



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, October 31, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2024 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Thursday, October 31, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**Speaker's statement**

**Chair:** Before proceeding to the Order Paper, the Chair would like to remind members that they are to direct their comments through the Chair.

**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 MADD Project Red Ribbon campaign**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize Mothers Against Drunk Driving's annual Project Red Ribbon campaign, which begins tomorrow.

Earlier this week, our Liberal government and the New Democratic Party passed a new *Traffic Safety Act*. That act contains new provisions to combat and punish impaired driving, among other things. These new provisions have been adopted by Mothers Against Drunk Driving for many years. These sanctions include immediate penalties for criminal levels of impaired driving and dangerous driving offences.

In other jurisdictions in Canada and across the world where provisions like the Yukon's new law have been enforced, there has been a marked decline in alcohol-related motor vehicle collisions and deaths, something that Mothers Against Drunk Driving has long known.

Every year, Mothers Against Drunk Driving volunteers distribute millions of red ribbons to Canadians so that they can display their commitment to avoiding alcohol and drugs before driving. The Project Red Ribbon campaign serves as a reminder to stay sober when we drive or to plan for a safe ride home before consuming alcohol during the holiday season. The red ribbons that we see throughout the community also serve to remember those who have lost their lives to senseless accidents caused by impaired driving.

MADD Whitehorse is a dedicated group whose mission is to raise awareness to help shift our social mindset and ultimately to end impaired driving. The impacts of impaired driving are devastating and ripple far beyond those who are directly involved a collision. Entire families, including my

own, and entire communities are affected when we lose someone in this senseless and completely preventable manner.

The Whitehorse chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving played an important role in the development of the *Traffic Safety Act*, helping to guide our policy decisions. I would like to thank them for their input and involvement during our engagement on this legislation.

I would also like to thank the members of the RCMP M Division who do the very difficult work of enforcing impaired driving laws throughout the Yukon.

As the holidays approach and we plan celebrations with family, friends, and our communities, we must also remember that impaired driving includes impairment from alcohol and drugs, including cannabis and other medications. Impaired driving continues to kill or injure more Canadians than any other crime and remains the leading criminal cause of death in Canada.

The Government of Yukon takes impaired driving very seriously. Though impaired driving rates in other parts of Canada have steadily decreased since 2019, the Yukon's impaired driving rates continue to be higher than the national average. There is still a lot of work to be done.

If you are going to drink, plan for a ride home ahead of time. It will save your life and the lives of others. As we enter the holiday season, I urge everyone to participate in Project Red Ribbon, to spread the message, and to take responsibility for your actions and those of your friends and family behind the wheel.

Together, we can ensure that this year's festive celebrations are done safely. This holiday season, wear a red ribbon to show your commitment to sober driving. Let's all do our part to keep our roads safe.

*Applause*

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Mothers Against Drunk Driving's Project Red Ribbon initiative, which kicks off tomorrow and takes place until January 8.

Each year, we see an increase of celebrations and get-togethers throughout the holiday season. With this comes an increased risk of people getting behind the wheel after drinking. The holidays should be a safe and happy time for all and our roads should be free of hazards. Project Red Ribbon is about recognizing drinking and driving as a problem and giving people the opportunity to take the pledge to do their part and not drive impaired.

The red ribbon serves to remind drivers to make good decisions, as safety starts with each of us as we get behind the wheel. The Whitehorse chapter of MADD Canada does an exceptional job of distributing red ribbons throughout the community and raising awareness about the impacts of drinking and driving. MADD works alongside the Yukon RCMP members to educate drivers roadside during traffic stops. According to the Yukon RCMP, they responded to 555 incidents of impaired driving between January 1 and November 30 of last year, with charges being laid in 171 of those cases. So, please be cautious, as always, this holiday

season on the roads, but most importantly, take special care not to get behind the wheel or into a car with someone who has been drinking.

I would like to thank the RCMP and the incredible volunteers with MADD Canada, Whitehorse chapter, for their continued efforts in supporting families and victims and for their work to end drinking and driving. Talk to your kids about the dangers of impaired driving and be there for them if they need a safe ride home.

*Applause*

**MLA Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Mothers Against Drunk Driving and their Red Ribbon campaign.

The red ribbon reminds us that death and injuries caused by impaired driving are avoidable and preventable and that even one death or injury from impaired driving is too many. It symbolizes the importance of planning ahead for a safe ride home to prevent drinking and driving.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving and their Red Ribbon campaign remind us as drivers of the privilege it is to drive and to think about the many opportunities and responsibilities we have to ensure that we are responsible drivers not only for ourselves and our families but for everyone around us.

I would like to thank the many volunteers of Yukon's Mothers Against Drunk Driving who have led the fight to keep our roads safe and led the fight to educate the public, to support victims, and to work toward a future with no more deaths or injuries from impaired driving. Thank you for all of your work to keep Yukoners safe.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of National Skilled Trade and Technology Week**

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to National Skilled Trade and Technology Week, which takes place this year from November 3 to November 9.

Skills Canada and Skills Canada Yukon organize this initiative each year.

We are grateful to those who work and volunteer locally and nationally to make the engaging events of this week possible. One example is the paper glider competition for grades 6 and 7 students across the territory.

I would also like to highlight and give special personal congratulations to the 21 Yukoners who competed in the 2024 Skills Canada National Competition in Québec City and who came home with two medals: a silver medal in post-secondary Mechanical Engineering CAD and an RBC Best of Region Award for carpentry.

Further, I want to draw attention to the second annual Trades and Apprenticeships Expo for the Yukon's grade 11 and 12 students being held at Porter Creek Secondary School tomorrow. Last year, over 30 local businesses showcased what they have to offer in the skilled trades, and this year, we expect even more. Students are encouraged to bring their resumés and to network with potential employers. Trevor Hale, a school counsellor at Porter Creek Secondary School, is the mastermind

behind this amazing event. Mr. Hale, thank you for all that you do.

Yukon Education is continuing to expand its offerings in the trades. F.H. Collins is currently exploring offering a work-experience course that highlights the trades in the next semester. As we reflect on the economy of the past few years, we recognize the increasing demand for skilled professionals across various sectors from construction and mining to information technology and renewable energy.

These fields require a diverse set of skills and knowledge, and it is our duty to ensure that youth can take advantage of the opportunities available to them and that educational systems are aligned with the needs of our economy. More youth are exploring careers in the skilled trades and technology fields than ever before. We are thrilled to share that over 500 people working for 220 employers are currently registered in the Yukon apprenticeship program, including one of our sons, Max, who is entering his fourth year of a carpentry apprenticeship with Parks Canada at the *SS Klondike* National Historic Site.

Mr. Speaker, in the Yukon, we are taking significant strides to promote skilled trades and technology education. Our schools integrate hands-on learning experiences, enabling students to engage in a real-world application of their skills. As we look to the future, let us remember those who have paved the way for the next generation. The legacy of skilled trades and technology professionals is rich with stories of perseverance, dedication, and success. It is our responsibility to honour their contributions by investing in the education and training of our youth today.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all the skilled trades and technology professionals in the Yukon and beyond. Your work is foundational in our communities, and your commitment inspires us all. Let us work together to build a future where every young person can see the potential for a fulfilling career in skilled trades and technology.

*Applause*

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize National Skilled Trade and Technology Week in Canada. This event helps to promote career opportunities in skilled trades and technology for youth and others looking to get into a new field. It highlights the importance of these sectors throughout the Yukon — carpentry, plumbing, and electrical — all the trades necessary to respond to our housing crisis.

Technology-related trades help to keep us moving in this ever-evolving, modern world. Today, trades and technology converge in remarkable ways. The electrician and the programmer, the welder and the data scientists are now partners in building a sustainable and interconnected world. As we look to the future, tradespeople and technologists together are the stewards of both tradition and innovation. There are so many areas of the trades to discover and find the right fit for your skills, experience, and personality — pipefitting, landscaping,

photography, culinary arts, hairstyling, aesthetics, and so much more.

We would like to thank Skills Canada Yukon for the work they do to promote the trades and to support our young Yukoners, getting them engaged in new projects and experiences such as skills competitions at many levels, also, to the Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, which helps girls and women find their confidence, find their place, and hone their skills, also, of course, to our high school trades teachers and university instructors who help to foster the love of hands-on learning. There are so many options for our youth and so many eager young minds determined to find their place in the trades and technology sectors.

National Skilled Trade and Technology Week is more than a celebration of careers; it is a tribute to the essential unity between tradition and progress. In a world that faces unparalleled change, those skilled in trades and technology embody adaptability, resilience, and creativity.

Thank you to all our skilled tradespeople across the Yukon for your services and to all those following in their footsteps.

My gratitude; salamat po.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the NDP in celebration of National Skilled Trade and Technology Week. Yukon has made leaps and bounds in the arena of skilled trades and technology in the last two-plus decades.

Organizations focused on hands-on learning for youth, like Skills Compétences Canada Yukon and Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, have supported legions of Yukon youth to find their feet in the trades. Programs like the six-week long Power Up! after-school program aimed at young women, trans, and non-binary youth meet young people where they are and support them to learn new and exciting skills.

Skills Canada Yukon provides youth with hands-on learning opportunities by offering fun and engaging workshops and skills clubs in trades and technology areas. They support schools and teachers by offering young people a chance to engage in interactive activities related to various trades and technology careers. These immersive experiences help to identify one's personal interests, strengths, and skills. The workshops are tailored to cater to the group's preferences, skill levels, and time constraints. Both of these organizations spark interest and sometimes set the path for a future career.

When we talk about skilled trades and technology in the Yukon, we can't leave out Yukon University. This institution started as a vocational school and has never forgotten its roots. The tech wing is my favourite wing at the university. These fine folks not only support students in Whitehorse but also across the territory.

They know how awesome trades are and have created an incredible community at the school of trades. They foster and support apprentices to succeed in their chosen fields. The work they do now is felt across the Yukon yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

The world as we know it wouldn't exist without folks in the trades and technology field. In Canada's economy, the

skilled trades and technology sector matter more than ever. It is a good thing that in Yukon, with the hands-on mentorship of Skills Compétences Yukon, Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, and Yukon University, we are well on our way to meeting that challenge head-on.

To all the people out there who are considering a career in the trades, I want to share how much being in the trades has enriched my life. I am a proud ticketed journey person and those skills have taken me on more than one exciting adventure. I have travelled the world, working in places like Paris and small rural towns in England. I have chased snow across Canada, working at ski resorts and backcountry lodges. I have made ice cream in Australia and worked in remote Yukon mines and exploration camps. I have owned a catering company and a café.

