. These are things that we are hearing. We know and are going to be watching closely to see if we get a vote of support from the opposition to support the business community with the development of a new funding program that is specifically being built to work with the private sector on being able to mitigate some of the challenges that they have had downtown.

We take this incredibly seriously. I would just ask the member opposite — I think that I had a quick scan of the report, and there might be a letter on the front part, but I thought that none of the data had to do with the territories. I think the question was posed to make it sound like it did. Maybe correct me if I am wrong, but I thought the data was just coast to coast, not the territories.

Ms. Van Bibber: In the Premier's September press conference about the government's response to this crime wave, he noted that there would be a \$100,000 fund called the "crime prevention grant program"; however, the Premier was light on details. Can the Premier tell us what consultation occurred with the business community in the development of this new grant, how much will each business be eligible for, and does the Premier think that \$100,000 is enough to make a difference, considering how many local businesses are affected by this crime wave?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm pleased that the member opposite has noted the new program, which will be funded by the supplementary budget, as the Premier has just noted, so we are looking for support for that, of course.

That program is being developed by Economic Development in consultation with the Department of Justice. That is real money on the table for real businesses here in the

territory to deal with issues that they believe to be of priority for their businesses.

It's such a great idea that, last week, Public Safety Canada announced the launch of an application process for funding under the national crime prevention strategy. Eligible organizations will be able to apply for funding from November 1 of this year to December 20, 2024. An estimated \$123.5 million will be available over the next five years. It will be available to not-for-profits; to provincial, territorial, regional, municipal, local, and aboriginal governments; organizations; and communities may be eligible to apply for some funding. The Department of Justice is working to make sure that our local businesses are also aware of this important opportunity for them.

Question re: Bail system reform

Mr. Cathers: In January 2023, the Premier co-signed a letter to the Prime Minister from all 13 premiers calling for a thorough review of the bail system in Canada. While the premiers called the bail system a “revolving door”, we have not seen any actual action from him, despite the fact that the joint letter from premiers last year said that the time for action is now.

Yesterday, the Government of Ontario wrote to the federal government calling for a number of specific actions to enhance public safety. They also noted that they have taken significant steps at the provincial level.

Has the Yukon Liberal government taken any action at all to reform the flawed catch-and-release bail system?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. I'm pretty sure that the member opposite will know that the Premier doesn't write *Criminal Code* law and neither do any of the ministers of the territorial government. However, we have been working closely with the federal government, attended virtually a federal-provincial-territorial meeting — a two-and-a-half day meeting — last week that was hosted in Yellowknife by the federal minister and their Premier and minister responsible for public safety and justice in the Northwest Territories. This was a primary topic of conversation. Work continues to be done at the level of ministers tabled across the territory.

Work is being done to evaluate changes that were made to the bail system last year and to continue to advocate and to determine what next steps can be made to make the bail system that is set out in the *Criminal Code* more responsive to the needs of Canadians and also to make the implementation of those bail provisions more effective for Canadians.

Mr. Cathers: In the release yesterday, the Government of Ontario made public their calls to action for the federal government on bail reform. Unlike this Liberal territorial government, they have specific, detailed bail reform requests they have asked the federal government to act on. One of those is — quote: “Restore mandatory minimum sentencing for serious crimes, which this federal government removed, to ensure appropriate penalties and justice for victims.”

What is this Liberal government's position on this call to action by the Government of Ontario, and will they be writing a similar letter to the federal government?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I certainly don't think that Premier Ford is necessarily interested in what I might have to say about his approach. I can tell you that we discussed it at length with his minister responsible both for justice and for public safety in Ontario. There was a lengthy communiqué as well signed by all the parties involved, including the federal government. It is very clear to the ministers of the federal government that we are working hard to make sure these bail provisions are responsive and are improved.

I can also indicate that, here in the Yukon, we are working with the Department of Justice to explore a repeat offender management approach intended to mitigate criminogenic risk factors and address the needs of repeat offenders. It's a program that I note was cancelled by the former government here in the territory.

The approach will engage offenders in a behaviour change process that is necessary for them to stop the cycle of offending behaviour while increasing support, monitoring, and enforcement. This is an incredibly important step forward. The Department of Justice is working with justice partners throughout the territory for the purpose of reinvigorating this program and making it responsive to the needs of Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: It's interesting that the minister wouldn't say their position on the policy.

The Premier has been quick to criticize the federal justice system. He said — quote: “... we want to make sure that the system uses the tools they have, and people that are doing things have to be accountable for their actions. And if that means incarceration, it's incarceration.”

He also called the justice system a revolving door, but what he hasn't done is actually take a position on any specific thing that he wants changed or make a clear request for federal action.

Ontario has done that and, among other things, are calling for removal of credits for time served for repeat and violent offenders. Does the Premier agree with that position, and will he join Ontario's call for that change?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, what I will say is that, at the table, I have been very closely supporting the work of the COF table. I think that what I will point out here today is that the Member for Lake Laberge is talking about what activities and what we are really doing. What we are doing is that we are going back to the program, which I believe was cancelled by the Yukon Party in 2014, for revolving offenders. We want to put that back in place. We think that shouldn't be removed.

What we are going to do, like we did in our spring budget — I think 7.5 RCMP positions and two more now — is we are going to put the funding in place. I want to ask the Member for Lake Laberge: Are you just talking, or are you actually going to stand up and also support these things? We will see when the supplementary budget comes forward if you are just talking or you are actually going to put some action behind this.

Question re: Eagle Gold mine heap leach failure

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, the Yukon Conservation Society, and the Yukon NDP have all called on this government to initiate a public inquiry into the failure of

the Eagle Gold mine. While the government has convened an independent review board, this will only uncover part of what we need to know to prevent another failure in the future. The government-appointed review board cannot investigate the government itself or the regulatory structure under which the mine is governed; they can only look at the technical, management, and governance aspects of the mine. The minister said that he hasn't ruled out a public inquiry, but he hasn't committed to one, either.

It has been over four months since the Eagle Gold mine disaster. When will the minister commit to a public inquiry?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, it is incredibly important for Yukoners to find out what caused the catastrophic failure at the Eagle Gold heap leach facility. We don't know what the cause was, and so, we have the independent review board in place right now. They are doing this diligence to uncover what are the likely causes, and they will report back.

We have made the commitment to share all of that information, and I think that is the point at which we can see what was the cause and then determine what are the next steps that are necessary.

We all want to have safe mining in the territory, and this is part of that important path.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, so no answer there, unfortunately.

We all recognize that mining is an important part of the Yukon's economy, but failures like this put the whole industry in jeopardy. There are many questions that need to be answered about the role of the government as an effective regulator of the industry — questions like: Why was Victoria Gold allowed to be non-compliant with its water licence for months before the failure? Why was Victoria Gold allowed to proceed without having an operational water treatment facility in place, as required by their water licence? Were the recommendations of the Piteau report implemented, and if not, why not? These are just some of the questions that need to be answered.

Why hasn't the minister committed to holding a public inquiry into the Eagle Gold mine failure?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I did just answer that question; I'll answer it again. The whole approach here is to determine what is the cause of this failure. We don't know. We really don't know what happened, and it's important that we understand that, and that will help to shape the decision-making that comes next about how to prevent this in the future.

Those sorts of questions — if it is a public inquiry, I think that it's important that we understand what the independent review board finds. I'll just, as an example, say that when there was the Mount Polley failure and that disaster happened, they too did not call for a public inquiry, but they did establish an independent review right away. So, I think that it's important that we see what happened there and understand that as best as possible. It is an independent process. We have experts in place and advisors in place; we worked with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to select that board and the advisors to the board, and that is what we are looking for: to get that critical information to help us to set the right path to make sure that mining is safe for Yukoners.

Ms. White: We know from inspection reports that the mine was frequently non-compliant with its licences. We know that their water licence required them to have a functional cyanide destruction plant prior to the mine becoming operational, but that didn't happen. We know that the water licence required them to have a water treatment plant capable of treating more than 13,000 cubic meters of mine water per day, yet the mine was never able to meet this requirement.

Because of these failures to comply with their licences, it's critical that the government initiates a public inquiry. First Nations support it, conservation organizations support it, and many in the mining industry support it. So, when will the minister listen to First Nations and call a public inquiry into the government's role in the failure of the Eagle mine?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will just repeat my answer. It's the same answer when I have talked to those environmental organizations and when I have talked with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun.

What I have said is that we wish to get the information about what caused this catastrophic failure. It was not foreseen; we don't know what the cause was. I'm not going to jump to conclusions about it. We brought experts on who are independent of government to provide that expert advice about what caused this. That is the critical step. Once we have that information, we will be in a position to understand what the right direction is to go regarding a public inquiry or other approaches in order to make sure that we create safe practices for mining here in the territory. We absolutely need safe mining in the territory.

Question re: Aishihik wood bison herd management

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Environment released the new conservation and action plan for the Aishihik bison population. The plan includes a number of specific actions, and one of those action items has raised some questions among the hunting and wildlife management communities. Action 4.15 says — quote: "Create hunting refugia to reduce hunter-induced impacts on bison, moose and other wildlife..."

Can the minister tell us what this means for Yukon hunters?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak about the Aishihik bison technical study. The Aishihik bison technical team, which includes all governments and organizations with a role in bison management, has collaboratively drafted a new management plan for the Aishihik wood bison herd in southwestern Yukon. This plan updates the 2012 management plan and seeks a better balance between bison control and harvest as well as managing the impacts of bison hunters on people, other wildlife, and on the land. It also provides interim bison harvest guidelines.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board completed a 60-day public engagement on the draft plan and made recommendations for the changes that the Department of Environment subsequently accepted. The

Government of Yukon has completed consultation with First Nations on the draft plan and it is now being finalized.

For Yukoners listening to Question Period, a 2022 population survey estimated the Aishihik bison population to be just under 2,000 adult animals, indicating continued population growth. One of the goals of the new draft plan is to ensure that a viable population is restored to the land, which will require managing harvest to maintain a minimum population of 1,000 bison.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to further responses on this important topic.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, my question was actually about a specific action item, and I'm hoping I can get an answer.

Under the detail section of this action item, the plan says — quote: "Recommend closure of identified areas to bison hunting during a portion or all of the hunting season..."

Can the minister tell us more about how these closures will work? How will the areas be chosen to be closed? How big will these areas be? Will the closures be temporary or permanent?

The hunting community has a lot of questions about this and I'm hoping that the minister can provide some information that will address these questions.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I certainly will get back to the member opposite with respect to those rather specific questions that have been asked, not diminishing at all the questions that the non-resident and resident bison hunters have. Certainly, they are entitled to an answer and they will receive an answer in a timely fashion.

As the current population of bison is above 1,000 adult animals, hunters will not see a reduction to bison harvest opportunities for the 2024-2025 season.

The bison technical team, which includes all governments and organizations with a role in bison management, recommended in 2024 that the bison hunting season be shortened by one week. Bison cows begin giving birth as early as the last week of March and throughout April and May. The early calving coincides with when we typically see an increase in bison harvest in late March due to warmer weather and longer daylight hours. Shortening the season by one week may help to reduce pressures and stress on pregnant and lactating cows.

The Government of Yukon has notified Yukon First Nations and wildlife co-management partners of this recommendation.

Question re: Whistle Bend development subsurface water

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, there continue to be concerns for my constituents in Whistle Bend about drainage on the so-called "green streets".

Following the public input sessions hosted by the City of Whitehorse in 2022, they issued a "what we heard" document. That document noted considerable concern about drainage, and one of the answers to a frequently asked question was — quote: "Each Green Street will have a drainage swale on one side of the paved path to collect and direct stormwater and snow melt."

Since the Yukon government is responsible for the contract to build these swales, can the Minister of Community Services tell my constituents when this drainage with swales will be completed in each and every green street?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I'm very grateful to have a question about Whistle Bend this afternoon. I'm a bit puzzled why they didn't take us up on our ministerial statement that would have answered these questions had they decided to, but they turned that down to their detriment. So, I will now take the opportunity to answer this question.

Green streets are an innovative concept in Whistle Bend where neighbours can gather, play, and connect on a multi-use trail system free from public traffic. Phases 4 and 5 green street projects are substantially complete. A recent review confirms that drainage swales have been installed. Landscaping will be maintained by the Yukon government until the fall of 2005, at which time, it will transition to the City of Whitehorse for ongoing maintenance.

Phase 6 green street construction and landscaping will advance in 2025 as houses along the street are built out.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the minister. Those drainage swales have not been installed. Despite the ongoing concerns that my constituents have expressed about drainage, there has been an insufficient response from the Liberal government, which is in charge of constructing the infrastructure. I continue to hear about concerns from residents on the so-called "green streets" that are directly impacted by poor drainage of stormwater and snowmelt.

What steps will the government take to ensure that these problems are addressed in a timely manner?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Once again, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite deprived the residents of Whistle Bend from answers on green streets and Whistle Bend in general by turning down the ministerial statement that we had not long ago. I'm sorry that residents had that opportunity denied.