I feel lucky to have had a career in the trades that made all of that possible. So, if trades are something that you are thinking about, I say: Go for it — you won't regret it.

*Applause*

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

## **TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS**

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 9 of the *Public Service Group Insurance Benefit Plan Act*, I have for tabling the Joint Management Committee annual report for the period of April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024.

I also, pursuant to section 16 of the *Liquor Act*, have the honour of tabling the Yukon Liquor Corporation annual report for liquor. I also have the honour, pursuant to section 15 of the *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*, to table the Yukon Liquor Corporation annual report for cannabis.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, for context on the importance of traffic safety, I have for tabling the annual report of the Yukon Police Council, April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I have for tabling two legislative returns.

**Speaker:** Are there any reports of committees?  
Are there any petitions to be presented?

## **PETITIONS**

### **Petition No. 26**

**Mr. Dixon:** I have for presentation the following petition that reads as follows:

This petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT Food and Beverage sector businesses have suffered multiple years of an extremely difficult economic climate in the Yukon.

THAT labour costs for bars and restaurants have risen multiple times in the last two years.

THAT the cost of goods, food, liquor, and the cost of service and maintenance of the equipment, rise every year.

THAT the current liquor regulations are old and inadequate to support a thriving industry in the Yukon.

THAT wholesale liquor discounts to Licensees are larger in other jurisdictions.

THAT the Government of Yukon has been made aware of and recognized the struggle for licensed establishments in the Yukon.

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Yukon to increase the wholesale discount on liquor products from 17% to 25% for all Yukon Licensees.

The petition includes 53 signatures representing 56 businesses, Mr. Speaker.

**Speaker:** Is there anything further under Petitions?

### **Petition No. 25 — response**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to address this important petition that was brought forward to the Legislative Assembly regarding nursing home attendants' pay in relation to other health care professionals.

I thank the member opposite for raising the issue in the House and for all of those who lent their names to this petition.

The Government of Yukon recognizes the invaluable contributions of all health care providers, including nursing home attendants, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and others. Each group plays a crucial role in delivering high-quality care to Yukoners, and we are committed to supporting them.

There has been much discussion about the retention bonuses provided to registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and some other allied health care professionals.

I want to clarify that these bonuses were not about showing a greater appreciation for one group of workers over another. This was a strategic response to recruitment and retention challenges in the highly competitive labour market of nursing.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon was previously among the lowest paying jurisdictions for nurses across Canada, and this made it very difficult to attract and retain registered nurses and licensed practical nurses here in the territory. The signing and retention bonuses were necessary and effective in making Yukon's nursing salaries more competitive on a national scale. Without these, we would have faced more serious staffing shortages than we have, which would likely have required the use of costly agency staff to fill gaps.

I want to emphasize that our Yukon's long-term care homes are extremely well-supported by our dedicated nursing home attendants. As a result, we do not rely on agency staffing for those positions. The nurses' recruitment and retention bonuses were essential to ensuring that Yukon remains an attractive place for nurses to live and work, especially given the global health human resources crisis that we are facing. Nursing home attendants here in the Yukon are already among the highest paid in the country. This higher pay reflects the critical and compassionate role that nursing home attendants play in our health care system and our support for them.

The Government of Yukon deeply values the work of nursing home attendants, which is fundamental to providing high-quality person-centred care in our continuing care homes. We strongly refute any claim that nursing home attendants are in any way disrespected. Nursing home attendants are integral to overall patient well-being, to resident safety, to home care, and to so much more for enhancing the lives of their patients. Their contributions are key to the success of the Yukon's continuing care programs and we are committed to supporting them. As of October 2024, there are 206 nursing home attendants employed in Yukon's care homes, with a low vacancy rate of just 2.7 percent. This stability speaks to both the competitive wages that we offer nursing home attendants and the positive work environment that they help to create and operate.

In continuing care, we have fostered a strong culture of employee recognition, which includes the regular sharing of positive feedback from peers, supervisors, and residents and some monthly prizes, among other things. These initiatives help to acknowledge the essential role of nursing home attendants and contribute to workplace morale by promoting a culture of appreciation and respect.

To be clear, our decision to respond to our nursing recruitment challenges by offering retention bonuses to registered nurses and licensed practical nurses was never intended as a statement of greater value for one group of health care workers over another.

Similarly, the competitive wages and recognition programs for nursing home attendants demonstrate our commitment to the recognition of their vital contributions.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Yukon remains devoted to supporting all health care workers, including nursing home attendants. We are committed to ongoing dialogue to ensure that all voices in our health care system are heard, respected, and understood. Our priority is to continue improving health care across the territory in a way that acknowledges the unique needs and contributions of every health care professional. They are invaluable.

**Speaker:** Are there any further petitions to be presented?  
Are there any bills to be introduced?  
Are there any notices of motions?

### **NOTICES OF MOTIONS**

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

THAT this House wishes all Yukoners a happy Diwali.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to ensure that rural roads are plowed in a timely manner after snowfall for the safety of motorists and so that emergency vehicles and school buses can safely travel.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to take steps to ensure that highway rest stops and pullouts stay open all season long, including:

- (1) ensuring that garbage bins are maintained year-round;
- (2) ensuring that outhouses are maintained year-round; and
- (3) ensuring that snow is removed in a timely manner and at no time are there berms blocking access to the outhouses.

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

THAT this House condemns the State of Israel's recent decision to ban the United Nations Relief and Works Agency from operating in Gaza.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Property crime in Whitehorse

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, communities across the territory are concerned about the rising crime rates in the Yukon. Many long-term Yukoners are saying that this is the worst they have ever seen, and for those who have moved here recently, they're worried that this isn't the community they thought it was.

Yukoners are deeply concerned about the rising rates of crime that we have seen develop under this Liberal government, and meanwhile, the Liberal government has been trying to shift the blame. A few months ago, the Premier tried to blame the City of Whitehorse for the spike in crime and publicly criticized the city for not doing enough.

Why is the Premier trying to blame the city for a problem that his government is responsible for?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** A nice try by the Member for Watson Lake, but what we spoke about was the need for collaboration when it comes to our approach to downtown, and that's municipal governments — we have had good contributions from First Nation governments, organizations, NGOs, and all of us coming together.

I think quite simply one of the biggest statements when it was made by the Member for Watson Lake and the members opposite — I think it was 7.5 new RCMP officers for rural Yukon in last spring's budget. It was one of the biggest contributions that we have seen over the last number of years, maybe in decades, to policing capacity across the Yukon for specifically rural Yukon, and I would ask the member opposite: Why did you vote against it?

**Ms. McLeod:** In a public speech that the Premier gave in August, he said that they were missing a valuable partner in the City of Whitehorse and the city had been absent from the work to make the community safer. This was something that Mayor Laura Cabott has pushed back against firmly. In a letter to the Minister of Justice, Mayor Cabott said that she disagreed and that — quote: "To my knowledge, the City has been present

and has fully participated in discussions around downtown safety, collaborating to the full extent of our jurisdiction."

Yukoners know that the Liberal government hasn't done enough to stop the crime wave sweeping the Yukon, so why is the Premier pointing fingers and trying to shift the blame onto the City of Whitehorse?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that I, like many Yukoners — or moreover, the residents of Whitehorse — were happy to see in the municipal election that this conversation was front and centre. What I can report to the House is that, in less than a week of the election concluding, I had an opportunity to sit with the mayor-elect and have a discussion. I was very happy to see the perspective coming on a focus on downtown safety.

So, of course, we want to welcome the team who is there, and they will be formally in their positions on Friday. I also want to thank Mayor Cabott for her contribution to the city. I will be looking forward to seeing what the mayor and council — the position that they are taking. Then again, we just think that there are lots of things that we all can do. Do we think that there are ways that we can continuously improve as a government when it comes to these things? Absolutely, but I think that it's important for everybody to be at the table together, and I think it's important when real tools — like new police officers, capacity for SCAN, funding for Yukon businesses — come to this table, that we see the opposition stand up for what they are saying are their priorities but that they vote for those tools so that we can have them in place and use them to make things safer for Yukoners.

### Question re: RCMP funding

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has been quick to take credit for the two new RCMP positions that it is funding, but the reality is that they had to be forced into that investment. It wasn't until the City of Whitehorse unanimously passed a motion that was put forward by Councillor Ted Laking that called on the Yukon government to increase resources to the RCMP that the government finally acted. Instead of working positively with the city, the Premier chose to publicly attack them and criticize them for not doing enough.

So, why is the Premier picking fights with the city instead of working with them to address the crime wave that has swept the territory?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I'm very pleased to be able to rise and repeat the information that I provided earlier in the week during conversations with the Member for Lake Laberge on the Justice budget, which is what we're really talking about here.

I explained then — and maybe the Member for Watson Lake wasn't listening at that time — but our budget planning starts in the fall of the year before, so conversations about two new RCMP officers in this supplementary budget — and let's be clear: In the main budget of this year, for 2024-25, eight additional members were all in conversation and at our table for discussion long before there was ever any motion here in the House — whoever might have instigated that conversation — appreciate that they're on board, appreciate that they support more resources for the RCMP — let's see them vote for it.

**Question re: Prolific offender management program**

**Mr. Cathers:** This week, the Minister of Justice and the Premier told this House that they are looking to re-establish a repeat offender management program that the Yukon government cancelled. The minister confirmed that is the program that was called the “prolific offender management program”. Oddly, both she and the Premier tried to claim that it had been shut down in 2014, but we know that the program was running when I talked about it during budget debate in April 2015 and in February 2017 when the Minister of Justice wrote me a letter that described the operation of that program in the present tense.

So, I repeat a question that the Minister of Justice dodged yesterday: When did the Liberals cancel this program and why?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Our government is, as I noted a few moments ago, funding new RCMP officer positions here in Whitehorse and across the territory. We’re increasing the police budget. We’ve hired private security guards for businesses downtown. With other provinces and territories, we have written to the Prime Minister to call for changes to the bail system, which resulted in Bill C-48 and those changes to the bail system. We hope that our continued conversations with the federal government and the federal ministers, in unison across the country, the provinces and territories will create more change.

With respect to the then-called “prolific offender management program” — we call “repeat offender program” — funding for supports for victims have been increased under our watch. We’re adding new programs to help people leave behind a life of violent crime in every step of the way. Unfortunately, the Yukon Party votes against these efforts.

Our government is providing significant financial assistance to community groups as well. We have a downtown safety action plan. We continue to work with individuals who find themselves involved in the criminal justice system, working hard to make a safer community here in the territory.

**Mr. Cathers:** On Tuesday and again yesterday, the Premier and the minister talked about the prolific offender management program and said that it shouldn’t have been cancelled. The Premier said: “... 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.”

But the problem is that he got his facts wrong again. The program was running when the Liberals took office. It was running in 2015 when I told the Legislature that the prolific offender management program was fulfilling its role effectively, and I said, “The team meets monthly...” It was running in February 2017 when the minister wrote about it in a letter.

Crime has skyrocketed, and now the Liberals are looking at re-establishing the program, but they still haven’t answered the question: When did the Liberals cancel the prolific offender management program and why?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Unfortunately yet again, the member opposite has their facts incorrect. As I noted yesterday,

this program ran as a pilot project between 2011 and 2013, at which time it was assessed in through 2014, and there is confirmation coming forward that it was not continually funded as a result of those decisions made in 2014 and 2015 with respect to this program.

References to the program are important, because we look forward to reinstating that the work is underway with the Department of Justice, with partners in justice, PPSC — public prosecution unit — the RCMP, court users, Legal Aid, the judiciary, and the legal community to determine how to best move forward with the good lessons that were learned as a result of the program between 2011 and 2013 and that we should be addressing the root causes of crime in order for us to move forward with a safer community.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, that is a ridiculous claim by the minister. If you check Hansard from April 2015 and the minister’s own letter from 2017, it is clear that the program was running.

As my colleague the Member for Watson Lake, touched on earlier the Premier and his floundering government have reached a stage of desperation where they are trying to blame someone else — anyone else — for the problems that they create with their own decisions. The Premier picked a fight with the city trying to blame them for skyrocketing crime. Then he and his minister both lashed out at us, trying to blame someone else for the Liberals’ decision to shut down the prolific offender management program.

The problem is that we know the program started in 2011 and ran until 2017 or later. It is clear that, under this minister, the Liberals shut it down. The Premier has now admitted that it was a good program and said that he wants it put back in place.

So, I will ask again: When did the Liberals cancel the prolific offender management program and why?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I think that it is important that Yukoners have lots of information about what is really going on here. Just this week, we saw the Yukon Party vote against the *Traffic Safety Act*, which contained important amendments that would increase penalties for driving under the influence. Budget 2024-25 contained a quarter of a million dollars to implement recommendations from *Yukon’s Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ People Strategy* — the Yukon Party voted against that funding. Budget 2024-25 contained nearly \$300,000 in funding for a service for families of missing and murdered Indigenous people — the Yukon Party voted against that funding.

I don’t know how many times the Yukon Party will stand and talk about stopping crime and supporting victims of crime and their families. It is disappointing to see them play politics with such a serious issue, and it is disappointing to see them yet again ignore the Yukoners, business owners, and community members who are calling on all of us in this House to do more to make our community safer.

Let’s see them support those communities.



**Question re: Connective Support Society and Whitehorse Emergency Shelter**

**Ms. Blake:** Mr. Speaker, recently, we asked the minister about an update on the Connective review. Recommendation 5 from the coroner's inquest was that an independent review be conducted into any future deaths at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. We know that there was a recent death at the shelter and another at Housing First. When we asked about the independent review, the minister reaffirmed her commitment to that recommendation.

Based on what was said during budget debate, will the minister confirm that there will be an independent review of these deaths at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and Housing First?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I was pleased to address this question as part of the budget debate for the Department of Justice. At that time, I said that those situations would be independently reviewed, because that was part of the commitment that has previously been made by our government — to accept the recommendations of the coroner's inquest jury with respect to the situation at 405 Alexander. As such, as far as those situations and untimely deaths are reflected in that recommendation, we would, of course, support independent review.

**Ms. Blake:** Earlier, the minister told the House that she expected the results of the different reviews of Connective by the end of October. Those reviews included the work done on the coroner's recommendations: a review of Connective by this government and Connective's own review of its policy. It's now the last day of October.

Can the minister tell us when these reviews will be completed, and will the government commit to making them public?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The review conducted pursuant to the coroner's inquest jury recommendations, being conducted by Connective of its own policies and reviews, will be — and is — completed today. I have committed previously that those recommendations and the work that has been done, pursuant to those jury recommendations, would, in fact, be made public. Of course, the respectful thing to do would be for me to first have the Department of Health and Social Services, responsible for implementing those, report directly to the coroner, at which time the coroner can determine her assessment of them. Then, I will be seeking her permission on behalf of the department to make those public.

**Ms. Blake:** Recommendation 6 of the coroner's report was to be completed by the Yukon government and Connective within two months of its release. This recommendation recognized the grief and loss to the home communities of Myranda Tizya-Charlie, Cassandra Warville, Josephine Hager, and Darla Skookum. This recommendation said that leadership from the Government of Yukon and Connective should meet with those communities affected by the deaths of the four women to hear their concerns arising from the inquest.

Can the minister confirm that this government and Connective leadership have met with those communities and will share what was learned from those meetings?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, what I can confirm is that the Department of Health and Social Services and Connective were directed by the leadership of those communities — three different ones. They had individual requests of how those recommendations should be met — that we complied with those, that we cooperated with them to make sure that they were comfortable with how those meetings would take place.

We did, in fact, meet with some family members. In another situation, the First Nation leadership wanted to meet only with Connective and not with the Department of Health and Social Services. So, we respected what those communities wanted to do and, yes, we have met that recommendation.

**Question re: Shakwak project funding**

**Mr. Istchenko:** Earlier this year, the governments of Alaska and Yukon announced a partnership to invest significant new resources in the north Alaska Highway. The two governments announced that they would be spending over \$31 million USD over the next three years on much-needed upgrades to the Shakwak section of the highway from Destruction Bay to the border.

While this is positive news for both Yukoners and Alaskans, I do have some questions about how this project will work. Can the minister tell us which government will tender the projects? Will it be one large project, or will it be broken down into multiple smaller projects? Also, the news release said the construction would begin in 2025, but can he give me more clarity about when this work will be tendered so the local contracting companies can begin to prepare?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to answer this question. Of course, this is fantastic news for the Yukon and for Alaska and is emblematic of the great relationship that exists between the State of Alaska and the Yukon Territory. The communication initiatives that were initiated by the Premier — and this has certainly borne fruit. I'm very happy to be reporting to Yukoners on this project.

Highways and Public Works is working collaboratively with the US Federal Highway Administration and the State of Alaska to complete the funding agreements to begin project work in 2025 and to continue implementation over the next several years. Road rehabilitation activities will primarily consist of the restoration of the existing pavement surfaces by removing significant cracks, bumps, and other deformations that result from permafrost thawing under the roadway. This approach for the Alaska Highway between Destruction Bay and Beaver Creek is part of the long-term strategy to keep the road in good repair while emphasizing value for money. The planned approach allows for an improvement to surface condition over the life of the road at a lower overall cost.

The project will divide the highway between Destruction Bay and Beaver Creek into six zones and will restore approximately 14 kilometres of road within one zone per year. The order of work will be prioritized —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. He started to answer the questions that I asked at the end, so hopefully he can continue.

Primary funding for this project comes in the form of \$31 million USD from the statewide transportation infrastructure program, which is an American federal infrastructure program.

So, can the minister tell us if the money will be the only funding for this project, or will the government be providing money to go with it? If so, how much?

In the United States, federal government infrastructure falls under the *Buy American Act*, which gives preference to American companies. So, since this funding is coming from the American federal government, can the minister tell us if either Buy America or Buy American procurement rules will apply to this project?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, once again, I'm happy to answer this question about this great news of the funding that has been secured for the Shakwak project. As we know, the members opposite allowed this funding to lapse, but we have engaged successfully with both the State of Alaska and the US federal government on this project.

For the first time since 2015, funding is secured to rehabilitate sections of the Alaska Highway between Destruction Bay and Beaver Creek that have been damaged by thawing permafrost. Yukoners in the member opposite's riding will certainly be familiar with the challenges on that section of road.

Through partnership with the State of Alaska and the US federal highways, the Government of Yukon has secured more than \$37 million USD in project funding over the next several years — \$37 million.

The funding has been approved. The Alaska Strategic Transportation Improvement Program, also known STIP, and also a grant under the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity, also known as RAISE program — this is a result of cooperation between Alaska and Yukon and a shared recognition of the influence that the north Alaska Highway has on the quality of life and well-being of northerners and its vital role in strengthening our mutual security, trade, and tourism.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I'm not getting many specifics out of the minister here. As we all know, the American election is happening next week and there are some big differences in approach from the two candidates. Can the minister tell us if there is any political risk with this project associated with the American election? Has the money already flowed for this project, or can it be overturned by the new federal government in the US?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I will obviously not be engaging in speculation — first of all, as to the results of the presidential election occurring next Tuesday or what may or may not occur thereafter. We will certainly deal with both the State of Alaska and the federal transportation administration in the professional manner that we have had, and we don't believe that will change.

Sorry — just some more details for Yukoners who will be listening at home. Highways and Public Works has been sharing information and working together with the Kluane First Nation and the White River First Nation. In the meantime, until funding flows in 2025, the Department of Highways and Public Works will continue to inspect and maintain segments of the north Alaska Highway. This past summer, the department resurfaced over 20 kilometres of the north Alaska Highway along the Shakwak corridor between Destruction Bay and Beaver Creek. Operation and maintenance expenses for the Shakwak portion of the highway vary from year to year and average approximately \$4.2 million per year since fiscal 2022-23.

We look forward to the Shakwak project moving forward; we are going to get it done, in contradistinction to the members opposite.

#### **Question re: Residential lot development**

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, in the last election, the Liberals promised to develop and release 1,000 lots by the end of their term in office. Can the minister tell us how many lots they have released since they made that promise in March 2021?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, it's really a pleasure to rise again today to talk about all of the great work that we're doing on behalf of Yukoners, investing in land development across the territory, which was started under my colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and which I'm certainly happy to continue.

We know that Whitehorse is a growing community. It's growing because of the great economy that we have and so many services. It's just a wonderful place to live, and it has certainly been enhanced by our government over the last several years. We expect long-term demand for housing to continue because of these factors.