I am happy to say again today that phases 4 and 5 of green street projects are substantially complete, and a recent review confirms that drainage swales have been installed. That is the information I have. It's obviously in contradiction to the member opposite. I will certainly run that to ground. I asked for a briefing on this just two days ago. This is the information that I have been given. It's the most up-to-date information I have.

We know how important green streets are and we are working on that. We have landscapers who are working, but they are working very hard because there is such a great economy in the territory right now, Mr. Speaker, that getting all the work done is a challenge to some people — because of the incredible economy that we have got going in this territory. I know that's hard for the members opposite to hear, but we are going to continue to foster the economy and get the work done that needs to be done, and Whistle Bend residents will be the beneficiaries.

Question re: Canadian housing infrastructure fund

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, in their most recent budget, the federal government created a new infrastructure program called the “Canadian housing infrastructure fund”, which is aimed at ensuring that communities have adequate water and solid-waste infrastructure. That fund has two streams. One is for provinces and territories. To receive funds under that stream, territories must finalize a bilateral agreement with the federal government.

So, can the minister tell us what the status of the bilateral negotiations is with Canada for the Canadian housing infrastructure fund?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to get the opportunity to stand up this afternoon and talk about all the infrastructure that this government is building in rural Yukon and in Whitehorse as well. It has been an absolutely phenomenal amount of work going on in the territory. I was just talking a few moments ago about how the economy is raging right now. It is a challenge, but it is a good challenge to have. All the infrastructure money that we have going out the door — I think that my good colleague from highways would claim \$500 million — in the neighbourhood of that — going out the door? This is all good work for the territory.

As far as new infrastructure coming out of the federal government, of course, both housing and the Community Services teams are working in tandem with our federal counterpart to make sure that we access that money. Those negotiations are going on at the departmental level. I can certainly check in and endeavour to get an answer back to the member opposite about how those negotiations are going, but I understand how important this infrastructure funding — whatever it is — across the territory, be it for housing, be it for sewer and water, or be it for road infrastructure — whatever. That is important to Yukoners, it is important to this territory, and it is work that we are doing in hundreds of millions of ways.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, it seems a bit strange that the minister does not seem to be familiar with this program. According to the federal government’s website, the amount set aside for the Yukon is \$74.2 million over 10 years, and that means that we will be receiving an average of \$7.4 million per year. So, that raises a few questions.

Can the minister tell us what the Yukon government’s plans are for this money? Will the money flow directly to the municipalities, or will the Yukon government play a role as the middleman? Will the money be distributed equally to all municipalities, or will it flow based on some sort of per capita system?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I told the member opposite that I would certainly endeavour to get more information about this new infrastructure project that is dedicated to the territory.

But what I do want to focus on a little bit — because they go on about how we are cutting services and all the rest of it, which is total bunk. The fact is that we are investing in all of our communities.

The member opposite intimated or suggested that we weren’t going to invest in all communities and that has been a

hallmark of this government. From my good colleague the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to the Premier to me, we are making huge investments across the territory in every community, be it: in Old Crow where we did a 10-unit mixed-use housing; in Dawson City, a 34-unit Korbo multiplex unit designed for the Lower Dome lot development; in Pelly Crossing where we have done road upgrades and the Selkirk First Nation early childhood development centre; in Carmacks, the public works fire hall and EMS building; in Beaver Creek, a lagoon and a solar farm project; in Burwash, boat launches and the Kluane First Nation wind farm project; in Haines Junction, biomass district heating system, underground and road upgrades, water well replacements.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing the good work for all Yukoners, and our economy is booming and the territory is growing, and I think that is a great thing.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, it seems that we are getting a \$75-million gift from the federal government that this minister is not familiar with.

The territorial funding stream includes a number of very specific housing conditions that must be met by a municipality in order to be eligible for this funding. For instance, one of those criteria is to enable the adoption of standardized designs from the federal housing catalogue within 18 months of its publication and to implement the national model codes within 18 months of that publication.

Has the minister consulted with municipalities about these criteria? Will the minister work with municipalities to determine its negotiating position for the bilateral agreement with Canada to ensure that these criteria work for Yukon municipalities or that an exemption is sought if the criteria does not work for Yukon? I look forward to all of those answers.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, what I can let you know is that, on behalf of Yukoners, I have asked for an exemption; it’s both housing and Community Services that are part of the discussion. The minister was very open to that.

We have two different timelines that we are working toward. I believe the first is March 2025, and that is to have the agreement signed off. I believe more of the work plan is required for June 30, 2025. Right now, what I have communicated to the minister — Minister Fraser — is that we do want to see funds move. There is, of course, in the bilateral, money that will come directly and we will work through Community Services and their discussions with communities on how that should best flow. The second, of course, is for one-off applications, and we have certainly started to reach out and make sure that we have applications in the pipeline. We want to see that money move as quickly as it possibly can.

We think that some of the funding from the larger pot can move before the new fiscal for distinct applications, but at this time, we’re going to make sure that we go through the TPAs bilaterally, and we do need exceptions in the Yukon. This is not going to fit for the Yukon, and that’s what we shared with the federal government.

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. 44: *Traffic Safety Act* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 44, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Clarke.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to speak again today on Bill No. 44, *Traffic Safety Act*. This bill presents a significant shift in how the Yukon will govern vehicle and pedestrian travel on our highways. It will replace the outdated 1977 *Motor Vehicles Act*, bringing our legislation up to date, allowing for modern enforcement technologies, and ensuring that we are prepared for whatever the future brings.

With this bill, our government is providing a legislative framework that will deter dangerous driving behaviours and improve safety for all road users by updating enforcement authorities, modernizing programs, and increasing penalties. Our government has worked on this bill for years. Of course, we have not done it all alone. We have sought feedback from anyone and everyone who might be impacted by this legislation.

As you have heard during Committee of the Whole, that is a significantly broad scope of people, governments, and organizations. We have considered the feedback that we have received and applied it to the bill before us today. We have not only applied the feedback that we received during engagement, but we have also worked with the members opposite over the past several weeks to make important amendments, resulting in the final version of the bill that you see today.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that this legislation is an example of what is possible when you take the time to listen and adjust based on feedback received. I take pride in the fact that Bill No. 44 will play a key role in addressing the issues that we are seeing with road safety in our territory today and into the future.

I look forward to beginning work on the regulations that will further define how this bill will be implemented, and in the meantime, I am confident that the transitional provisions that are worked into this piece of legislation will provide much-needed immediate change, provisions that will allow us to update fine amounts for unsafe driving offences and update and expand upon the bylaw-making authorities for a municipality to manage traffic safety matters. These are changes that can have an immediate positive impact on road users throughout the territory.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the questions that we received about this bill in Committee of the Whole and the opportunity to provide those answers and more clarity to Yukoners and to the members opposite.

This bill will allow room for our territory to grow and advance while the legislation governing traffic safety remains

relevant. This enabling drafting style will allow the Yukon to be more nimble, since we can make adjustments to our traffic safety legislation through regulations.

However, I do recognize that some aspects of this bill elicited some questions from the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner in relation to facial recognition technology. Our government worked quickly to address these questions and clarify the scope of this technology's use under the draft act in a way that satisfied the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

We have also worked with key stakeholders to modify the bill's preamble, acknowledging the importance of protecting vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists and the increased risks that they face in collisions with motor vehicles. Adding to this, the Leader of the Third Party's amendment to section 1(3) means that Bill No. 44 now has a clear definition of "vulnerable road user" that will serve to inform our traffic safety laws as we move forward.

While this bill has moved through the House, I have had the privilege of responding to questions from the members opposite — questions ranging from how impoundments for abandoned vehicles will work, what the roadside administrative sanctions regime will look like, and how our government will engage on the upcoming regulations.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their interest in this bill and their determined efforts to identify potential issues before it passes Committee of the Whole.

Finally, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to everyone who has worked on this bill. I can think of several people on the TSA team who have dedicated years of work to this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, without the people behind the scenes — the policy analysts, the advisors, and the legislative drafters — we would still be firmly stuck in the dark ages of motor vehicles legislation. It has been an honour to work with such a passionate group of people, and I believe that it is evident that they have put the safety of Yukoners front and centre when drafting this bill. I look forward to the support from members opposite so that this bill can pass and we can begin implementing this next step in improving road safety for all Yukoners.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise today to speak to third reading of Bill No. 44, the *Traffic Safety Act*. First, I would like to bring in some general concerns. The first would be the trend of this Liberal government's failure to do their homework on legislation. As we all know, the minister tabled the bill and, almost immediately, the Information and Privacy Commissioner raised serious concerns that the government had failed to consult with his office as well as failing to properly do a privacy assessment about the use of facial recognition technology.

We in the Yukon Party are also very concerned about the Liberals implementing this technology and are opposed to its use at this time. I should also note that we specifically voted against line 215 when it was debated in Committee of the Whole here in the Legislature on October 24. Thankfully, the

intervention of the IPC prompted amendments from the government that at least strengthened protection for Yukoners. Yukoners' personal information, which includes biometric information, is very important and private, so it's very concerning that this government has casually decided to start using it without actually talking to Yukoners.

It's even more concerning because these Liberals have proven themselves irresponsible and unreliable when it comes to doing things correctly. The *Traffic Safety Act* is just another example of a bill that required major surgery on the floor of this House before the government fails to complete their due diligence. The list of flawed legislation is long and growing, Mr. Speaker. This bill to rewrite the *Motor Vehicles Act*, the new *Health Authority Act*, the better building program, the animal control act, the bill to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues, and the new *Business Corporations Act* that is currently stalled here in this Sitting — all of these pieces of legislation were brought to the floor of this House and needed to be fixed because the Liberals have checked out and aren't doing their jobs. They just continue to get things wrong.

As I pointed out in my second reading speech, this bill broadens the power of Cabinet to take actions in many areas and make changes that are no longer subject to the scrutiny of the Legislative Assembly.

We take issue with this decision to take away some very important and controversial provisions out of the hands of the Legislature and put those decisions behind the closed doors of Cabinet in secret. One of those aspects of this bill that we also found concerning is the decision to remove much of the content in relation to off-road vehicles and to move that into regulation.

As the minister may recall, there was an all-party Select Committee on the Safe Operation and Use of Off-road Vehicles that held public consultations on these topics beginning in 2009 and ending in 2011. That committee voted unanimously to its recommendations, which included detail that should be put into the act. The bill removes all of those ORV items that the Yukon-wide consultation recommended we put in the act. Now, we see this as a big problem.

We also feel that Yukoners should have a say in some of those decisions that this government made regarding the changes. For example, the minister confirmed that this act enables the use of photo radar and red-light cameras. Yukoners will have strong opinions on the use of these enforcement tools and should have an opportunity to share those opinions before we make them law.

We learned during debate that the bill will enable the government to implement mandatory use of snow tires using regulation behind closed doors. Again, we think Yukoners should be asked how they feel about this decision. As I've noted, the Yukon Party still has serious concerns about the use of facial recognition technology, even with the amendments that were made on the recommendation of the privacy commissioner. We are sure that using facial recognition software is deeply concerning to many Yukoners, and we feel that there has been little to no consultation on its use.

While there was a very high-level public engagement a few years ago, it's clear that Yukoners have not been consulted on many of the specific details of the legislation. We think that many Yukoners would have concerns about the content of this legislation and should have been consulted.

Since the Liberal government has shown no inclination to properly consider the input of Yukoners in this bill, the Yukon Party will not be supporting this bill at third reading.

Ms. White: I find myself in the uncomfortable position again where we talk about revisionist history, where we talk about the stories that the Yukon Party will play in this Assembly and, of course, then there is always that thing — the truth. It's your perspective, my perspective, or the actual truth.

I'm going to say that I believe that when legislation comes to the Assembly and it needs to be made stronger and amendments are made while it's here, that is leadership — that is leadership.

I appreciate the Member for Kluane saying that it's lack of consultation, but I remember when the Yukon Party amended the *Financial Administration Act*, which sounds innocuous — the *Financial Administration Act*. Do you know what it did? It made sure that when people were homeless and they were camping on the lawns of the Legislative Assembly, it made it against the law; it made it criminal — it made it criminal. Despite the beaking-off behind me, it was not about safety; it was a perception.

The same Yukon Party made changes to the *Oil and Gas Act* that removed First Nations' ability to say no to oil and gas development on their territory. And when we proposed amendments in this Assembly, they were absolutely shot down.

So, if we want to talk about what legislation should look like and the ability to work together in this Assembly, it's about making it better, and I fundamentally believe that different perspectives will make things better.

So, I am grateful for the multitude of briefings that I had ahead of time, and I will say that having the drafters — the people who work on the legislation — give a very, very, very complete briefing to both opposition parties ahead of it being tabled was incredible. If we want to talk about legislation going forward and we want to talk about the ability of having conversations about it — to be able to debate it in this Assembly — then it's about understanding where we're at and where we're trying to go with it. Those briefings — that explanation — was the reason why I jumped ahead 215 lines, because I was adamant that this is about safety and this is about the future and how we need to change.