The Land Development branch continues to work with the City of Whitehorse as the main developer for Whistle Bend to meet this increased demand by creating a beautiful and vibrant neighbourhood. The construction season saw continued work in the next phases of Whistle Bend — phases 9A, 9B, 12, and 13 — along with two lift stations and the associated landscaping of these areas.

This year's work will result in another 108 lots being ready for release in 2025. It could provide more than 500 housing units, and that's a really important point to make, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about lots, but one lot can hold hundreds of housing units, so we're actually seeing an incredible development in the territory, and I'm happy to continue this discussion after the next question.

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, in a press release from the Minister of Community Services in August, the Liberal government stated that they had released 685 lots and were well on their way to meeting their commitment. That means that the government needs to release well over 300 lots before the end of next summer in order to keep their promise.

Can the minister tell Yukoners if the Liberals intend to keep their promise to release 1,000 lots in their term in office?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, the answer is yes; that is the goal that we're working on, and I'm pretty sure that, in that — I'll go back and check that press release, but that was 685 lots that had been released previously, and then, of course, we were releasing lots right at that same time, so let's add that on, and then we have the work that's happening right now with the Land Development branch that is getting ready for next summer.

I know that this fall, we released six residential lots in Haines Junction, Mayo, and some country residential around Watson Lake. I know that earlier this spring, we had 130 lots out through the lottery system. I know that in the middle of summer, we had 20 country residential lots in Grizzly Valley, Golden Horn, and Mendenhall. I know that as of the middle of last month, we had lots available for over-the-counter sales in Haines Junction, Watson Lake, Silver Trail subdivision north of Mayo, Faro, Carmacks, Mendenhall, and Lone Tree subdivision north of Teslin — so, lots of lots.

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, in the news release I referenced from August 17, 2024, the government used the figure of 685 lots released since 2021. Can the minister tell us whether or not that number includes the more than 200 lots that the government released in January 2021? That's important, Mr. Speaker, because those lots were released well before the Liberals made the promise. So, does that figure of 685 lots, which they put in a press release, include the lots that they released in January 2021?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, for sure, I will go back to check to see what was in the number — somehow, I think that the Yukon Party is concerned that lots we put for sale in 2021 shouldn't count in our commitment — I don't know. For Yukoners, what we have been doing is developing land because it is super important, and we have been developing a lot of land around the territory and producing lots.

Just a moment ago, we heard the Minister of Community Services talk about how some lots are different. For example, we transferred the title to the Northern Community Land Trust this year. That is one lot, but it is producing a whole suite of affordable housing over the long term, because the Minister of Justice brought forward that amendment to the *Land Titles Act* this fall, providing for covenants and that is going to mean that it is going to stay affordable for Yukoners over time.

Just last year, the Premier in his role as the minister of housing and myself worked to get 5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers out the door, and the private sector, working with First Nation development corporations, started that development work this fall. That is only one lot, but it is going to have hundreds of homes for Yukoners.

So, yes, we are going to continue to fulfill our promise. I will make sure to get the answer for the member.

**Speaker:** Order, please.

The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

#### Motion No. 1082

**Clerk:** Motion No. 1082, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT the membership of the Members' Services Board, as established by Motion No. 8, be amended by:

(1) rescinding the appointment of the Hon. Nils Clarke; and

(2) appointing the Hon. Richard Mostyn to the committee.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, we are just looking to update our membership on the Members' Services Board, and we look forward to moving this motion through quickly so that we can get to other House business.

*Motion No. 1082 agreed to*

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### Bill No. 41: *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024)*

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

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** The House has had debate and covered the material in detail during Committee of the Whole of this bill, so I would like to just take a few minutes to give some highlights and context for this bill before the vote.

Currently, we have one of the most outdated contaminant regimes in Canada. We need to update our laws governing contaminated sites to catch up with the realities of today's industry and bring our regime into alignment with other Canadian jurisdictions that have gone ahead of us. Being a latecomer in this case is not all bad; rather, it gives us the advantage of learning from the experiences of other jurisdictions and uses these lessons to shape our regulatory frameworks for contaminants.

As I mentioned at second reading and again during Committee of the Whole, we are making technical amendments to the *Environment Act (2002)* and to the *Act to amend the Environment Act (2014)* to support the drafting of regulations needed to implement a new contaminants regulatory framework in the Yukon.

Modernizing the laws that govern how contaminants and contaminated sites are managed here will help the Yukon align with national and international standards in this area. It will also promote ongoing efforts to reduce impacts of contaminants on public health and the environment. The proposed amendments address key concepts, streamline provisions, and broaden

existing regulation-making powers to ensure that the new regulations being developed are well-supported by the act.

Once in place, the new contaminants regime will enable transfer of responsibility for contaminated sites. This will open up some of the existing legacy contaminated sites to redevelopment. The ability to transfer liability was introduced in 2014 when the *Environment Act* was amended but cannot be enforced in the absence of new regulations.

Mr. Speaker, the new framework will also introduce industry standards and enable the minister to adopt internally or externally developed protocols or other documents by regulations so they can be legally enforced.

Further, by making the person who causes the contamination cover the cost of external reviews, we are hoping to reduce the cost of these reviews to Yukon government and to Yukon taxpayers. This will also improve the efficiency of the external review process.

Finally, Bill No. 41 will streamline the reporting of releases. The exemption of certain releases from the requirement to report will help us to focus resources on reportable releases which present risks to the environment and public health. We are also making it easier for the public to report a release of a contaminant by recognizing calls made to the Yukon Spill Line, a dedicated hotline for handling such reports, as a formal way of reporting a release.

Mr. Speaker, the passage of this bill will allow the Yukon government to develop a robust regulatory framework that will transform the handling of contaminants as well as the management of Yukon's contaminated sites.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to this bill passing the House.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I don't have much to say here on third reading to the minister — just the fact that these are basically housekeeping in nature. We will be supporting this, and we will be watching as the regulations move forward.

**MLA Tredger:** I would like to thank all the staff, all the public servants who made this happen. I asked detailed questions in Committee of the Whole and was really satisfied with the answers. It's clear that a lot of thought has gone into this, a lot of work, and we really appreciate that, so we will be supporting this at third reading.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

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. Mr. Clarke:** Agree.

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

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

**Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Blake:** Agree.

**MLA Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yeas, nil nays.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 41 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 41 has passed this House.

## **Bill No. 39: Act to amend the Forest Resources Act (2024) — Third Reading**

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 39, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 39, entitled *Act to amend the Forest Resources Act (2024)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources that Bill No. 39, entitled *Act to amend the Forest Resources Act (2024)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I will be brief in talking here at third reading. First of all, I would like to thank the members of the Assembly. Yesterday when we were in Communities ittee of the Whole, there was a lot of good dialogue and discussion about the bill, which is the review of the *Forest Resources Act*. I note for Yukoners that this is successor legislation that we have been working — the *Forest Resources Act* came in some years ago and within it was the notion that we would review it and seek to improve it. The amendments here clarify exemptions to forest resource harvesting; they improve compliance tools for forest officers; they streamline the tenure system and increase flexibility of forest resource permits; they clarify practices for forest resource roads and promote the responsible use of incidental timber harvest.

I would just like to say a big thank you to the working group, which included the Forest Management branch and, of course, First Nations, for all of their hard work over the past couple of years in developing these proposed amendments. I'm confident that these amendments will make our *Forest*

*Resources Act* more effective, provide greater clarity for all parties, and continue to allow for responsible use of the Yukon's forest resources for years to come.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to just briefly speak to this at third reading as well. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the officials who have worked on this over the past number of years — those who provided briefings and subsequent information to us from the questions that we asked at the briefing and, of course, for their support and thank the minister for the discussion yesterday and the responses provided not only on changes to the bill but the overall state of the forest industry as well.

We are looking forward to the development of the regulations, which have to be completed first before the bill can come into force, so we will be watching those over the next year or so. We will be voting in support of this bill at third reading today.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate the briefings that we received from the officials ahead of the tabling, and I appreciate the conversation with the minister. The NDP will be supporting this bill.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, just really briefly again — thank you for the remarks from the members opposite. We just missed out by a day, because today is Halloween, and if we would have had Committee of the Whole today, our deputy minister would have been dressed up as Thing 2, because they had a Dr. Seuss theme over at Energy, Mines and Resources, and the two deputy ministers were dressed up as Thing 1 and Thing 2, which I thought was very fun.

I just want to say thank you — I mean, of course, the whole of the branch was supporting yesterday when we did Committee of the Whole, but that was our director's first day in the Assembly, and I am sure that folks who have had the role of ministers know that, when you sound good, it is usually because the people who are supporting you are providing great information, and I will say that was the case yesterday. I would really like to thank the professionalism that was here to help us get that information out to Yukoners. Thanks to everyone, and I am looking forward to the vote.

**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. Mr. Clarke:** Agree.

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

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

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Blake:** Agree.

**MLA Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yeas, nil nays.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 39 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 39 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):** Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing 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 15 minutes.

*Recess*

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

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

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing 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:** At this time, I will ask if any private member wishes to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole so that I can participate.

*Member for Takhini-Kopper King rises*

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

**Department of Justice — *continued***

**Acting Chair:** Is there any further general debate?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Acting Chair, I just wanted to welcome back with me this afternoon Mark Radke, the Deputy Minister of the Department of Justice, and Navneet Nijhar, who is the acting director of finance. I appreciate them having time for us today and for the assistance with questions that may come with respect to the supplementary budget regarding the Department of Justice. I thank them for being here and look forward to further questions.

**Ms. Blake:** I believe that when I left off in our debate, I was asking questions regarding the Child and Youth Advocate annual report. I think that the next question I had was regarding the issues indicated in the report. In the Child and Youth Advocate's recent report, they highlighted their concerns that there was a lack of collaboration between Yukon government departments on youth issues related to substance abuse, overdoses, gang violence, sexualized violence, and violent public assaults.

Can the minister explain why there is a lack of collaboration between the departments of Education, Justice, and Health and Social Services and what her plans are to improve this?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** What I can indicate is that clearly the fact that I have responsibility for both Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice — I think perhaps it goes without saying, although I am happy to say it, that collaboration between those departments is a regular activity. I can also indicate that the position that we have always taken with the Child and Youth Advocate is that we are working collaboratively and we want to work cooperatively with the issues that she brings forward on behalf Yukoners and in particular Yukon youth and children. I have not spoken to her specifically about this issue, but I will because I don't see it the same way, and we want to make sure that we address any of the issues that she has with how it is that we collaborate and work together with her on behalf of the youth of this territory. That work is positive and assists both with the responsibilities that she has as the Child and Youth Advocate and the responsibilities that we have with respect to youth and youth programming.

I should note that there are parts of youth programming that exist both in Health and Social Services and in Department of Justice, although less so in Justice and more so in Health and Social Services, including youth justice issues, which are the responsibility of Health and Social Services.

**Ms. Blake:** In the Justice supplementary budget briefing, we were informed at that time that there were 40 male and three female people serving time at Whitehorse Correctional Centre. We were also informed that the majority were in remand rather than incarcerated with sentences and the majority were from Whitehorse.

Can the minister provide an update on this information? How many people serving time in WCC are from rural communities? How many are members of the Yukon First Nations?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** As of October 11, 2024, there were 40 male inmates at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and three female inmates at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, for a total of 43 inmates.

Again, as of October 11, of the 43 inmates who were housed at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, 36 were on remand and seven had been sentenced.

Actually, the Minister of Environment and I were speaking about that this morning. Certainly, it has been our experience over the years that by far more inmates at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre were there with respect to remand than were serving sentences. I see from those numbers as of this year that this continues to be the case. With respect to the inmates at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, 33 of the inmates are from Whitehorse and nine are indicated to be from the communities. One person is from out of the territory.

**Ms. Blake:** Out of the 43 folks at Whitehorse Correctional Centre, how many of those folks identify as First Nation?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. Upon arrival at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, inmates self-identify if they choose to with respect to a particular First Nation or cultural descent. I don't have numbers with respect to how many individuals might have chosen to do that out of the 43, but I can request that information. If it is available, I am happy to provide it.

**Ms. Blake:** I ask that question because, in the last while prior to my medical leave, I was spending time visiting folks at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre as requested. With the times I spent visiting with folks at Whitehorse Correctional Centre and also thinking about the reality that First Nation people are overrepresented within the justice system as well as in hospitals and other institutions — during my conversations with people who are struggling with addictions and homelessness and are incarcerated, I have listened to their stories about where they have come from. I have often thought back to when the late Darius Elias, the previous MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin, stood in this House and spoke openly about the history of residential school and the impacts it had on our people.

I would like to quote the former MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin Darius Elias when he spoke in this House on October 28, 2015, because I think that what he had to share in his statement at the time is still very relevant today when we consider how important it is to shape the justice system in a way that supports people who come from a difficult past.

In his speech, he listed 32 impacts that many intergenerational survivors face on a day-to-day basis, which include: "... alcohol and drug abuse; fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect; sexual abuse, past and ongoing; physical abuse; psychological/emotional abuse; low self-esteem; dysfunctional families and interpersonal relationships; parenting issues such as emotional coldness, rigidity, neglect, poor communications and abandonment; suicide, or the threat thereof; teen pregnancy; chronic, widespread depression; chronic, widespread rage and anger; eating disorders; sleeping disorders; chronic physical illness related to spiritual and

emotional states; layer upon layer of unresolved grief and loss; fear of personal growth, transformation and healing; unconscious internalization of residential school behaviours such as false politeness, not speaking out, passive compliance, excessive neatness, obedience without thought; postresidential school community environment, seen in patterns of paternalistic authority linked to passive dependency; patterns of misuse of power to control others, and community social patterns that foster whispering in the dark, but refusing to support and stand with those who speak out or challenge the status quo; the breakdown of the social glue that holds families and communities together, such as trust, common ground, shared purpose and direction, a vibrant ceremonial and civic life, cooperative networks and associations working for the common good; disunity and conflict between individuals, families and factions within the community; flashbacks and associative trauma; educational blocks; spiritual confusion, involving alienation from one's own spiritual life and growth process, as well as conflicts and confusion over religion; internalized sense of inferiority or aversion in relation to white people, especially white people in positions of power; toxic communication — gossiping, criticism, put downs, personal attacks; becoming oppressors and abusers of others as a result of one's experience of abuse; dysfunctional family co-dependent behaviours replicated in the workplace; cultural identity issues; destruction of social support networks; disconnection from the natural world; voicelessness..."

I think that is very relevant for me to share again today in this House — to quote Mr. Elias — because in the conversations I have had during the visits I have had at WCC, I'm reminded in those conversations, from the guys I sit with, of the hard backgrounds they come from and how, when they talk about the challenges with the lack of programming or supports that they feel they need, that's what they're speaking of.

So, I'm just having a hard time to process this right now. I think it's really relevant to say that for a lot of our people who are incarcerated, who are First Nation, at Whitehorse Correctional Centre, this is the reality that they come from. This is the reality that we see in our communities, in our families, and anywhere we go within society. When I think about what Mr. Elias shared in this House at the time and the stories that I hear, I think about how it is so important for us to remind ourselves, as legislators, that the impacts of residential school are still alive and well within our communities. I live with that as well.

I think the guys who reach out and ask me to visit and share their hard stories, especially the men who — our men have always been taught to be voiceless and not share their feelings or to hold shame on what their challenges have been.

So, I'm just wondering: What are the current programs in place to support our male inmates at the Correctional Centre right now when it comes to mental health supports that they are in need of?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Before I begin, I do have an additional statistic that, as of today, of the inmates at the

Whitehorse Correctional Centre, 76 percent identify as Indigenous persons. That is probably not a surprise to anyone.

Let me next say, please, thank you for the quotation and the information that you have provided through that quotation from the former MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin here in the territory, in particular with respect to the impacts of the residential schools. These are impacts that play out currently today and will tomorrow, unfortunately, and the day after that in this territory with respect to the reality of some Indigenous individuals who are feeling the impacts of those very well-described situations.

It is incredibly important, and Yukoners, I believe, have been having this conversation probably longer than most Canadians but still need to continue to have it and to learn from individuals like the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin and the former MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin and other leaders in our community. It is incredibly important that Yukoners and Canadians continue to learn and continue to have this conversation and listen and learn from the leaders. This absolutely must be kept in mind in the development of any programming and in the development of any situation that deals with individuals perhaps in the criminal justice system, perhaps in the health and social services system, perhaps trying to challenge addictions that they are suffering, and perhaps in the safety of our communities more generally.

It is absolutely a reality that must be kept in mind. I want to acknowledge that prior to answering this specific question and also to acknowledge the courage that it takes, perhaps, for the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin to read that list and perhaps think about that list. As you read that information, we can all think of situations — perhaps in our own lives or perhaps in our own worlds — that recognize that this is the reason — and the reversal and the work to impact the life reality of the individuals who have been affected by residential school — that we do this work every day, all day.

The truth is that we cannot move forward as a community or as a culture in Canada without the due recognition that is required. There is still a long way to go in the Yukon, but I have to say that, in comparison to people we know maybe across the country, I am proud of the work that this government has done. I am proud of the work that Yukoners have done to understand these issues. But there is still much education to be done and there is still much realization of the impacts — and on a daily basis, what one person might have impacting their lives or their decisions — from that list — maybe just one thing or maybe 28 things. It is really a situation that must be addressed through education and knowledge. Let me say that.

I also note that we are having some recognition across the territory of the impact — and in particular the impact on men's programs and what has to be done. I think that we have a flagship men's treatment program and residence in Dawson City. I think that those of us who have been there and supported the growth of that and the building of that — and the First Nation and the community there have seen a positive impact in that community in the way that there are places and programming for individuals to try to wrestle with the impacts that have been listed or variations of those. But it is not just

their responsibility — not just the individual's responsibility to wrestle with those impacts. It is our responsibility as a community to understand them, to know them, to build programs that take them into account, and to recognize those as we go forward in all of the services that we try to provide to support individuals. That is the focus: to try to support individuals.

We also have important programs across the territory that have joined adult and youth restorative justice initiatives so that we can divert people out of the criminal justice system. We can help to address core root causes of criminal activity — some of it minor and some of it not so minor — but the core root causes have to be addressed and thought about and understood at every level — at the level of police intervention, at the level of Crown intervention, at the level of court intervention.

We've talked a lot about bail and ultimately dispositions, sentencings, and Gladue principles, and at all of those levels, they have to be taken into account.

I also can note that work has been done quite extensively with the recognition of Jordan's Principle. We've had some very important conversations with Yukon chiefs about that work and about using the Yukon Forum as a place for those conversations. They have been more formal and there have been some informal conversations where everyone gets to sit by a fire and talk about what's important to them and the priorities and how we can go forward recognizing First Nation governments, recognizing all of the things that the member has said today and its impact on the work that we do.

Perhaps more specifically, there was a question regarding Whitehorse Correctional Centre programming. I just have a minute, so hopefully, I can come back to some of this, but the Whitehorse Correctional Centre offers programming to both remanded and sentenced clients. So, the status of remand doesn't necessarily impact the availability, and regardless of incarceration status, individuals can participate in programming.

Some criminogenic programming is mandatory for all sentenced clients, and I'm happy to speak more about those in a moment.

**Ms. Blake:** I thank the minister for her response.

I think for me, the important issue that I have always wondered about, whether I have engaged in meetings in my home community or in previous employment opportunities — and I've engaged in conversations about the need to build support programs for Yukon First Nation people and take into consideration the impacts of our history with colonization and residential school. One of the things that always stays at the front of my mind — in all the conversations that I have been a part of and all the conversations that I continue to be engaged in — is the reality that, when we talk about the root causes of harm — the root causes of why our First Nation people, myself included, struggle with addiction, why we end up incarcerated, why we drop out of school — there is often the missed opportunity of — like, we don't often talk about the history of sexual abuse and how that has played a role in individuals' lives that has landed people where they are when they are struggling.

I guess I'm wondering: Is there programming or supports in place at WCC or within Victim Services or within any of the Justice departments that offer supports or programming to individuals to help them deal, if they have that lived history with sexual abuse?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for that question. I will just take a moment to answer the question that was brought before with respect to the programming that's available at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre for inmates, whether they are on remand or sentenced clients: criminogenic programming; cultural and spiritual programming; educational, vocational, and health promotion; and leisure, recreation, and well-being. Programming is offered through facility-based program staff who work at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre or through First Nation liaison officers and also through contracted service providers. I know of some who provide some of the leisure and recreation services are on contract to do that, and there are also professional partners.

The Whitehorse Correctional Centre has a dedicated First Nation liaison officer who works and includes connecting with clients with available cultural and spiritual supports. Cultural programming at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre includes opportunities for beading, carving, drumming, fire ceremonies, and talking circles. The Whitehorse Correctional Centre also works to build relationships with Yukon First Nations to provide ongoing supports for offenders reintegrating into the community.