I mean, when I was born, you could drink and drive, and that wasn't against the law. Seatbelts weren't required. You know, the Yukon Party talks often about listening to the Association of Yukon Communities. Well, guess who wanted red-light cameras? The Association of Yukon Communities — it passed in one of the resolutions.

When we talk about a piece of legislation like this — and I heard the part coming back about winter tires — you can look at jurisdictions like British Columbia where everywhere outside of the City of Vancouver requires winter tires. We can

look at Québec; we can look at other places with snow — and again, it's about safety. There seems to be a perception in this Assembly that driving is a right — that we should all be allowed to drive and that there is no responsibility there. Well, I'm going to say that it's a privilege, and with that privilege comes responsibility, including looking out for others.

Today, I am thrilled to be voting in favour of the *Traffic Safety Act* and the changes that it will bring. I'm thrilled to know that my nephews, as they get old enough to drive, will be driving in a safer place. I am thrilled to know that there is going to be the ability for communities to help with the issues that they have — whether it is speeding or whether it is going through red lights or traffic signs. I am looking forward to that.

I understand that change is uncomfortable. I also understand that, with the way this legislation has been drafted, regulations will roll in; it won't be all in one go. I fundamentally believe that Yukoners are smart enough to understand the importance of these changes. Every single person in this Assembly and every single person in this territory has been affected by some kind of traffic accident. Whether it is a small, small issue that is an inconvenience or whether it is a tragedy like someone's death, everybody has been affected. It is because we forgot that driving was not a right, but it is a privilege, and with that privilege comes responsibility.

I appreciate that there have been amendments when it has been here. To be honest, I wish that there was the ability to amend more legislation from the floor. I wish that there was the ability that, when oversight was raised, we could actually address it. I think the way that we go forward — collectively go forward — to make things better is with the acknowledgement that mistakes can happen and that we have the ability to correct them.

I am happy to say that the Yukon NDP will be supporting the *Traffic Safety Act* and I look forward to what these changes will bring. I appreciate the work that was done by those who have worked so long and hard on this legislation. I appreciate the amount of the work that they have put in. I appreciate the thought and consideration that they put behind it. I don't view this piece of legislation as political. I view this as public safety, and so I thank the minister for working with me to bring forward amendments. I thank the minister for reaching back out or the officials for reaching back out to the Information and Privacy Commissioner. I appreciate the amendments to section 215. I appreciate the change to the preamble that includes vulnerable road users. I appreciate including the definition and, more than that, I appreciate a piece of legislation that talks about safety, because really, this is about safety. Again, the Yukon NDP will be voting in favour of this legislation.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the comments from our colleagues across the way. I wish I could say that I was surprised, but I am truly just disappointed, quite frankly, in the lack of vision being shown by the Yukon Party with respect to this piece of legislation.

I've had the honour of sitting at these tables when this work was being done, since 2016 when we first came to the Cabinet room and to government. But I worked on this legislation in its

now current state but hopefully soon passed state in the early 2000s — but began conversations in earnest with Vern Janz when I was working for the Department of Justice in 2012 and was prosecuting matters under this current *Motor Vehicles Act*. He, as a leader in the department, knew then many of the changes that needed to be made. The work over the period of time that has brought us to 12 years later and to this very day is nothing short of incredible.

I want to echo many of the comments made by the Leader of the Third Party. This is the place for debate, Mr. Speaker. I don't understand a point of view that says that we can't possibly change a piece of legislation that ends up on the floor of this Legislative Assembly.

Where is the place to make changes that are taking into the account the debate if it is not right here?

I guess the Yukon Party thinks that everything has to be perfectly baked and that we would never take into account any point of view that came later or that came during the opportunity, like with the *Health Authority Act*, that allowed us to make improvements — and they would just shut that down, they would ignore that, and they would not respect the floor of this Legislative Assembly, which is designed for the purpose of making these kinds of changes and conversations in debate.

This is absolutely phenomenal to me that they could take that point of view and would take that point of view publicly.

The Department of Highways and Public Works has built expertise that is second to none based on the work that they have done. They have, despite the comments from the member opposite, built extensive consultation, built opportunities for input, responded to concerns, responded to direction from Cabinet, from partners, and from other stakeholders with which they engaged.

It is incredible to me that the criticism of them is here. I'm embarrassed for that. I hope that they hear that this is not what other members of this Legislative Assembly are saying. We respect the expertise that the department has built and the absolutely unending work that they did for the purposes of making sure that engagement and consultation were critical in this process.

This piece of legislation absolutely must be modernized. It is, as has been said and reiterated — and I will reiterate again — about safety. It's about public safety. It is about positive improvements for the safety of Yukoners. We can only hope that the implementation of this legislation in its various forms — it is enabling in many ways. As the community grows with it and as regulations grow with it, we can only hope that we see a true and honest impact on the safety of the roads in this territory.

We have had a tremendously difficult summer with road accidents, with individuals losing their lives due to the operation of motor vehicles. It is a privilege and it must be regulated. It must be seriously and strongly regulated, because otherwise, we will have something like we had last weekend and the weekend before that and probably the weekend before that: continued examples of people losing their lives on these roads. We have a responsibility to make sure that we do

everything possible to make sure that those numbers are reduced and that the opportunity doesn't exist.

Mr. Speaker, there are many, many positive improvements in this piece of legislation — hundreds of them — but if there was only one, the Yukon Party should be voting for this legislation. If the only one that was in the improvement was the ability to use administrative sanctions to respond to Mothers Against Drunk Driving to make sure that impaired driving, which is completely and utterly preventable, never happens again — not even on one occasion, that could be a goal and, in fact, that is a goal. If that was the only thing that this piece of legislation did, the Yukon Party should be voting for it, but it isn't. It does that and it does hundreds of other things that are improvements to this legislation and to the services and the responsibility of Yukon drivers that they have to one another and that they have to our greater communities.

I appreciate the support and the strong words of the Leader of the Third Party. This is what Yukoners should be concentrating on as a result of this legislation, and frankly, if the Yukon Party does not see this as the improvement and can't see their way clear to supporting it in the way that it absolutely should be, for the safety and protection of Yukoners and the responsibility of Yukon drivers, shame on them.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, frankly, I wasn't really going to talk this afternoon about this. It is a momentous occasion for this Chamber, for this government, for me, and for my good colleague the Minister of Highways and Public Works, and it is really something to celebrate. I am frankly shocked and amazed to hear the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin's remarks this afternoon.

We are talking about, in 2024, replacing a piece of legislation that was written in 1977 — 1977. Let's put that in perspective for a second, Mr. Speaker. And my simmering anger is going to come out a little bit this afternoon, but I can't believe it — 1977. There was a company in 1977 called AMC; doesn't exist anymore. In 1977, we could drink and drive on our roads; that is when this legislation was written and we live with that legacy today. This is a foundational piece of legislation that, when I was on the hustings in 2016 — early February, going door to door — one of my constituents took me aside and said: The most important work that you can do is to replace the *Motor Vehicles Act*.

Our *Motor Vehicles Act* is absolutely incapable of doing the job that it is supposed to do, and we are living with the consequences every day. If I am out walking today, what do I hear? People are driving too fast. I talk to my brother and he says: Motorists in this territory don't know how to drive; they are lax; they are sloppy.

You talk to municipalities and they say: We need more tools to be able to enforce proper driving on our residential streets. We talk about school buses.

The members opposite want to bring up a boutique piece of legislation to protect roadworkers. All that is captured in this new piece of legislation, and they are voting against it for some sort of fabricated reasons. Frankly, they are fabricated reasons. Mr. Speaker, they had the opportunity to do this for 15 years

and they did nothing. We are now doing the hard work — seven years of work. The civil service has meticulously and thoughtfully pulled together and talked to Yukoners. We had one of the biggest responses to our engagement ever on this piece of legislation. We have spoken to First Nations, municipalities, and road users. As a matter of fact, we have been talking and listening to people right up to last week, making the changes necessary to make this bill the very best it can be. I commend my good colleague for all the work he has done on behalf of Yukoners on this bill.

Then to hear this fabricated nonsense about regulations being behind closed doors — what utter nonsense. I am sorry, Mr. Speaker; this is simply untenable, and Yukoners have to know that the Official Opposition is voting against stronger rules for drunk drivers, stronger rules for unlicensed drivers, and stronger rules for uninsured drivers. The ability for RCMP to actually have fines are going to increase so that we can actually have the RCMP start to enforce the laws that have been criticized by our justice system as being unenforceable, and that was years ago under a Justice who is now retired.

Mr. Speaker, what we are hearing is utter nonsense. I want to commend the Leader of the Third Party for her support and for her vigorous defense of this bill. I totally agree with her.

Going back to 1977 just before I end, the biggest horsepower vehicle that I researched just in the last few minutes, in 1977, was AMC again, which you could maybe get an engine that could go up to 200 horsepower. I was just looking at 2024, and there are 1,000 horsepower engines on the road. We have electronic vehicles on the road now. We didn't have them in 1977. As I said, you could still drink and drive, and they're voting against this improvement. I find it reprehensible, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the civil service for all their work on this. An incredible amount of work has been done on behalf of Yukoners on this legislation. Meticulous, methodical, conscientious, working with Yukoners — that's what they have delivered after seven years of work, and the work hasn't finished. Unfortunately, there is more to do — hundreds of pages more and regulations that will be as equally meticulous as the bill you've brought before us today.

When I'm in my riding, the one thing people talk about is how fast cars are driving. That's what I hear. This legislation will set the foundation that will help society address that and so many other problems on our roads. I absolutely think it's one of the most important pieces of legislation that I've seen in my tenure here in this government.

I really do again thank all the people who worked so hard on this bill. I thank the NDP for their support. I thank my colleague for bringing it to this vote today, and I express my profound disappointment and shock at the Official Opposition for turning their backs on Yukoners, because that's what they're doing, Mr. Speaker.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the vigorous contribution made by the Minister of Community Services — I certainly, of course, endorse his comments — Minister of Justice, and the Leader of the Third Party.

A lot of the topics that have been canvassed in this third reading response were dealt with at some length over the course of the three days or so of debate with respect to this act, so, I don't necessarily want to retreat over trodden grounds and the comments, as I said I indicated.

Perhaps, just for one of the I think red herrings, which — I understand that the Official Opposition has to do what the Official Opposition believes it ought to do, but the issue of consultation, I think, is just perhaps something that I ought to put on the record for Yukoners listening at home. I'll be brief, and then we can complete the third reading debate.

While there may be differing opinions on final decisions, the engagement approach taken with respect to this legislation was notably more extensive compared to other governments. Sometimes, this approach means progress isn't as fast as some would like, but we believe that it is more important to do things right than to do things quickly, and that means making room for thorough feedback and dialogue.

Mr. Speaker, we have disagreements with our partners at times, of course, and sometimes those disagreements spill into the public, but that is part of an open and transparent process where everyone gets to be heard. We know that we can't always follow every suggestion or piece of feedback; sometimes we have to make decisions that don't align with everyone's views or we face limitations beyond our control, but we are always listening to the input — and, of course, that matters. We will keep doing this, and we will continue to hold firm to our belief that engagement and consultation are key to being a responsible government. It's what Yukoners deserve, and it's what we keep delivering.

We have done a total of 124 formal engagements with Yukoners since 2017 on things like flood hazard maps, new public land legislation, the expansion of a sexualized assault response team's services in Yukon communities, the *Animal Protection and Control Act* regulations, review of the *Landlord and Tenant Act*, the *Child Care Act*, progress on the LGBTQ2S+ *Inclusion Action Plan*, new minerals legislation, and, but not limited to, extended producer responsibility, and, of course, the transformation of Yukon's health care system.

This doesn't include the direct engagement and consultation that the departments do every single day with partners and stakeholders. The feedback shapes our policies, reports, procedures, and decisions. Yukoners will now see for themselves how the proposed new *Traffic Safety Act*, for example, has been informed by extensive feedback that we heard. I certainly could go back into the record that I provided at second reading and at some length in Committee of the Whole with respect to the extensive nature of the consultation, but I would just adopt the comments that have been made both by my colleagues and by the Leader of the Third Party.

Not to get into a bigger bun toss than we need to at third reading — just for Yukoners listening today with respect to how Committee of the Whole transpired — ultimately, clauses

1 through 214 were deemed read by unanimous consent. So, a lot of the concerns that have been raised by the members opposite — the Official Opposition — of course, could have been dealt with by clause-by-clause consideration and concerns raised, questions raised, and presumably then questions answered by me and by elected officials who were here to assist the Assembly in their consideration of Bill No. 44.

So, that happens, and then — agreed — there was a concern with respect to section 215, which the Department of Highways and Public Works and I addressed in a thorough manner and returned to the House expeditiously with a revised clause which met the concerns of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Fast-forward and we come back to Committee of the Whole, and ultimately, clauses 217 through 247 were deemed read by unanimous consent as well.

Sure, I understand that the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and by extension the Leader of the Official Opposition have concerns with this legislation; however, they had every opportunity to ask about, well, 247 clauses minus one that actually received any consideration or any concern in the Assembly.

I certainly would urge the Official Opposition to reconsider their position and to support the 2024 modern *Traffic Safety Act* for the Yukon, which will improve road safety, reduce fatalities on the road, reduce drunk driving, increase fines, and provide a framework that will benefit all Yukoners today and into the future.

As the Minister of Community Services indicated, I am disappointed. Some of the concerns that have been raised in some respects at the last moment could have been addressed in Committee of the Whole, but anyway, I look forward to the vote at third reading and thank all members of the Assembly for their contributions as this bill made its way through the Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 44 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 44 has passed this House.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 41, entitled *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)*.

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

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 41, entitled *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in Committee on Bill No. 41, *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)*. Assisting me today, to my left is Natalia Baranova, who is the acting manager of standards and approvals at the Department of Environment. To my right is Renée Craig, who was the legislative counsel with respect to this proposed legislation.

This bill is essential for the development of comprehensive regulations that will usher in a modern legislative framework for contaminants in the Yukon. The *Contaminated Sites Regulation 2002* and *Spills Regulations 1996*, which we are currently relying on, are outdated. Further, we cannot enforce

the modern contaminants provisions that were enacted in 2014 until we put in place a new regulatory framework to support their implementation.

The development of new regulations requires that further technical amendments be made to both the *Environment Act* and the 2014 amendment act. Passing Bill No. 41 this fall enables us to complete the new regulations by the spring of 2025. This will bring the Yukon up to par with other Canadian jurisdictions that are already applying modern standards and practices to effectively manage contaminants within their regions.

Bill No. 41 addresses gaps in statutory authorities that were identified during the drafting of the regulation. We noted that some of the provisions that were proposed to be included in the new contaminants regulation were not adequately supported by enabling authorities in the *Environment Act*. For example, the regulations intended to enable adoption of protocols or standards by reference, but this is not contemplated in the *Environment Act*. Therefore, if the act is not amended to authorize incorporation of protocols by regulation, any protocol or standard that would be incorporated by reference through the regulation would not be legally enforceable.

In broader terms, Bill No. 41 amends the *Environment Act 2002* and the *Act to amend the Environment Act 2014* in order to clarify concepts and to enable the development of a comprehensive contaminants regulatory framework that reflects Yukoners' vision of how contaminants and contaminated sites should be managed going forward.

The Yukon government completed public engagement in 2018 to inform the development of a new regulation. The feedback that we gathered during this engagement was instrumental in shaping the new proposed regulation that these act amendments support.

We did not technically have to engage with the public again, as the amendments being proposed are technical and do not necessarily introduce new policy issues. However, to ensure a transparent process, we have notified targeted stakeholders who are directly affected by these changes of our intent to bring forward a bill during this session to support the completion of the new regulation. We also re-engaged these stakeholders on the proposed regulation in order to update the feedback gathered in 2018, before the regulation is completed next spring.

Generally, based on the engagement conducted in 2018 on the new contaminants regulation, the Yukon public and stakeholders were supportive of the proposal to modernize our regulations and the specific changes that were proposed to achieve a modern contaminants framework that is consistent with other Canadian jurisdictions.

Madam Chair, apart from ensuring sufficient regulation-making authorities for the proposed regulations, Bill No. 41 also seeks to clarify provisions and update language to achieve a cohesive legal framework that is clear to understand and easy to implement.

If we do not pass these technical amendments at this time, it will be difficult to develop the new contaminants regulation

as contemplated due to gaps in statutory authorities for certain regulation provisions.

I have all the changes, but I will sit down now, and if there are any questions, I do have clause-by-clause notes here with respect to all the technical amendments should there be any specific questions with respect to the proposed changes.

Mr. Istchenko: Madam Chair, I thank the staff who are here today and, like I always say, those who are on the phone who are assisting the minister.

I just have a couple questions for the minister. In his opening remarks in his previous speech, he said: “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 and statutory authorities, further amendments to the acts are required before the regulation can be finalized.”

He went on to say: “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.”

I do have a concern and I hope that the minister can answer this with regard to the contaminated sites. Of course, we know that there are many types of contaminated sites. There are government-owned, municipality-owned, First Nation-owned, and then there is private sector-owned contaminated sites.

A good example that everyone should be familiar with would be the Marwell tar pit. That was a government site and it had a 10-year plan. I can remember that back in the day. I believe I was the minister, and the NDP would ask every year about it and I would give them an update.

The direction that we went in years ago — all political stripes — it didn’t matter what party you were from — is that we dumped oil in our driveways to keep the dust down. We did a lot of things that we’re not doing today, and there are still a lot of those sites along every highway and especially in some of our small communities that are close to rivers. My town has quite a few of them, but some of those sites are sites that are owned by private people, so cleanup of these sites can be very expensive. For government, often the cleanup is done when funds are available or there is a 10-year plan. So, costs and timelines fall under this environment act, and this is what will come out of this.

So, what sort of guarantee is there that the private sector — that small guy who has a lot that he wants to sell or whatever — will be afforded some sort of leeway — as the government has and municipal — and some sort of funds maybe when it comes to his cleanup on his private property?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We do not anticipate significant additional costs, as contaminated sites are most commonly remediated to a standard where the contaminant can no longer be detected. We will know more about the actual cost implications once we determine the standards to adopt.

Also — additionally, it is important to remember that the new act and regulations will be compliant with the most recent

science intended to protect human health and the environment, so any increased financial liability for YG will be offset by increased safety and quality of life for Yukoners.

The new act and regulations are not increasing our authority to increase our mandate for remediation — only increasing the standards that are applied to remediation.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that. The reason that I bring that up is that I’m from rural Yukon, and I know a lot of people from rural Yukon. There are two types of things. There is government-funded, and that is government-funded by the taxpayers, which is a lot of the rural people who live in the Yukon, so it’s their money that is funding the big cleanup of an environmental site that the government or a municipality might have to deal with. So, my concern is for the little guy or the little girl or whoever owns that piece of property.

This government is famous — I think we just spent a little time earlier talking about how famous this government is for not consulting and how they bring legislation to the House. The last public engagement — and I will go to the minister’s opening remarks where he says: 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, two years before the pandemic, quite a few years ago. We recently re-engaged with 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.

My question for the minister is: The last public engagement, like we said, was in 2018. Who has the department consulted with? And I would like to know if they have consulted with the little man or little lady who has a piece of property — a private sector person who is not part of a government or something, and when did they do that?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: It might take a while to get this on the record, but I will do it so that it is on the record. The member opposite was present for the previous debate on the now-passed *Traffic Safety Act* and my recounting of the engagement and consultation, which has taken place on many issues, so I don’t agree necessarily with the member opposite’s characterization, but in any event, let’s see where we get with this putting the public engagement on the record.

With respect to this bill, Bill No. 41, Yukon has an outdated regulatory framework for managing spills and contaminated sites. The *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)* contains technical amendments to the *Environment Act* and the *Act to Amend the Environment Act* to support the development of regulations needed to implement a modern contaminants framework.

As I indicated in my preliminary comments, public engagement was not a requirement for this bill, because the amendments being proposed are deemed to be technical and do not introduce new policy issues; however, in order to ensure a transparent process, the Department of Environment notified targeted stakeholders of our intent to bring forward a bill during this session to support the completion of the new regulation.

Stakeholders have raised no concerns with the proposed technical act amendments.

Once again, stakeholders have raised no concerns with the proposed technical act amendments.

We engaged the public and stakeholders on the proposed contaminants regulation in 2018. At that time, we received broad support for the proposal to move forward with a new regulation to modernize the Yukon's contaminants framework and bring it to a standard with other Canadian jurisdictions.

In July of 2024, given the amount of time that we acknowledge has passed since public engagement was completed, we re-engaged targeted stakeholders and First Nation governments on the regulations to update the feedback we had received in 2018. We then wrapped up this re-engagement.

To reiterate, the re-engagement is specific to the regulations. It does not have any impact on the act amendments being tabled in this session, so the engagement is specifically with respect to the regulations, which we hope to have finished by the spring of 2025. The engagement does not relate specifically to the technical amendments.

The public engagement on the regulations in 2018 ran for a period of two months from September 20 to November 23, 2018. Approximately 200 stakeholders were contacted, including environmental consultants, land treatment facility operators, and contacts within the Government of Yukon. Several engagement opportunities were made available to stakeholders and the public to participate. These included three face-to-face workshops where approximately 50 people attended, an online survey where 86 responses were received, two online presentations, and one teleconference call.

Consultation with First Nation governments was also initiated, and one First Nation responded with a request for more information.

For the 2024 re-engagement to inform the completion of the new contaminants regulation, we reached out to the Yukon First Nations and targeted stakeholders, including consultants, lawyers, Conservation Society members, land treatment facility operators, laboratory staff, contractors, and miscellaneous parties who expressed interest.

A discussion document on the proposed regulation changes was published on yukon.ca, and participants were asked to review it and submit written comments. In addition, two online sessions were held in August and September 2024 respectively where the department presented the proposed changes and responded to questions. A total of 35 participants attended the two sessions. To date, we have received 13 written submissions: one First Nation response and 12 from industry stakeholders. Perhaps when I get on my feet again, I can continue with the engagement record — but my understanding is that this engagement is more — much more with respect to the proposed regulations and not with respect to the technical amendments.

Mr. Istchenko: No more questions. Thank you to the staff who are here supporting the minister.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

MLA Tredger: I will start by thanking all of the officials and all of the people who got this bill to this stage. Thank you.

I'm hoping that the minister can clarify something for me. He was just talking about consultation, and he talked about consultation on the contaminants regulations. Are those the regulations for this bill, or is that referring to something different?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will provide a brief response, and if the member opposite wishes a more comprehensive answer, I can certainly receive that as well. Sorry, I will just refer again to my notes. The bottom line is that these technical amendments are required to enable the regulations to be drafted — if I could just have a moment.

Just for greater clarification, the *Contaminated Sites Regulation* 2002 and *Spills Regulations* 1996 that we are currently relying on are outdated. We cannot enforce the modern contaminants provisions that were enacted in 2014 until we put in place a new regulatory framework to support their implementation.

Passing Bill No. 41 this fall enables us to complete the new regulations by spring 2025.

I'm just going to summarize some of things I said in my preliminary comments in Committee of the Whole.

Bill No. 41 addresses gaps in statutory authorities that were identified during the drafting of the regulation. We noted that some of the provisions that were proposed to be included in the new contaminants regulations were not adequately supported by enabling authorities in the *Environment Act*.

So, briefly, the regulations — anyway, there are a lot of technical reasons, but yes, the bottom line is that these are technical amendments that enable the Environment team to continue and hopefully successfully continue to consult and implement the regulations in the spring of 2025.

If the member opposite requires additional detail, I will certainly endeavour to get that detail.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister. I'm just going to make sure I understand correctly.

So, the term the "contaminants regulation" which I heard him use a couple times refers to a subset of the regulations for the *Environment Act* that are to do with contaminants; is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, the new proposed contaminant regulations will replace the current contaminated sites regulations and the current spills regulations.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. There are a few different regulations that we're talking about, so I really appreciate the clarity.

So, he mentioned consulting in 2018 and then again in 2024 on the contaminant regulations, but I think I heard him say that the regulations for the act we're debating right now are not yet written. So, was he consulting on the regulations from the previous *Act to Amend the Environment Act* and then that's when they realized that they needed another act as well as more regulations? If you can clarify that for me a little bit, that would be helpful.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I could just have the indulgence of the member opposite, and perhaps — I am endeavouring to get an answer, but if I could just absolutely clarify the question, please.

MLA Tredger: Absolutely. So, in his response to the Member for Kluane, the minister talked about consulting on the regulations in 2018 and then consulting on the regulations in 2024. I am just trying to understand which regulations it was that they consulted on. I thought that he said the regulations for the act we're debating right now haven't been written yet, so I am wondering which regulations he was consulting on or whether I am incorrect and that he is actually consulting on the regulations for the piece of legislation that we are debating right now.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Just to be clear — and I will repeat myself, but the regulations to replace the current contaminated sites regulations and the spills regulations are currently in the drafting process so that the consultation — both in 2018 and 2024 — are in relation to the ongoing drafting of that regulation, and this *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)* ultimately enables the regulations to be in force and effect hopefully in the spring of 2025 — I will just have a quick look here.

The *Environment Act* was first amended in 2014, and then the contaminants regulation started being drafted in 2018, since it was determined that additional changes to the act are required. We are — yes, as I said — here today to amend the act to enable the new contaminants regulation.

I hope that is clear, but I can certainly continue to try to clarify.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister. That does clear things up for me, and I appreciate that. I also understand that I might be a bit hard to understand, so I am going to try very hard to speak really clearly, and please ask me to repeat anything that isn't clear.