I know personally that this can be formal and also informal. We always work to outreach to elders to make sure that the spiritual supports of an individual's culture are respected.

I appreciate the emphasis of part of this question being on the history and the impact of sexual abuse. Sexual assault and sexual abuse is a topic that I know that the Minister of Education, in her former career, and, I can assure you, in my former career — I have worked on since I was 18 years old. It is a primary concern for the work that I do, and as a result, the minister who I mentioned as well as a former colleague who was a minister in this government and I worked very hard to set up the sexualized assault response team years ago.

There was a version of that when I worked on the front lines as a prosecutor, but it petered out, and we wanted it to be revived. It is a network of agencies that provide safe, comprehensive supports for victims of sexualized violence in Whitehorse and now across the territory. We are committed to expanding sexualized assault response services in Yukon communities. Access to SART and the services that are provided by this comprehensive group of supports through the Department of Justice, Health and Social Services, Women and Gender Equity, the RCMP, specialized medical professionals, specialized police officers, and specialized counsellors at Victim Services are available to anyone for any purpose.

It doesn't have to be a recent situation. It doesn't have to be a situation that you have ever spoken to anyone about before. It doesn't have to be a situation in which a criminal charge might come. It could be historical. It might be an opportunity for someone to just finally talk about something that has happened to them, either more recently or not, to have an



opportunity to access counselling, to access services, and as a result, it has been designed to try to address some of the issues that the member opposite notes with respect to the impact of those devastating situations on individuals.

I will stop there, and I am happy to speak about our expansion of that land-based healing as well if that is of interest to the member opposite.

**Ms. Blake:** I thank the minister for her response to my question. I know that the conversation of sexual abuse is a sensitive topic for people, but I feel like it is something that is important that we must have. I think back to my experiences going through treatment for 87 days. There were 78 peers I had in the treatment program, and I was 79. Out of 79 of us, we all went through sexual abuse in our lifetime, which was one of the root causes of why we struggled with addiction.

The next question that I had was in regard to fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect.

I think about growing up in my home community and the conversations that have been had across many communities about our history with substance use. Within First Nation communities, our people were only allowed access to alcohol in the 1960s, I believe. It's known that there are generations — my generation included — who have been impacted by substance use while we were in our mom's tummy, and I know that, throughout my career, there have been conversations about the need to have programming supports in place within WCC to support folks who are living with fetal alcohol syndrome effects or are diagnosed with FASD.

So, my question to the minister is: What supports or programming are in place to reduce recidivism or re-offending with folks doing time? And how are those programs shaped to help those folks understand the cause and effect of their actions and consequences when they are breaking the law and ending up back in WCC?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. Incredibly important services and recognition all stemming from the presentation made a little while ago by the member opposite for the reasons that we have to understand the impacts of all of the residential school impacts for individuals and ultimately the trauma that can and does live on in families and communities.

I don't have particular information about FASSY — like, numbers or anything like that — the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon — but I do know that their work is truly amazing with respect to their community and supporting the individuals who have sought services from them.

I can also indicate that the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* has focused on services for individuals who are wrestling with these types of issues as well as this type of diagnosis. The desired outcomes of that strategy involve the delay and the agent of initiation of substance use for individuals. That would include individuals who suffer from fetal alcohol syndrome.

Another desired outcome is to minimize substance use across an individual's lifespan, which is focused on all individuals, including those who wrestle with fetal alcohol syndrome disorder, to keep people safe when they are using

substances. Our work is also designed to reduce harms of substance use and to improve the health, safety, and well-being of Yukoners in communities.

Government is committed to implementing the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* actions to support the health and safety of Yukon communities. We've expanded the capacity of the mobile crisis response team, also known as Car 867, which I got to speak about earlier this week in the Legislative Assembly. We've expanded to seven 10-hour shifts per week to provide greater coverage during peak hours.

I also know that, if I remember the number correctly, since the inception of Car 867, they have had some 775 interactions with individuals — which are interactions with real people with real concerns and crises and real issues — and supported them through those situations.

We have also created two positions at community corrections under this *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* that will provide better outreach and clinical support to individuals who are struggling either with substance use or attempting to avoid substance use or have treatment and support after treatment as those individuals transition from the correctional system back to communities. We will continue to provide support for Indigenous-led, community-based therapeutic courts and other restorative justice approaches that focus on healing and treatment alternatives for justice-involved clients who are struggling with substance use issues. Lastly — perhaps for this question — the capacity of the safer communities and neighbourhoods unit has been increased to investigate and disrupt the distribution of toxic drugs and organized crime occurring from property in all Yukon communities.

I think much of the work that is currently encompassed in the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* is designed to assist individuals who are not only wrestling with issues of fetal alcohol syndrome disorder but who are wrestling with these issues more generally, and recognizing that some individuals have such a diagnosis and the impact that has on their life is also very important.

**Ms. Blake:** Thanks to the minister for that response. I tried to do the math of 76 percent, of 43 percent — math is my weak point — but if I did it right, it's either 32 or 33 people who identify as First Nation within WCC. So, my next question is: What steps are being taken to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in Yukon's justice system? And can the minister outline any plans that the Department of Justice has to support restorative justice initiatives or alternative sentencing programs?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I thank my able assistants here who are giving me lots of information, so I will backtrack for a moment to talk about allegations or disclosure — let me say it that way — of sexual abuse reports by inmates at Whitehorse Correctional Centre. There are absolutely supports available if an individual has to and wants to have that conversation. Programming and supports are developed by case managers for each individual inmate.

For inmates who disclose sexual abuse or a sexual assault, we offer specialized services, a referral immediately via case

management to counsellors at the forensic complex care team at Health and Social Services. We also make these referrals to one-on-one counsellors to First Nation elders and knowledge-keepers to support an individual. There is also apparently animal therapy available. It is predicated on the focal point of this contract for services, and broadly, sexual abuse and sexual assault can also be discussed in the context of all the services that are available at WCC.

I should also add, please, that FASD is addressed at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre through programming, services, and supports that are tailored to care for individuals who may be incarcerated who have such a diagnosis, because it is different. It's an opportunity to provide supports that must be properly taken.

The question I now have before me is about restorative justice. Our government is committed to supporting the growth and integration of community-based justice programming and advancing the use of restorative justice practices throughout the territory. The Yukon program is something of which I am very proud. It integrates youth and adults. It is a program that is sought after and researched by many other jurisdictions in the country and the other two territories to determine how to best have the program not only created but how it is working.

In 2020, the Government of Yukon approved the creation of our Integrated Restorative Justice unit to improve restorative justice service delivery, to enhance adult and youth diversions, to increase engagement with First Nation governments, and to better support community-designed and community-led restorative justice initiatives. The Integrated Restorative Justice unit currently is a pilot phase but has combined dedicated youth justice and adult justice resources to provide consistent program delivery across the Yukon.

I am also proud of this work because it is a great example of having Health and Social Services and Justice connected in a way, because youth justice comes under Health and Social Services and adult justice comes under Justice. The collaboration between those two departments and for the purposes of initiating and moving forward with this restorative justice initiative is great work, and it is, as I said, researched across the country to determine how we are making those decisions and how we are engaging with our First Nation governments and stakeholders about how to best deliver adult and youth diversions through the restorative justice unit.

**Ms. Blake:** I thank the minister for her response to that question. I actually really uphold restorative justice. I can recall taking restorative justice training with Val Binder when I was in my early 20s, and I have worked for youth justice, particularly with youth diversion, and I have seen the benefits that program has with families and communities when the alternative of going through the court circuit is offered for people to access restorative justice, because it keeps the family together, keeps the person connected to community and supports. I was able to see first-hand the value in having restorative justice available to people through the court system.

How does the department plan to expand or support restorative justice practices to ensure that restorative justice is being served to all Yukon communities?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The Integrated Restorative Justice unit here leads engagements with First Nation governments and stakeholders about adult and youth diversions, as I have noted. The initiative allows the Government of Yukon to support existing restorative justice services and practices as we continue to work in partnership with Yukon First Nation governments through the Yukon Forum and other working groups.

The Government of Yukon continues to work with First Nation governments, the Government of Canada, the RCMP, and other territories and provinces to share best practices, as I have said, and to increase the use of restorative justice nationally.

The federal chief prosecutor, the public prosecutor from the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, Yukon region, as a delegate of the Attorney General of Canada, recognized that the Yukon adult diversion program allowing for the Integrated Restorative Justice unit to accept pre- and post-charge referrals into their program for adults — that was a major milestone in the work being done by this integrated unit.

The work of the Integrated Restorative Justice unit is expected to contribute to a decrease in the rate of victimization, crime, and incarceration in the Yukon by addressing the harm caused by crime and by holding offenders responsible — as the member opposite has noted, the responsibility of the community itself and the meting out of justice that is supported by the community.

The level of community justice services is different in different communities depending on the capacity and the priorities of that community, but I know that the Integrated Restorative Justice unit has reached out to every community to offer collaboration and services. Services are developed and implemented through collaborative work with Yukon First Nations in response to their priorities, so we take their lead.

The roles and responsibilities of the community justice workers and Indigenous courtworkers are also community-specific. I think it's something that the member opposite is aware of as well. Yukoners should know that they are responsible for establishing community-based justice processes designed to meet community needs by promoting community healing, by facilitating restorative justice approaches at a community level, and by developing positive relationships within the community. They're also working to educate the community about existing justice alternatives.

So, that's the outreach work and the collaboration so that communities can participate in restorative justice initiatives when they are aware that they can do so when they are supported by the unit — Integrated Restorative Justice unit — and their work also involves demonstrating accountability to the community about justice matters and establishing a proactive approach to healing with long-term community wellness.

This program is currently being assessed by the government. As I've noted, it is initially a pilot program. It is something that I strongly support and I know that the department strongly supports it. I know we have seen positive impact. It's a program that has required us to build relationships

with First Nation governments, with communities, with the trust of individuals in the criminal justice system.

We have every expectation that it will show through data that it has been successful in diverting individuals from the criminal justice system and supporting communities in a more positive way than having individuals simply go to traditional court and come out with a disposition that may or may not take a few days or longer and then have no real community accountability.

I also note that individuals can choose to participate and that this is one alternative but a very important opportunity for us to impact the root causes of crime.