I wanted to ask: In the explanatory note for the bill, it talks about enabling the internal development of or establishment or making of standards, protocols, rules, or codes and incorporating those documents. Is the department planning that those all be created internally, or do they have any plans to reference external standards from other bodies?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. Yes, I'm advised that there are two potential sources of numerical standards that are being considered: one from the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment and one from British Columbia.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. Is there anything in this act that talks about transferring or selling contaminated sites?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: No, not in the technical amendments, but it is certainly being considered for adoption or inclusion in the regulations. In my second reading speech — I'll just put on the record again — one of these — the observation which was that one of the important changes in the new framework that will help to 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.

So, just to be clear, it's not in Bill No. 41 but is certainly being considered for adoption in the new regulations.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for clarifying that.

Can he talk a little bit about how he is expecting that to work? If someone owns a contaminated site, I think that right now they have to remediate it before they can sell it, which provides an impetus to remediate it. If they can transfer it without remediating it, what would prevent it from being transferred forever without remediation? What other incentive or impetus would there be to require people to remediate their sites?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As indicated, the information I have been provided, as I said previously, is that the change 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. That presupposes that — and I am not going to speculate — the historic liabilities have been identified, that there is a cleanup plan, that the new purchaser for value has determined that it makes economic sense, and there is a plan to clean up the contamination to develop the land. It would be an obligation to clean up the contamination. I am sure that it would likely be prescribed in regulation as to what this standard would be. I am just seeing if I can provide the member opposite with an example.

Here it is. For example, at a Whitehorse industrial site, identified contamination has resulted in an expensive remediation process which the owner of the site will be hard-pressed to complete. The new proposed regulation would allow for the transfer of liability from the owner to a prospective buyer. There is currently no direct impetus to make responsible parties remediate sites unless the contamination is leaving the site or presents immediate danger to human health or the environment.

The act amendments do not change the authorities of the minister to make someone clean up a site. Perhaps that's a different issue, but the bottom line is, just going back, that it provides the ability to transfer liability from an owner to a prospective buyer and the site would then have to be remediated up to a certain standard.

MLA Tredger: I understand why that would be useful, and I can imagine situations like he gave where someone doesn't have the funds to remediate a site so is just sitting on it forever. But the inability to sell until you remediate is an incentive to remediate even if it's one that is not working for everyone. I am wondering what will happen if that's gone as well. Is he concerned that this could lead to sites just never being remediated and the liability being passed on in perpetuity?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Certainly, I look forward to the further discussion this afternoon. I'm just of the impression that the questions don't really pertain to this act, but I understand that, of course, it's peripherally and importantly linked because

this is a technical amendments act. In any event, let's continue and let's see if we can get answers for the member opposite. Where we can't, we will certainly endeavour to get back to the member opposite.

Currently, owners of contaminated sites can sell without remediating. However, without transfer of liability, there is little incentive for a new buyer, which can result in abandoned, unremediated sites.

I'm advised that the act amendments would not decrease the likelihood of a site being remediated, but we are of the view that it would increase it.

Frequently, people want to sell property for development but don't have the capacity to clean up. Currently, the new owner does not have to clean up old contamination, so transferring liability is an improvement.

I think that answers the question, but I anticipate that there may be a bit of a follow-up.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. I appreciate him discussing this even though I know it's not in the content of the bill because this is what the bill will enable.

That actually does answer my question and I'll leave that there; I appreciate that answer.

I want to ask about the exemptions to reporting. So, I'm looking at page 3 of the bill, and partway down the page it says: "Subsection (1)..." — my understanding is that it is about reporting spills to the government — "... does not apply in respect of a release or class of release that is

"(a) authorized under the *Oil and Gas Act*; or

"(b) exempted by the regulations."

So, I want to narrow in on "exempted by the regulations". What sorts of spills or releases is the minister contemplating would be exempted from the requirement to report?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: If I could just ask respectfully, with the audio, there is a bit of a minor bathtub-echo element happening. I certainly respect that the member opposite is making great efforts to be heard. It is still a little bit difficult, so, as advised, I will just ask to repeat — but there is a bit of an echo and it's a little bit garbled.

I think I do understand the current question.

The question is basically asking to provide examples of cases where someone would be exempt from reporting a spill. For example, if, while filling your vehicle with fuel, you accidentally spilled a litre of fuel on the ground, you are not required to report a spill; however, you would still be obligated to ensure that the spill is cleaned up so that the fuel does not contaminate the environment.

The exemption from the requirement to report does not free a person from the duty to clean up or remediate the release. It is primarily meant to streamline our reporting processes so that it is less onerous for both the responsible party and the officers who process these reports.

There is already a reportable threshold exemption limit in place in the current *Yukon Spills Regulations*. When the proposed new contaminants regulation comes into effect, it will incorporate these thresholds as well as all other aspects of the *Spills Regulations* into a single piece of legislation. The amendments to the act allow for this as well as other required

technical changes for effective implementation and enforcement.

MLA Tredger: For spills that are exempted for small volumes, is the threshold cumulative? I can imagine a scenario in which a small amount is spilled and it is not reported and then the next month, another small amount is spilled. Eventually, if enough small amounts are spilled, it's the equivalent of a large amount being spilled that would have to be reported.

Is the threshold cumulative, or is it only if the threshold is exceeded in a single spill or release?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am advised that right now it is per spill event.

MLA Tredger: Does the minister have any concerns that, if many small spills are unreported, it could lead to a cumulative impact that would be problematic not to have the government aware of?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Just to clarify — just from the team — it looks like there are additional thresholds for spills over time, such as a 30-day period, so I don't disagree with the member opposite that, of course, there could be a scenario where a daily single-release threshold is not met, but there could be cumulative issues. Just to clarify for the record, I am advised that there are, in fact, additional thresholds for spills over time, such as over a 30-day period.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. That was my last question for Committee of the Whole. I'll just say thank you again. There is a lot of very technical work that has gone into this, and I really appreciate that.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 41, entitled *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)*?

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

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Clause 3 agreed to

On Clause 4

Clause 4 agreed to

On Clause 5

Clause 5 agreed to

On Clause 6

Clause 6 agreed to

On Clause 7

Clause 7 agreed to

On Clause 8

Clause 8 agreed to

On Clause 9

Clause 9 agreed to

On Clause 10

Clause 10 agreed to

On Clause 11

Clause 11 agreed to

On Clause 12

Clause 12 agreed to

On Clause 13

Clause 13 agreed to
On Clause 14
Clause 14 agreed to
On Clause 15
Clause 15 agreed to
On Clause 16
Clause 16 agreed to
On Clause 17
Clause 17 agreed to
On Clause 18
Clause 18 agreed to
On Title
Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 41, entitled *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale North that the Chair report Bill No. 41, entitled *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)*, without amendment.
Motion agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, 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 10 minutes.

Recess

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

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

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

Chair: As the Third Party Justice critic, I would like to participate in debate and I will ask if any private member wishes to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Member for Takhini-Kopper King rises

Acting Chair (Ms. White): Order, please.

Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Department of Justice

Acting Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would like to start by thanking my colleagues who are present here today to support the

conversation we will have regarding the supplementary budget for Justice 2024-25. I have with me Mark Radke, the Deputy Minister of the Department of Justice, and Navneet Nijhar, the acting director of Finance. Welcome to both of you. Thank you for being here to support the conversation today.

I am pleased to speak to the Department of Justice Supplementary No. 1 for the 2024-25 fiscal year. During this fiscal year, the department has continued to work diligently toward a justice system that is responsive to the needs of all Yukoners in a fiscally responsible manner.

Through these strategic investments in our future, we continue to build healthy, vibrant, safe, and sustainable Yukon communities. The supplementary budget that I present today enables the department to continue to meet our objectives. This supplementary budget for the Department of Justice includes only operation and maintenance expenditures. There are no supplementary capital expenditures to report.

The operation and maintenance expenditures include funding for retroactive pay to RCMP members as per their collective agreement and for work to improve community safety in downtown Whitehorse and several initiatives to respond to those issues. The most recent round of collective bargaining resulted in pay raises for regular members and officers that currently project a total of \$1,955,716 overage to the 2023-24 and 2024-25 RCMP budget.

The Department of Justice was able to accrue \$561,716 for 2023-24 and will be required to pay the outstanding amount of \$1,394,000 in the 2024-25 fiscal year. As a result, this amount is in the supplementary budget. This is a contractual obligation under the *Territorial Police Service Agreement* and the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program.

Next, we have an increase of \$320,456 toward initiatives to advance safety and well-being in downtown Whitehorse and to implement actions in the downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan. More precisely, we have reserved \$147,500 to fund two additional RCMP resources — members — for the Whitehorse detachment at a 70-percent cost share with Canada. This is the cost to fund those positions in this fiscal year but is ongoing funding for permanent positions — intending to have it appear in next year's mains. \$72,956 is to fund an additional safer communities and neighbourhoods, or SCAN, investigator. Similarly, this funding is permanent and ongoing, although the amount here is for this fiscal year. There is \$100,000 to implement a crime prevention funding program administered by the Department of Economic Development to support businesses and NGOs to improve security measures and to address the impacts of crime. This funding is \$100,000 for 2024-25 and \$100,000 for 2025-26. We spoke a bit about this earlier today in Question Period.

Our government is committed to working with partners and the community to ensure that downtown Whitehorse is a place where everyone feels safe and supported. Over the last year, we have continued to work in collaboration with community partners, Yukon First Nations, and local businesses to address challenges related to homelessness, addiction, and community safety. This is something that communities across this country are dealing with. I think that the response here in

Whitehorse — being coordinated with community partners — has been somewhat unique and we have even heard quite recently about these challenges for the provinces that are having elections this year and the communities' concern about supporting individuals who are struggling with homelessness, addiction, and the impact on community safety. This work has been taken, led by our government, as a way to make sure that our Yukon communities are supported and, in particular in this case, downtown Whitehorse. This approach supports a coordinated and sustainable approach to create a vibrant, inclusive, and safe downtown for all.

I would like to thank all of those whose work contributes to ensuring that the justice system is administered for the benefit of Yukoners and lastly the Department of Justice staff for their truly dedicated work. I wouldn't have time here today to list all of the elements of the kind of work that's done at the Department of Justice that supports government, supports Yukoners, and supports communities.

We have before us — just to focus on the financial staff in the department and the very difficult work that they do — and alongside them, we have community corrections, Court Services, legislative drafters, litigators, individual translators, drafters of legislation and policy, and many others, including Court Services and front-line supports for Yukoners when they come to primarily the courthouse looking for help and services. All of those dedicated individuals deserve to be recognized.

This concludes my opening remarks, and I look forward to questions about Supplementary No. 1 with respect to the Justice expenditures.

Mr. Cathers: I would like to also welcome officials here today. I am going to start off with the issue of policing and crime overall. Just to refresh the minister's memory and that of the House, last fall during that Fall Sitting, we brought forward a motion urging more funding for RCMP front-line positions. That motion, which was passed by the Assembly, read, "THAT this House urges the Yukon government to increase resources and funding to the RCMP to support the hiring of additional front-line police officers in the Whitehorse area and in rural Yukon communities."

I would note, just for the reference of Hansard, I am quoting now from a press release that we issued on October 11, entitled "Yukon Party motion passes urging more funding for RCMP front-line positions." At the time, I noted that: "The Liberal government has neglected the needs of communities and rural Yukoners by failing to respond to population growth and the rise in organized crime with appropriate increases for new policing positions in Whitehorse and rural Yukon ... This motion urges the government to increase resources for the RCMP, which is an important part of tackling illegal drug trafficking and organized crime and responding to growing public concerns about property crime and community safety."

Again, that motion passed, and we are pleased that the government has indeed acted on that call by increasing resources for the RCMP. Of course, the issue of crime and property crime and violent crime continues to be of great concern for Yukoners. Part of the problem requires, as a solution, increased resources for the police. Another aspect of

it, as we touched on today in Question Period, is the issue of bail reform. The minister will recall that changes brought in by the federal Liberal government in Bill C-75 created a situation where it resulted in a lot more offenders being out on bail while awaiting trial, and that has been especially problematic when it comes to repeat and violent offenders, leading to what some have called a "catch-and-release" approach. Others, including the Premier, have referred to it as a "revolving door." The bottom line is that we are seeing serious problems here, as in other provinces and territories.

The Government of Ontario just made an announcement yesterday regarding specific proposals that they have made to the federal government for changes that they would like to see the federal government make in this area. I will just quote, for the reference of Hansard, a CBC article entitled — quote: "Ontario calls for further bail reforms, including no chance of bail for some charges". That article is dated October 28, 2024. It notes — quote: "At a news conference Monday, Solicitor General Michael Kerzner said too many crimes are being committed by 'individuals out on bail after being charged with a previous serious criminal act'. He also alleged the federal Liberal government has a 'go easy on crime approach' that has resulted in a 'catch-and-release bail system.'"

The minister will recall that during the Spring Sitting and, in fact, previous to that, I have asked, on behalf of our caucus, for the government to consult with the RCMP, Crown prosecutors, and others to identify priority areas for changes to the *Criminal Code* and outline those to the federal government, noting that the current Premier joined the other 12 premiers across the country in jointly signing a letter to the Prime Minister in January 2023 regarding the most urgently needed bail reforms — those being related to murder and violent crime. That letter was also very clear that there was more that needed to be done and emphasized the shared priority of all 10 provinces and three territories in having the federal government work with them on those further reforms.

The letter also said that the time for action is now. Under that closing sentence were the signatures of all 13 Canadian premiers. So, that letter again was January 2023. We're now in the fall of 2024, and unfortunately, we have not seen the action that we should have, including, I should emphasize, that this Yukon government has not, to date, given any indication that they are going to make calls to the federal government for specific changes.

I was reviewing my exchange with the minister from the spring of this year. At the time, the minister, in fact, clearly stated that they had not made a request to the federal government for any specific changes but referred to ongoing conversations, including a meeting that she said was going to happen in May between deputy ministers, and she indicated that she herself intended to meet with the federal Justice minister — but it has been radio silence since then on this issue.

We have seen the Ontario government step up with a list of specific requests to the federal government. Quoting from Ontario's press release issued yesterday: "... the federal government's inaction has made it harder to keep dangerous

criminals behind bars. Enough is enough: We need meaningful bail reform now.”

So, in Question Period, I asked the minister about some of the specific policies proposed by Ontario, and unfortunately, the minister was unable or unwilling to answer them at that time, so I’m going to start with the first one on the list.

The Ontario government proposed to the federal government that they, quote — and again, for Hansard, I am quoting from Ontario’s press release — that they asked the federal government to — quote: “Restore mandatory minimum sentencing for serious crimes, which this federal government removed, to ensure appropriate penalties and justice for victims.”

So, regarding that request by the Ontario government, what is this government’s position on that policy? Will they be supporting Ontario’s request in that area or disagreeing with it? And if they do not support that request, would the minister please explain why?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I object, I guess, or challenge that I didn’t answer this previously, but I’m more than happy to have an opportunity to make note for Yukoners about the Justice and Public Safety ministers meeting that concluded on October 18 in Yellowknife. I attended virtually for all of the portions for which I was not otherwise sitting here in the Legislative Assembly. At that time, it was a primary conversation. I can note that the deputy minister was present, along with the assistant deputy minister, in Yellowknife and was able to bring our concerns to the table. I did speak at that meeting as well — virtually. I suspect that — although I’m not speculating — the letter from the Ontario Premier to the federal government came as a result of those conversations as well.

At that meeting, the federal, provincial, and territorial governments all agreed that we have a part to play in ensuring that the bail system is working as intended. Following significant collaboration, the *Criminal Code* amendments were enacted with the objective of enhancing public safety and maintaining public confidence in the administration of justice. Ministers acknowledged — that was Bill C-48 — that despite the changes, significant concerns remain, and they agreed that monitoring the effectiveness of Bill C-48 is needed and that jurisdictions will continue to collaborate to support an effective bail system. Collecting, analyzing, and reporting on reliable data on bail are absolutely critical to support the proper administration of the bail system and addressing concerns about public safety. Ministers also acknowledged the need to further consider legislative and non-legislative measures, which brings me to some further comments and recognition — just noting that Bill C-48 became law with respect to bail provisions back in January 2024. Those amendments were aimed to strengthen public safety by targeting repeat violent offenders and those accused of serious offences committed with firearms and other dangerous weapons.

Provisions that shift the burden to the accused to demonstrate that detention is unwarranted — or, in other words, they should not be detained — are called “reverse onus” provisions. The amendments to expand the reverse onus provisions for certain firearms offences and for offences

involving intimate partner violence were part of Bill C-48. The matter of repeat violent offenders and the bail system involves many complex factors.

Amendments to the *Criminal Code* are just one part of the solution. We will monitor the effectiveness and the impacts of Bill C-48 within our jurisdiction, and that work is being done. I think that is what is being suggested by the member opposite. That work is being done. We remain mindful of the potential impacts of these measures on groups who are overrepresented in the justice system, but we also recognize that there needs to be monitoring and collaboration between our justice partners to continue to explore forms of reintegration or aftercare in support based on individual needs and community culture.

I can also note that — as I noted as part of Question Period today — we are working on a repeat offender program, which I understand was previously cancelled by the member opposite’s government back in 2014. We believe that it will be a collaboration among partners in the justice community and are having conversations with the Crown’s office, the RCMP, and members of the legal community and the judiciary for the purposes of reinvigorating that program and determining how to best address these issues in our own community here in the territory.

I do not have plans at the moment to write to the federal minister. I do have an opportunity, I believe, in some weeks in the future to meet with him. This, of course, will be an issue on our conversation agenda. I look forward to furthering those. I believe that the communiqué expressed the concerns of provincial and territorial ministers very clearly. I know that our conversation expressed — to both the Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Justice for Canada — the concerns that remain as a result of C-48 changes.

At the time, I spoke about the changes in C-48 and how they did not, in my view, go far enough with respect to provisions of protecting individuals who ultimately should not be victims of violent crime but that they should have a broader scope. I expect that will continue to be the case.

On the point of the RCMP resources — and I am certainly happy to come back to this if I get a further question, but I think it’s incredibly important that we take the opportunity to remind Yukoners.

I appreciate the mentioning of the motion last session, but the truth of the matter is that not even our government works that quickly. This opportunity to increase resources for the RCMP here in the territory was in the works for quite some time. It showed up in the 2024-25 budget. Despite the urging of the members opposite, it was well-planned prior to that. It provided an increase of \$1.724 million to the *Territorial Police Service Agreement* budget and was to support responsive policing services.

This budget 2024-25 resulted in an increase that supported eight and a half positions — seven and a half new RCMP members and one public service employee — with additional funding for operational equipment. I look forward to being able to give more information to Yukoners about RCMP resources and our continued commitment to supporting them. Hopefully,

that will be supported by the members opposite in this supplementary budget.

Mr. Cathers: Well, there was a lot in that, including the minister attempting to claim that they weren't responding to the motion that passed in this Assembly last fall requesting an increase to RCMP resources and oddly claiming that government can't act that fast. Well, it was a year ago.

I do want to move on, though. The minister did not answer my specific question about restoring mandatory minimum sentencing for serious crimes, which was a specific request made by Ontario. Unfortunately, having a copy of Hansard from the spring when we last debated the topic of bail reform here in this Assembly, much of the minister's remarks here today read almost verbatim — or, in some cases, possibly verbatim — to what she said in the spring. What is concerning is the lack of action because, again — not my words but in the words of all 13 premiers over 21 months ago in a joint letter to the Prime Minister, they said that the time for action is now.

Again, I'm just going to briefly quote from the spring. For the reference of Hansard, it is from April 4: "When I raised it with the minister previously, I made reference to that. I noted that the National Police Federation has identified bail reform and additional changes as necessary and has been clear that Bill C-48, which the federal government brought in to undo some of the most problematic changes that they had previously made in Bill C-75 — when I raised it with the minister, I asked her questions including what, beyond Bill C-48, the Yukon government has identified as specific areas to the federal government where they would like to see additional changes made to bail provisions to put the onus on the accused instead of on the Crown. At the time, the minister indicated in response — and I quote from Hansard: '... the Yukon has not encouraged the federal government in any particular way to add or change bail provisions with respect to specific criminal offences.'"

I am continuing to quote from that page of Hansard: "My question for the minister is: Since we last discussed this, has the minister reached out to the RCMP or have officials reached out to the RCMP to seek their views on which areas regarding bail should be priorities for the federal government to make changes to the *Criminal Code* bail provisions? Have they reached out to the RCMP and sought their input from the Yukon RCMP on what issues or priorities — what offences, for example, would be priorities — and what they believe would be the appropriate legislative measures by the federal government to improve the situation regarding bail reform and the issue of repeat offenders in particular being allowed back out onto the street?"

The minister then, at the time, and I will not quote at length from what the minister said, but the minister made reference to officials meeting with the RCMP locally on that topic next week — that would have been in April — and made reference to an FPT deputy ministers meeting in May and indicated that she — quote: "I look forward to ... scheduling a meeting with the federal Minister of Justice..." That is from that same page in Hansard, continued over onto the next page.

Again, the concern is the apparent lack of priority being placed on this by the government. I am going to conclude with

two specific questions. Again, regarding Ontario's request that the federal government restore mandatory minimum sentencing for serious crimes, which this federal government removed to ensure appropriate penalties and justice for victims, what is this government's position on that request? Do they agree with it? Do they disagree with it?

The second question is — the minister made reference to a repeat offender management program. Could she clarify if that is the "prolific offender management program" to which she is referring?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'll see if I can address each of those things despite the fact that I just get criticized for addressing all the questions — I'll try again.

First of all, what I made reference to with respect to having worked on increased financing for the RCMP was that our budget planning begins in the fall of the year before. I'm not sure that the members opposite ever did that, but we will start to discuss very soon budget planning for 2025-26. As a matter of fact, work has begun in departments already. That work is significant. We will begin discussing those priorities very soon for the 2025-26 main budget.

So, back in the fall of 2024-25, we were discussing RCMP funding for the 2024-25 budget, which then appeared in that budget.

I think it's important to remind Yukoners that, despite the fact that the member opposite seems to be painting a picture that nothing has been done for several years with respect to this, after this joint letter of premiers to the Prime Minister, as a matter of fact, the joint letter to the Prime Minister that is being referred to resulted in the changes being brought forward to the *Criminal Code* in Bill C-48 and specific areas being addressed.

The question with respect to: Do I meet — I discuss this with the RCMP? It's on absolutely every agenda, because we're trying to gather data to determine whether or not it's an issue with the way in which the laws are drafted or the way in which the laws are being applied or the ways in which — and whether that would be applicable to the Crown's office, whether it be applicable to the Yukon territorial Crown's office, whether it be applicable to defense, legal aid, or judiciary.

How is this all operating in our territory, and what are the identifiable problems?

I will challenge at any time that there is a lack of priority with respect to dealing with this issue or any matter with respect to the criminal justice department and issues of criminal justice in the Department of Justice.

I'm not familiar with the details of the letter — I don't know whether we have it with us — that's being noted from Premier Ford to the federal government, but we will determine as such. I have no evidence upon which to be able to answer the question about mandatory minimums and what the impact of that has been.

There is certainly lots of evidence across the country about how those have not resulted in fair sentences and certainly not the panacea to deal with prolific offenders or repeat offenders or violent offenders who are being released on bail. Certainly, a mandatory minimum sentence wouldn't necessarily even apply at the bail stage, so I'm not sure how those are connected,

but interested to see what Premier Ford has said about that, and we will review that.

Am I meeting with the RCMP and discussing this? If I haven't made that clear, yes. The deputy minister meets regularly with the RCMP, as do I. We are discussing a repeat offender — previously known I think to the member opposite as “prolific offender” — program to determine how to best support individuals here in the territory, because our approach has always been that, yes, certain individuals must be penalized by doing an appropriate sentence in court — after a court determination and penalties — but others perhaps need further supports or wraparound services or opportunities — off-ramps — out of the criminal justice system that we can help assist with. The repeat offender program will, in fact — we hope — reinvigorate those options for them.

Mr. Cathers: Just to make sure that I heard the minister correctly, I think that she indicated that the repeat offender management program that she mentioned having been cancelled was indeed the program that the department previously referred to as the “prolific offender management program”; is that correct?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yes.

Mr. Cathers: Again, the references that I'm making to what Ontario had called for are directly from the press release that they issued. It is on their website and listing — it has also been covered by a number of national media sources as well as Ontario media. So, I just want to go back to that.

The next request — we have heard the minister stating that she doesn't agree with mandatory minimum sentencing for serious crimes. With regard to what the next request made by Ontario was — quote: “Remove bail availability for offenders charged with murder, terrorism, human trafficking, intimate partner violence, drug trafficking, criminal possession or use of restricted or prohibited firearms, and robbery (for example, carjackings and home invasions).”

What is the Yukon government's position on that? Does the minister support that request made by Ontario? Does the minister disagree with it or perhaps support a portion of that specific request?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't think it's appropriate to further comment on a document that I just a few minutes ago said that I haven't thoroughly read or assessed. Let's be clear: I did not say that I didn't agree with mandatory minimums. What I said was that there is very little evidence to support that they deal with the issue that we are talking about, which is bail, because mandatory minimums are sentences, not bail-release terms. Secondly, in fact, there was an important proviso that we make sure that mandatory minimums do not adversely affect individuals who are involved with the criminal justice system on a more regular basis than they ought to be on the basis of race and other issues. So, let's clear that up.