**Ms. Blake:** My next question is in regard to program effectiveness and outcomes of the restorative justice program. How does the government assess the effectiveness of the restorative justice programs that were just mentioned in reducing recidivism and promoting community healing? Are there any statistics or findings available on how these programs impact reoffending rates or victim satisfaction compared to traditional justice approaches?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I don't have statistics for the member opposite today or for Yukoners, but what I can say is that anecdotally we have had much support for this program not only from the individuals who are involved — regular partners in the criminal justice system, Crown prosecutors, defense lawyers, judiciary, community justice workers, Indigenous courtworkers, et cetera — but we know that there is a positive impact on victims and communities. We are in the process of completing an assessment, which I truly hope will result in the statistical information that we need to make an informed decision about proceeding forward.

Restorative justice is the way of the future, in my view, in many circumstances — clearly, not in serious violent offences but in situations where individuals come in contact with the criminal justice system. I can also indicate that this is a priority for our government.

In my 2023 mandate letter, the Premier speaks to implementing the principles of restorative justice to better inform service delivery, to support community-designed and community-led initiatives, and to increase engagement with First Nation governments.

In the spring of 2024, a few months ago, at meetings of the federal-provincial-territorial deputy ministers of Justice, Yukon and Manitoba's deputy ministers co-presented on restorative justice and advocated for increased restorative justice practices across Canada. We will continue to do that. I look forward to the assessment being completed so that we will have the data to support what we know is a successful program.

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

When it comes to restorative justice, I can remember witnessing that in my upbringing in my home community — when court services would happen in the community. I can recall back in the 1980s how a lot of our people were going through the court system and they would often be sentenced back to the land and have cultural duties implemented as part of their sentencing orders as well as more westernized

conditions such as checking in with the court and probation services and stuff. So, I have been able to see as a child the effectiveness of that program and keeping people connected to their community and family.

What resources are currently available to support communities, organizations, and facilitators involved in restorative justice? Are there any initiatives aimed at training and developing restorative justice practitioners in rural and remote areas in the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thanks for the question. The Integrated Restorative Justice unit was created, as I said, in 2022 to increase the use of restorative justice practices and processes across the territory. The unit manages and provides training and oversight on four different programs and services. They involve: community justice programs, Indigenous courtworker programs, the Gladue funding program, and the Yukon restorative justice and diversion program.

The IRJ — Integrated Restorative Justice — unit is currently operating on a pilot basis until, as I have said, March 2025 and provides coordinated, centralized programming on restorative justice for youth and adults across the territory as well as training and mentorship to 12 Indigenous courtworkers in the communities.

We recently hosted a victim-offender mediation training session to which all First Nations were invited. The focus was on capacity-building and policy development and implementation. We encourage any First Nations who were not able to participate to reach out, and we are happy to continue that work. Together with the Yukon First Nations and Yukon communities, the Department of Justice is involved in many community justice programs.

Through grassroots initiatives, community justice helps with the protection of society and helps to promote the health of communities and individuals. In partnerships with Justice Canada and Yukon First Nations, the Government of Yukon provides funding and support to eight Yukon restorative justice projects that may include community-based initiatives such as conferences, diversion programs, peacemaker circles or courts, circle sentencing, community safety, land-based programs, reintegration, clan-based systems, elders boards, and also committees. These projects provide support to people who have been accused of a crime or people who have been harmed or people who have caused harm to others, families, friends, supporters, and other community members.

We also have some information on the Indigenous courtworker program and the focus to support fair, equitable, and culturally sensitive treatment for all Indigenous people who are involved in the criminal justice system. I note that the on-the-land option or the diversion option noted by the member opposite when she was a child back in the 1980s and when she was a child as well in the mid-1990s — I know that the Minister of Environment and I spent some time in that community — also supporting initiatives that would see communities responsible and individuals accountable to their communities as — what we know — that more traditional sanctions from a court do not address root causes of crime or community strife and that our work must be focused to do so.

**Ms. Blake:** Thanks to the minister for her response. I'm going to switch over to victim supports. How is the government addressing support for victims of crime, especially those impacted by domestic violence and sexual assaults? What measures are in place to ensure that victim services are culturally appropriate and accessible for Indigenous women?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Yukon Victim Services is guided by Yukon *Victims of Crime Act* and focuses on providing support for victims of all types of crime, whether the crime has been reported to police or charges have been laid or there is a conviction — or none of those things have happened. Victims can access services at any time following a situation where they feel victimized. Services are voluntary, confidential, consent-based, and client-led. Victims can access services by referral from agencies such as the RCMP or hospitals or First Nation service providers and community agencies. Victims can also self-refer via phone or e-mail or in person to one of the three offices that are located in Whitehorse, Watson Lake, and Dawson City.

Victim Services workers are assigned to each Yukon community to attend court circuits and to meet with clients in person if they are involved in the court process or otherwise at other times to provide updates and supports either by phone, text, or e-mail.

Services through Yukon Victim Services and the Department of Justice Victim Services include crisis response, safety planning, and emergency practical supports, such as transportation and housing through the victims of crime emergency fund and emergency cellphone program. There are also opportunities to seek assistance with a protective order, and Victim Services can indicate how to do that and walk someone through that process and navigate and support them through that. Part of the question involved particularly victims of intimate partner violence or sexual assault or abuse. A protective order might be an option.

Victim Services also can provide updates on the status of an investigation and be a liaison to help support individuals. They can provide court support, information, and updates. Also, they can accompany an individual to any kind of appointment or court if need be or support through perhaps medical services or whatever might be of assistance. They provide advocacy. Victim Services supports victim impact statements and how those can be completed. They also support referrals to other agencies.

The team at Victim Services operates from a victim-led approach so that victims can be in control while navigating the options that are available to them. They have support for understanding what those options are and then support for navigating through those. This is a compassionate and person-centred approach that contributes to the over-arching goals of the Department of Justice by providing accessible and confidential services for victims of crime.

I can also indicate that culturally sensitive work is absolutely top priority for individuals who might come forward and require the services or be inquiring about the services from Victim Services at the Department of Justice. We have a focus on making sure that individuals from many cultures and

backgrounds can be employed as Victim Services counsellors so that an individual — it's a very personal relationship — who might have an affiliation one way or another could be supported through that. That's the general concept of Victim Services.

I did speak earlier about SART, the sexualized assault response team, and their services, many of which are led through Victim Services and have wraparound opportunities for people to have service and support with respect to sexual assault reports or sexual abuse, historical or otherwise. I won't repeat all that information here, but those are tightly knit together as an opportunity to support people who come forward.

I will just take this opportunity to encourage people to please reach out even if they don't think that the services of the sexualized assault response team are for them, even if they are not sure what to do, and even if they are not even sure if a crime has been committed; I encourage them to reach out. These services are available for Yukoners. We have professionals and expertise that can help someone navigate through situations that are very traumatic.

We are proud of the work and the individuals who lead this work at the Department of Justice. I know that, on a daily basis, they help people. Anyone who is hearing this message and they're not sure if it's for them, please ask.

**Ms. Blake:** My next question is in regard to funding with Victim Services. What steps is the department taking to ensure sustainable funding for Yukon's Victim Services? Are there any plans to increase financial support in response to the increasing needs of victims? The other question I had that I will add is: How does the department track and measure the effectiveness of Victim Services? Is there publicly available data on service outcomes, client satisfaction, or areas for improvement?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. I'll come to the amounts in just a moment.

Let me say that, with respect to feedback from clients and people who are provided victim services, we have made some attempts. A lot of it is anecdotal and reported on by the individuals, Victim Services workers, and management there.

We have tried on several occasions to provide surveys, but it makes some sense that there is not a lot of uptake with respect to that because individuals don't necessarily want to dwell on the situations, perhaps, once they're trying to move on.

I can also indicate that they often — it is victim-led, as I said earlier, so a lot of control must be provided to victims so that they engage with the process the way that is best for them. It doesn't always involve reporting back to us when they are finished with that interaction on how that occurred, although there is some, for sure.

I can also indicate that we did extensive engagement when we were working to expand the SART program — the sexualized assault response team. So, that was done territory-wide, and there was good uptake on that not only from individuals but from First Nation governments and service providers through those First Nation governments.

I can refer to the part of the question about financial responsibility and commitment. The Victim Services budget

line item in budget 2024-25 is \$4,266,719. That is a critical commitment that we have made to operating Victim Services here in the territory. In that program, we operate with some financial assistance from the federal government for the family information liaison unit, for instance. That budget is \$285,000 for a three-year commitment by the federal government, in particular.

Also, the federal victims of crime agreement provides approximately \$963 annually for a five-year agreement with the federal government, with a total — those being included in the total budget for Victim Services.

I hope that is of assistance.

**Ms. Blake:** I think for my last question before break I'll go back to Whitehorse Correctional Centre. What accountability mechanisms are in place to ensure humane treatment of inmates and transparency of operations within the facility? How frequently does WCC undergo external audits or reviews?

That's my last question. Thank you.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The Whitehorse Correctional Centre is managed using a direct-supervision inmate model. It is a multi-level correctional facility for adults from across the territory. The model of management focuses on actively managing inmate behaviour to produce an environment that is safe and secure for inmates, staff, and visitors. This style of supervision enhances safety, promotes open and effective verbal communication, and allows correctional officers to interact directly with people who are in custody without physical barriers. The design of the building is supportive of that as well. It allows the staff to manage inmates with varying security requirements. In-house facilities allow inmates to use rooms for video court appearances, to access medical and dental care, and to access programs and services, of course, like meals, fresh air, yard, healing and recreational spaces, exercise equipment, and a healing room.

I can note that, as far as I am aware, the only time that the *Corrections Act* has been used to implement an inspection was done by me as the minister in 2018. Around 2018, a report — an independent individual was brought forward to do this. Ultimately, the inspection report that came as a result of that investigation came with 14 — sorry, altogether, a number of different actions were required. The implementation working group, who was responsible for implementing the inspection report, determined that 13 of the recommendations were completed.

After their work was completed in 2019, work was underway at that time toward completing and implementing the single outstanding recommendation. The recommendations were in several categories. All of that inspection by David Loukidelis resulted in changes that were made to the *Corrections Act*. In 2020, the implementation working group provided input and support to fulfilling the inspection report's recommendations, and it recommended that continued oversight shift to the community advisory board, which is set up under the *Corrections Act*.