If I could just have one moment —

Secondly, I think I will make reference again to just one reminder. The member opposite has asked me if I am agreeing with the litany of very serious *Criminal Code* charges that are being included in this letter from Ontario. As I said, I will look at the letter and will assess it properly, and then and only then

will I speak to the specifics of what is outlined in a letter that I didn't write and haven't seen. I think that is fair despite national news coverage, apparently. That's fine, but I will take the opportunity to remind Yukoners that I have spent my career as a Crown prosecutor prosecuting cases, prosecuting offenders, who have on occasion committed some of these horrendous crimes. I have spent more than your average prosecutor, probably, in bail court — every weekend for almost 10 years practically making sure that our criminal justice system works well, works as it is designed to work, works as it is designed to keep individuals safe.

It is designed to keep serious criminals off the streets. It's something that I have dedicated my career to. I certainly will continue to do that. I have the honour of being in this role which allows me to have a different vision and a different opportunity to make sure that the criminal justice system here in the territory is working to serve Yukoners. I will continue to do that.

Mr. Cathers: Well, the minister is attempting to frame it as though I'm somehow putting her on the spot regarding a new issue, but I would remind the minister that she said — and, not having the transcript from our debate here already, I can't quote her verbatim. She indicated that, when I made reference to Ontario's request, she thought that likely flowed out of the FPT ministers' discussions that had recently occurred. Presumably, some of these matters would have had some discussion based on her comments earlier in the debate.

The communiqué jointly issued by the federal-provincial-territorial ministers states in part that — quote: “Ministers acknowledged the need to further consider legislative and non-legislative measures.” The subject matter at hand is not new. The federal government did make changes several years ago in Bill C-75 that have had these negative effects on Canadian society and on crime and on reoffending. The first joint letter from the premiers was signed over 21 months ago. So, I asked the minister first of all what the government's position is on the issue of mandatory minimum sentencing for serious crimes. The second question that I asked which I did not get an answer to — I did get a response, but it didn't answer the question — is what this Liberal government's position is on the request made by one province that the federal government remove bail availability for offenders charged with murder, terrorism, human trafficking, intimate partner violence, drug trafficking, criminal possession or use of restricted or prohibited firearms, and robbery — for example, carjacking and home invasions.

I will move on to the next item on Ontario's list. What are the minister's views on Ontario's proposal? They asked the federal government to — quote: “Mandate a three-strike rule requiring pre-trial detention for repeat offenders so they are not allowed back on the street to commit more crimes before their day in court.”

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I guess I will just repeat myself. I won't be commenting on the details of a letter that I haven't seen. It's not responsible to do that.

What I can say is that all of the requests made, as reported by the member opposite, by Premier Ford to the federal government would need to be assessed with respect to the Charter implications of those moves, with respect to the

implications of those for the rights of an accused and the Charter protections that we have here in Canada.

What I will be very clear about is that we continue to work on the issue of bail reform. We continue to have it as a high priority in our discussions with both the RCMP and our partners here in the territory with respect to justice and with respect to the opportunities for collaboration on that work. I can indicate that it remains at the very highest of priorities in the conversations that I am having with the ministers from across the country.

To be clear again, I have noted that Premier Ford's letter probably came as a result of the conversations we had at the recent FPT on October 18, because the minister of Ontario's justice department was there and expressed similar concerns and issues. I think it's fair to make that assumption and to make the opportunity for continued conversations with ministers across the country to be a top priority.

I think that is sufficient. I'm trying to be as clear as possible about the fact that I won't be expressing today — much to the disappointment presumably of members of this House maybe but not to Yukoners — commenting on a letter that was written by another Premier to the federal government about specific details that have Charter implications for individuals, because it would not be responsible to do that. What I can say is that we continue to collect data and assess whether or not the Yukon's bail system is working to protect Yukoners to the very best.

Just with respect to the Charter provision that we would need to assess, all of these concerns against section 11(e) — that you cannot be denied reasonable bail without just cause — in section 11 of the Charter, any person charged with an offence has the right to not be detained improperly. That is the measuring stick upon which all of this must be adjusted. That is not to say — and I do not want it to be interpreted that we have said that this does not mean that adjustments and support and additional changes need to be made to a bail system if it is not working here in Canada, because clearly that is the position that we have taken in the past and I will continue to take.

Mr. Cathers: Just to clarify for the minister, I had previously noted that it was a press release, but the minister seems to have misunderstood that. This is a press release that was issued by Ontario's solicitor general — it was not a letter from Premier Ford — and it listed their specific priorities. Again, I recognize that the minister has been adamant that she doesn't intend to state a position on policy matters here today. I would point out that it is unfortunate, and contrary to what the minister seems to think, for Yukoners who are seeing the impacts of crime in their life — in some cases, on almost a weekly or even daily basis in certain neighbourhoods — this is an issue that is of the utmost urgency for people who are being negatively affected by break-and-enters, by theft, and by violent criminals being released onto the streets — in some cases, the next day — because the police and the Crown don't have sufficient grounds to hold them.

This is something, again — I reminded the minister that the joint letter signed by all 13 premiers happened 21 months ago. That was undoubtedly not the first time that provincial and territorial governments talked about the matter.

Flash-forward now to almost two years later, what we are looking for is the government's position on matters that, by the minister's own indication — she said several times that she thinks Premier Ford's letter — again, not a letter — it was a press release from the Solicitor General — probably came as a result of the FTP discussions. When I asked questions about the positions on the policy requests put forward by the Ontario government, the minister is unwilling to state it. Again, that probably is not going to change, but I would ask the minister — if she's unwilling to do so today, at the earliest opportunity — to answer the questions that I asked regarding those specific policy proposals in the press release from the Solicitor General of the Province of Ontario — stating her position on the request that the federal government bring back restrictions on who can get conditional sentences for serious crimes so dangerous criminals receive sentences that match their actions, require ankle monitors as a condition of bail for serious crimes, and remove credits that can be applied to sentences for the time an accused spends in jail before trial for repeat and violent offences.

Again, just to continue quoting from that press release, here is what the Solicitor General of the Province of Ontario said about it — and I quote: “Public safety has and will continue to be one of our government's top priorities,” said Solicitor General Michael Kerzner. “We have seen a demonstrated failure of Canada's bail system resulting in harm to the people of Ontario, and those who keep our province safe. We will not stand by while the federal government refuses to hear that the system they broke isn't working.”

Further, it is important to note that, in addition to the minister's comments on behalf of the government, this press release has endorsements and comments in it from the president of the Police Association of Ontario and the president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association.

Here's what Mark Baxter, president of the Police Association of Ontario, said in that press release put out by the Ontario government — quote: “The recommendations put forward to fix the bail system are a crucial step in ensuring a justice process that treats individuals fairly while keeping communities safe. Effective bail reform must strike that balance between public safety and the rights of the accused. The outlined approach underscores the government's dedication to public safety, accountability, and the well-being of everyone involved in the justice process. Stricter bail policies for repeat and violent offenders prioritize the safety and security of our communities.”

In the other quote included from John Cerasuolo, president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association — he said — quote: “The OPP Association support changes to the current bail system. Our members overwhelmingly feel that the current system is a ‘catch-and-release’ system that results in many of the same accused persons being at large again to re-offend shortly after arrest. We feel that the safety of our community and our police officers are at risk with this system. We acknowledge that the balance of the Canadian Charter of Rights of an accused person and community safety must be considered

and welcome all efforts by all levels of government to make the system more effective for all.”

Jumping back to homes — since I understand the minister is unwilling to answer those specific questions — regarding the rise in property crimes, I’m going to just quote from *The Yukon Star* article dated August 15, 2024: “Statistics confirm sharp rise in property crimes”. The first sentence of the article says this: “The perception is the reality: property crimes in Whitehorse are surging, new RCMP data show.”

The article goes on to note: “More than half of the total police calls for service occurred in the downtown area from April 1 to June 30 of this year, police report.”

So, that then brings me to the issue of including property crime and downtown safety in the policing priorities.

The minister will recall that we have on several occasions called on the Liberal government to address property crime and downtown safety and to make them priorities in the 2024-25 policing priorities. The minister has so far bafflingly refused to do so despite the fact that property crime is clearly top of mind for many Yukoners. As my colleague the MLA for Porter Creek North noted in the joint release that we issued on July 31, 2024 entitled “Yukon policing priorities must include property crime and downtown safety”, she said — quote: “These reports combined with the raft of business break-ins and vandalism that many downtown businesses have experienced all point to a problem that the Liberal government needs to take seriously. Finding a solution starts with admitting that there is a problem, and the annual policing priorities would be a helpful step in doing that.”

Now, moving forward to an RCMP press release dated in September, it notes that, in addition to the Yukon’s policing priorities — and I’ll quote: “... the Yukon’s Policing Priorities, which are priorities set for the entire Yukon territory set by the Minister of Justice.”

The release goes on to note: “The top three priorities identified by Whitehorse citizens, which are part of Whitehorse Detachment’s Action Plan, are: illicit drug use, property crime and traffic enforcement.”

Again, that is from their September 27 news release. So, again, with all of this in mind, can the minister explain: Will she reconsider her refusal to add property crime specifically to the Yukon’s policing priorities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Let’s be clear: I have never refused to add anything to the Yukon policing priorities, because they are set by the Yukon Police Council in recommendations to me. I also will reiterate for Yukoners that the Yukon Police Council, the body responsible for recommending to the Minister of Justice the policing priorities every two years, is a citizen advisory council on policing in the Yukon. Its focus is on promoting ongoing dialogue to foster a positive relationship between Yukoners, the Yukon RCMP, and the Department of Justice. The current policing priorities have been set for 2023-25. They are strengthening relationships and increasing public trust, enhancing policing, targeted and toxic illicit drugs, serious crime, and policing with First Nations.

This year, the Yukon Police Council is holding meetings in Watson Lake, Carcross, Teslin, and Whitehorse and will be

seeking to engage with Yukon First Nations, local business communities, and the public. As the minister, I look forward to receiving the recommendations from the Yukon Police Council going forward.

What I can be clear about is that the policing priorities have included, in my view — and I wouldn’t want to start quoting myself, as the member opposite is doing — but I take it that the information he is providing is what is involved in Hansard, and I look forward to continuing to hear my words on many of these topics, because I don’t actually disagree with them, so I appreciate that opportunity. To have that repeated to Yukon citizens is incredibly important.

The council, an independent citizen advisory body — the Yukon Police Council, that is — promotes ongoing dialogue to foster the relationships in the territory. As a reminder to Yukoners, it was formed in 2012 following recommendations in the *Sharing Common Ground — Review of Yukon’s Police Force — Final Report* that came out in 2010. That is incredibly important to remember, because this is unique in Canada: the opportunity to have policing priorities set biannually now and the opportunity to have those be communicated publicly to the RCMP and communicated publicly to the communities after the Police Council goes to those communities and gathers that information. It is something that we should be truly proud of.

The RCMP did provide an update about a number of items to media in September I believe, which was the date of the news release, although there was an informal meeting hosted by Staff Sergeant Jill McLaren and media back in August 30, 2024. It was noted at the time that each of the detachments in the Yukon have detachment-level action plans that complement the Yukon’s policing priorities, which are the priorities set for the entire Yukon, which are set by the Minister of Justice following the recommendations from the Police Council.

The three top priorities — and this is what has been identified by Whitehorse citizens — which are part of the Whitehorse detachment’s action plan — remembering that Staff Sergeant Jill McLaren is in charge of the Whitehorse detachment — are noted to be, by the RCMP statement: illicit drug use, property crime, and traffic enforcement. Illicit drug use and property crime fall under the territory’s policing priorities of enhancing policing targeted at serious crime. There is no question whatsoever that property crime and the seriousness of which property crime is taken here in the territory is not only a top priority for Yukon police for the RCMP Whitehorse detachment but is also of the utmost urgency to me as the leader of the department and the individual responsible for making sure that Yukoners have the safest possible system of community that we can allow.

Mr. Cathers: I do want to thank the RCMP for listening and responding to Yukoners. It is unfortunate that the minister would not update the policing priorities to reflect the top priorities of Whitehorse citizens, including property crime.

It is also notable here that we have seen very tough talk from the Premier this summer and fall on the issue of crime, including a CBC article from September 25 entitled “Yukon Premier decries ‘ridiculous’ uptick in Whitehorse crime, announces new money for RCMP, other measures.” A sub-title

says, “‘What is happening right now is absolutely unacceptable’, says...” and then there’s the name of the Premier, which, of course, I can’t say in this House without breaching the rules.

Again, the lack of action on the policing priorities, the lack of action on bail reform, and the fact that one of the announcements that the minister and the Premier made was a new crime prevention grant program meant to bolster security infrastructure, particularly for local businesses — while they rolled that out with some fanfare, we have learned that the total amount of the fund is \$100,000. My colleague the Member for Porter Creek North asked about it but didn’t get an answer during Question Period.

Again, \$100,000, considering just the sheer number of businesses that have seen damage to their buildings and may need to take additional security measures, not to mention the whole issue of compensation for any damages that are not insured — how many businesses does the government see this covering? What will it actually do, and how does the government see \$100,000 as being anything of significance considering the scope of the problem in downtown Whitehorse, including the fact, as I noted when quoting from *The Yukon Star* article, that half of the calls for service in the territory — in the downtown area — I’ll just — as the minister is getting information from officials, I would also ask the minister to update us: What is the total number of RCMP positions in the Yukon? How many of those are filled and how many are vacant? Where did the new rural positions that they announced for the RCMP end up going?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As I have noted — let’s try to draw this back to this particular supplementary budget — we are seeking to add two new members of the RCMP for front-line positions. They will be supportive of the Whitehorse detachment. Once funding for these two positions has been approved and all of the required approvals are in place, there will be 148 RCMP officers in the Yukon. I have a note here that it might have been answered incorrectly at the briefing, so I’m not sure what number the member opposite is asking about. But total regular members across both programs of the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program and the *Territorial Police Service Agreement*, with the support of the two additional members who are here, will be 148.

There are currently no vacancies with respect to those positions. I can indicate that they include increases for this year that were provided for human resources, including members for specialized units, members for the Whitehorse detachment, general-duty constables, and one public service employee. As I mentioned earlier in the conversation and in answering questions, those were the eight and a half positions that were approved when we brought forward the mains for 2024-25.

Mr. Cathers: I will just wrap up my questions with two here before handing the floor over to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. We have previously discussed in this Assembly on several occasions the issue of the potential creation of a Yukon firearms officer position. That is something that Yukon firearms owners had been asking for to help speed up the process of receiving licences, applications, et cetera. It is

something that we had pitched to both the territorial government and in a letter to the then-federal minister responsible. There was, in the changes that were made federally, the provision that there could be the appointment of a chief firearms officer reporting to the Yukon government. There was a letter from Minister LeBlanc, which the Premier responded to in January. The Premier’s request was lukewarm at best to the idea but seemed to be indicating that they would discuss it.

Could the minister tell us what the status of that is? Will the territorial government be moving forward to seek to establish local control over a firearms officer?

Earlier in the spring, the minister will recall that I made reference to a CBC article from March 15 regarding the issue of Whitehorse Correctional Centre and its assets potentially being used for the purpose of drug trafficking. Again, as I noted both on March 18 and on April 4, I want to be clear that, while I am referring to what the story noted from the court case, what I am asking the minister to do is to not comment on a particular case but on the policy and other measures, including security measures that the department is taking to prevent future misuse of the phone system at Whitehorse Correctional Centre from occurring.

Again, quoting from my comments on April 4 — “... the minister has been made aware of other allegations of illegal activities involving drugs on Whitehorse Correctional Centre grounds.”

With regard to the possibility of drugs entering Whitehorse Correctional Centre grounds, were the facility on that site operated by an NGO, can the minister tell us in response to those allegations and concerns — as well as those regarding the phone system — what she and the department are doing to ensure that the government is preventing potential drug trafficking from occurring anywhere on the Whitehorse Correctional grounds or using the Whitehorse Correctional infrastructure, including the phone system?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that there were quite a few things in there. I’m not sure if there was a question about the firearms program. What I will say is that our government supports the rights of legal gun owners in the territory — and we have done all along. We are also supporting an approach to gun control that helps to protect public safety. Conversations that I have had at the federal ministers level involve the fact that Yukon’s concerns absolutely must be taken into account. We continue to advocate with the federal government for Yukon’s concerns.

The federal government’s Bill C-21 amends several acts, with changes focusing on organized crime, supporting violence prevention programs for youth, taking measures to combat gun-related and domestic violence, and preventing self-harm, many of the things that we were talking about earlier as being very serious criminal offences, clearly not all committed by lawful gun owners, so this is a challenge.

We have worked with the Government of Canada — closely monitoring the rollout of the firearms buyback program, which is currently dealing with businesses and the opportunities for them to have proper compensation. The Government of

Yukon maintains that the program implementation must be entirely funded by Canada and not jeopardize any of our front-line policing or policing resources. Canada has engaged with the Yukon about potential changes to improve the delivery of firearms safety licensing and programming in the territories, including consideration of a northern chief firearms officer program to oversee territorial firearms safety training and licensing. I look forward to the continued work on that front.

I think that there is also part of a question with respect to both the supervised housing program that is operated at Whitehorse Correctional Centre and, of course, inmates at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

Let me first comment about the supervised housing. It is a key component of the criminal justice system that provides structured support for justice-involved individuals to assist with their reintegration back into the community or through the criminal justice process, including those who are on bail. So, I think that is an important element that we must stress here. The residents of the men's supervised housing program receive person-centred support and have access to programs based on their individual needs, including but not limited to criminogenic programming, employment support and education, Indigenous-focused programming, homelessness, prevention programs, reintegration services, community-living services, peer support, inclusive community drop-in centres, and food security support — all of which I expect will be components of a repeat offender program and wraparound services that must be brought to bear.

I'll say this: We take all allegations of crime occurring at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre or at the supervised housing program that operates there extremely seriously. We investigate where needed. Whitehorse Correctional Centre visitors are closely monitored. There is a high security for individuals attending to visit inmates. We encourage anyone to come forward with specific information regarding illegal activity that might be occurring there or that they might be able to report so that we can make sure that all of these issues are addressed in a very timely and quick manner.

I think there was a question as well about the phone system. We are again working very hard to make sure that the safety of the inmates, the safety of visitors, and the safety of staff are of the topmost priority at the Correctional Centre. All inmate calls are recorded and monitored in accordance with applicable legislation. All of the monitoring of visitors, et cetera, and treatment of Whitehorse Correctional inmates is done in compliance with the *Corrections Act, 2009*. The specific regulation that might be of interest in this case is section 15 of the corrections regulations.

Ms. Blake: I would like to start by welcoming the officials and thank them for being here.

This question that I'm going to ask — I ask it respectfully. It's a question that I have and it's a question that comes from a lot of folks in the community. As the minister knows, one of the coroner's recommendations for the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter was to hold an independent investigation should there be any further deaths at the shelter. This was to be separate and

independent from any other review done by Connective or Yukon government.

Can the minister confirm that there will be an independent review into the recent death at Whitehorse Emergency Shelter as per the recommendation from the coroner's inquest?

My second question — we know that there have been deaths at another Connective-run organization — Housing First. A few of them are pretty close to me.

My question is: Can the minister confirm if there will be an independent investigation into the deaths that have occurred at Housing First?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much for the question. I think that the member opposite will recall that our government wholeheartedly accepted the recommendations from the coroner's inquest jury, and each and every one of those are being worked on as we go forward. We expect that the outside limit for the initial work to be done with respect to those recommendations was six months. That comes at the end of October, which is only a few days away. I am expecting a report very soon about the activity that has occurred so far in implementing those recommendations. A lot of it comes from Connective itself and we are looking forward to that.

We have also committed to a further, more broad review of the work that is being done by Connective as a result of the work that we've done with several communities, including two of the three chiefs involved from the communities where four of the individuals who were the subject of the coroner's inquest were from, so we have worked closely with them. We have committed to a broader, more independent review of the work that Connective does up until the end of October so that we can learn as much as possible about how to do better and make sure that the issues and concerns of clients of 405 Alexander and other housing opportunities that are operated by Connective can be properly addressed.

More broadly than that is how we work to address the issues of our community, all of which is to say that, because we've committed to all of the recommendations, I can commit to independent reviews of the circumstances of those situations. I will say that each of the two situations that I think are being referred to are currently being investigated by the coroner, so, of course, her work has to come first. We will work with her and with partners — in particular, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice — to determine how those independent reviews can be done and how to best time those so as to not interfere with the coroner's findings and any work that she might want to do.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for her response to that question. The 2023-24 annual report from the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate noted that, over the past few years, their office has seen an increase in the number of calls related to community safety for youth. These include issues involving substance abuse, overdoses, gang violence, sexualized violence, and violent public assaults.

Can the minister provide information about the role of her department in responding to this issue in the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate annual report?

The report also outlines some specific presenting issues for children and youth, which include violence in the communities, violence at schools, risk assessment and planning, and insufficient behavioural intervention and restorative responses. Can the minister also explain her government's responses for plans to address these four issues?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question, but I would like to say that all of the notations described in the beginning of that question are extremely serious criminal offences. In the event that anyone is a victim of those kinds of offences, we hope to be able to support them through our services with Victim Services and in particular, if they are children or youth, with respect to our child and youth victim services.

The Department of Justice, through Victim Services, is committed to providing specialized and age-appropriate services for children and youth who have experienced crime.

Victim Services provides justice-focused supports and works with other agencies to provide coordinated services to victims and families. The team focuses on incorporating national best practices for child and youth advocacy centres into responses for child and youth victims and their families, which is an important aspect of supporting a child or a youth who is a victim of crime, including child-focused interviews and testimony spaces, victim supports, culturally sensitive service provision, and increased organizational capacity-building through training initiatives.

Victim Services continues to work with the RCMP, Public Prosecution Service of Canada, and the Department of Education and other partners to support child and youth victims of crime.

I must note that I was not that long ago able to visit the new Victim Services offices. I know there are several spaces focused on — well, the spaces are all focused on supporting victims in a compassionate and kind way, but in particular, we have some opportunities for children and youth who are either witnesses or victims of crime to be dealt with in a way that is compassionate and caring for them in their unique responses.

I can note that a lot of this work has come out of a program that we had between 2014 and 2020, which was when we worked to develop Project Lynx, which is a jointly administered and jointly led service for child and youth victims of crime based on national best practices for child and youth advocacy centres, and we continue to make sure that we work to focus on those elements of dealing with children and youth who might be victims of crime.

Factors affecting community safety are certainly complex, and we are working to address them holistically through the downtown safety response action plan, our community safety plan, and the substance use health emergency strategy as well. I appreciate that is a mixture of comments about this, but I think the beginning of the question draws our attention to the impact that much of the crime and addictions and homelessness and stress in downtown is having on our youth and children as well, and we can't ignore that. We have to make sure that services respond to them particularly, and I appreciate the opportunity to address the fact that there are specific services for youth and

children, and our Victim Services focuses as best they can to make sure that best practices are available here in the territory.

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

I think it's also important to remind ourselves that these issues that our children and youth are facing here in the City of Whitehorse are also happening in the communities, and there is great importance for communities to be supported as well.

In the supplementary information, there is a case profile number that highlights spousal violence, physical violence, sexualized violence, homicide, property crime, harassment, and uttering threats. I'm wondering: What work is the department doing within Whitehorse and with communities to ensure that resources are put in place adequately to support these issues that are happening territory-wide?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. I think that recognizing that these serious issues are occurring in communities is absolutely critical. I know that the mental wellness unit and the substance use health emergency strategies are not specific to Whitehorse. I know that they involve community liaison as well.

I'm not sure that I have enough time today to respond. I hope we can come back to these issues.

There are a number of things that I would like to comment on. Firstly, the family information liaison unit provides coordinated support for family members of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirited people to access information related to their loved ones' cases. This is only one element of what is being asked about here.

We work to provide supports for families — remaining a key component of the Government of Yukon's work to implement *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ People Strategy*. I think it's incredibly important to take the opportunity to remind people that this Yukon strategy was the first in Canada; many of the other strategies have been modelled on it, including Canada's itself.

In addition to that, it is innovative in its way of connecting all community. I know there is — yesterday and today I believe — the accountability forum with respect to reviewing the strategy and the “changing the story” elements and concerns. I note that Victim Services has a specialized sexual assault response team; we have specialized services for youth and victims; we have the victims of crime emergency fund; we have an independent legal advice program and the family information liaison unit that I have just mentioned.

I also note that we have implemented the intercommunity transportation for victims of crime program, which I unfortunately don't have enough time to properly describe. Improvements to SART have also included the sexualized assault response team and a network of agencies coordinating services to provide comprehensive care and support for victims of sexualized violence. It is incredibly important for me — I have worked with victims of sexualized assault since I was 18 years old, and that's a long time ago now, with my friend, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

I look forward to being able to hopefully respond more fully, but noting the time, Madam Acting Chair, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

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

Acting 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 Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 41, entitled *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

Speaker: You have heard the report of the Acting 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 to grant assent to the bill that has passed this House.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Please be seated.

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

Clerk: *Traffic Safety Act.*

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

I just wanted to say that I hope you have a good week, and also, you know, this week, I received the first poppy from the Legion. I just wanted to bring to your attention that it's really important to remember the veterans and those who served. I appreciate seeing all of you wearing your poppies.

Have a wonderful evening and a good week.

Günilschish.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order. Please be seated.

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 5:25 p.m.

Written notice was given of the following motion October 29, 2024:

Motion No. 1082

Re: membership of the Members' Services Board (Streicker)

The following written question was tabled October 29, 2024:

Written Question No. 61

Re: wait times for hearing services (Cathers)