The Corrections branch continues to make progress toward completing and continuing to fulfill all of the recommendations

of the inspection report. Notable improvements include that all WCC staff, including newly recruited auxiliary and on-call staff, have received or are registered to complete the Yukon First Nations 101 course that is offered by Yukon University. The Whitehorse Correctional Centre has implemented a more robust suicide screening process on intake that includes a two-step review by correctional officers followed by a health services review.

Whitehorse Correctional Centre is reviewing a contract for alcohol and drug use counselling to work with both remand and sentenced inmates. Support through Narcotics Anonymous is available for inmates. The Whitehorse Correctional Centre implemented a peer support team with support from the Canadian Mental Health Association, Yukon chapter, to support staff and inmate wellness.

The *Corrections Act* — which, of course, is the legislative authority for the operation of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre — was updated to significantly improve the framework and oversight mechanisms for the use of segregation at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, which was a key issue in the conversation around the recommendations from Mr. Loukidelis. A substantial amount of programming has been developed and is now being delivered with specific programs for First Nation inmates. The amended *Corrections Act* also includes a clause to require a review of the effectiveness of the changes that were made, which the Department of Justice would anticipate completing by 2026 based on the legislation.

The 2018 inspection report provided really important recommendations to inspire reforms within the corrections system in the Yukon, and significant improvements have been made within the last five years, and future improvements will continue within the Corrections branch, and they will be driven by factors from the 2018 report, what we have learned since then, and the changes to the *Corrections Act*.

Lastly, I will note that we look forward to the opening of the new mental wellness unit at the Whitehorse hospital. For the most part — I think that we can get statistics on this, but we have not held an individual at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre in place at the hospital for many, many years, but there always was a concern that we did not have the appropriate way and safe place in which to hold an individual who might need to have mental wellness services provided to them or before they were transferred out of the territory for that reason. We look forward to the new mental wellness unit being able to provide that space in a safe and compassionate way for individuals who might be subject to the legislation regarding their mental wellness.

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

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

Is there any further general debate?

**Mr. Cathers:** I would like to thank the officials for being here today and also the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin. I did find a number of her questions earlier today quite interesting as well.

Moving on, I have a number of questions on my list. I just want to begin by touching on one that I raised with the minister on October 29 when we last debated the Department of Justice. I had asked the minister about the potential appointment of a chief firearms officer resident in the Yukon. I had noted that there was a letter sent to the Premier by Minister LeBlanc, to which he replied on January 18.

From the Premier's response, although we know that the establishment of a chief firearms officer resident in the Yukon and reporting to the Yukon government was something that has been of great interest to Yukon firearms owners who believe that it would be a positive step, the Premier's letter was pretty lukewarm on the topic at best.

I had raised that with the minister and asked for clarification on the status of that — whether the government plans on accepting the offer and moving forward with the federal government to see a chief firearms officer resident in the Yukon and reporting to the territorial government as well involved in that. I didn't really get a clear answer from the minister. I am just reviewing Hansard from earlier this week, and about all that the minister said — quote: "Canada has engaged with the Yukon about potential changes..." Then she went on later in the same sentence to say — quote: "... including consideration of a northern chief firearms officer program..."

Could the minister clarify what the government is doing or is not doing regarding the potential of a chief firearms officer being appointed by the Yukon government?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** In December 2023, the federal Minister of Public Safety, Dominic LeBlanc, sent a letter to the Premier — I think that's what's being referred to here — indicating that he was interested in appointing a chief firearms officer for the Yukon. Currently, British Columbia provides this service to the Yukon Territory. So, we have a chief firearms officer who is operating in British Columbia and provides service to the territory here.

A chief firearms officer is responsible for the administration of the *Firearms Act* in their region of jurisdiction, and this includes support for required safety training and licensing. The Department of Justice entered into discussions with officials from Public Safety Canada to understand the potential benefits of this role of a chief firearms officer to the territory and under what circumstances the position would be appointed — so what the details of that appointment are.

Our Department of Justice officials met with the Government of Canada officials in Whitehorse on February 29, 2024. There were discussions about: the program; educational improvements that could be made; the responsibilities and role

of the chief firearms officer; how the program could be more effective if there was stronger coordination; and a recommendation that it be strongly coordinated between the federally appointed firearms officer, the local M Division RCMP, and the Department of Justice. We discussed the fact that the program would need to be tailored to the unique needs of the north for it to be effective here in the territory.

That is some of the background and the considerations that are currently on the table and the conversation that is happening. There has not yet been a decision about whether or not the chief firearms officer will be appointed federally, whether the process that is in place now would be maintained. Another category of conversation with respect to the background of a chief firearms officer has been whether or not a chief firearms officer would be appointed for the three northern territories and whether that would be an effective use of time, energy, and personnel. I think that each of those territories is still determining whether or not that is something that they're interested in. I don't have an update on their final decision, if there has been one.

What I can say — and I appreciate that this may be unsatisfactory — is that we continue our conversations with the federal government about the concept of a chief firearms officer and how to best tailor such a position to the needs and benefits of Yukoners.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do appreciate that there was a partial answer there. Now, the minister at times, in talking about federal legislation, including Bill C-21, has made comments that have really been tone-deaf to the concerns of a lot of Yukon firearms owners, including people who depend on the use of firearms both for hunting and subsistence hunting for their families, including those who exercise subsistence hunting rights that they have as First Nation citizens.

The minister's remarks just the other day again were not as strongly in favour of Bill C-21 as some of the previous ones she has made, but she did make the comment — again, this is from Hansard on October 29 — quote: "We have worked with the Government of Canada — closely monitoring the rollout of the firearms buyback program..." Now, again, that program is something that is very offensive to many Yukoners. It is also something that has been widely criticized, including by police associations, as being ineffective and taking resources from where they are needed the most. News coverage from this week included the Toronto Police Association responding to a post on social media by the Prime Minister, and they blasted the Prime Minister's comments.

I'm going to quote from — this is actually from the *Toronto Star*. For those who know the way that more urban centres like Toronto have tended to be on the issue of firearms rights and the tendency of the *Toronto Star* to lean to the left, the fact that this article is in the *Toronto Star* is telling.

Under the headline, "The prime minister is out of touch": Justin Trudeau's handgun ban is not working, police union charges" — and that's dated October 29, 2024 — the subheadline is — quote: "Two years after the Trudeau government banned the sale of handguns in Canada, police

unions across the country say Ottawa's gun control efforts have fallen short."

I'm quoting from the article: "'The gun ban is not working,' Clayton Campbell, president of the Toronto Police Association, said in a recent interview with the Star. 'We should focus on criminals, not legal consumers.'

"It's the latest blow to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's gun control reforms, a sweeping set of changes the Liberal government set out to make following a 2020 Nova Scotia massacre..."

Further in that *Toronto Star* article, it says: "The main prongs of that agenda — the ban of more than 1,500 assault-style weapons in 2020 with a buyback program that has yet to materialize and a national freeze on the sale of handguns in 2022 — have faced escalating criticism over their ballooning costs, rollout and effectiveness."

It goes on to reference the program and say — quote: "It has cost \$67 million and advocates fear it won't be complete before the next federal election..."

I'm quoting further from the same article: "But after Trudeau took to social media to celebrate the two-year anniversary of the handgun sales freeze last week, police unions from across the country said the handgun ban, the other key prong of the reforms, has not had its desired outcome.

"'The prime minister is out of touch,' Campbell said. 'It's disrespectful to Toronto residents.'" Again, that's from the president of the Toronto Police Association.

"At issue is that most guns used in shootings are illegally smuggled from the United States — 85 percent of guns seized by Toronto police are from there, according to Campbell — so taking handguns away from regular citizens may not impact gun violence, the unions charge."

Further on, according to the president of the Canadian Police Association, again in this same article: "'There's probably, at least, from a front-line policing perspective, other areas where investments could be made that would make a bigger difference,' Tom Stamatakis, the president of the Canadian Police Association, said in an interview.

"He said the main tool should be increased investment in border control to crack down on smuggling, but also suggested further bail reform and harsher sentences for gun violence."

Just noting these comments, including the fact that the Toronto Police Association was quite clear in their tweet responding to the Prime Minister, which if you will bear with me, I am just waiting for it to reload here on the screen. I don't have that right here at my fingertips here unfortunately, but the Toronto Police Association was quite clear that whatever steps the Prime Minister thought he had taken to improve community safety had not worked.

So, again, tracking back to the minister's comments here, she talked about working with the Government of Canada regarding the rollout of the firearms buyback program, so the question is — especially recognizing what Yukoners have been saying to the government on this: Why has the Yukon government not taken a strong stand in opposition to that program and echoed the calls of police associations — including the National Police Federation, the union

representing RCMP members — and pushed back against the federal government and told them that they are taking resources from where they are needed most for law enforcement and are wasting them in going after legal firearms owners, who, as I have noted in the past, are actually innocent? They purchased their firearms legally; they have done nothing wrong with them, and yet the federal government is still seeking to forcibly confiscate them under the so-called "gun buyback" program.

The question, Acting Chair, is: Why has this Liberal government not pushed back harder against the federal government and stood in support of the calls of police unions, including the National Police Federation, who have told the federal government that the so-called "gun buyback" program is actually taking resources from where they are needed most?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. The Government of Yukon continues to support the rights of legal gun owners in the territory. Bill C-21 also works to support an approach to gun control that helps to protect public safety. I think those things are not mutually exclusive.

What I can indicate is that we have been very dedicated to make sure that there is no impact on responsible gun owners. In fact, with respect to support for gun control, as noted — perhaps only partially by the member opposite — the federal C-21 and the federal buyback program, the design of which is currently underway, our federal pieces of legislation — Bill C-21 amends several acts, with changes focusing on organized crime, supporting violent prevention programs for youth, taking measures to combat gun-related domestic violence, and preventing self-harm. These are all things that we have heard in the last few days from the members opposite that they are supportive of as well.

The Yukon is closely monitoring the design and then rollout of the federal firearms buyback program, as we have maintained all along in all conversations with government at all levels — deputy ministerial level. I know that between the Premier and his counterparts and federal ministers as well, we have maintained that any impact on the Yukon absolutely must be minimized and that, if such a program proceeds, it must be entirely funded by Canada and not jeopardize any front-line policing or police resources. We are protecting the police resources for the Yukon Territory; we are increasing them. We have done so in the 2024-25 main budget; we are doing so in this supplementary budget that we are currently discussing. We are not in any way prepared to divert funds from front-line policing and front-line safety in our communities to such a program.

The Yukon also remains concerned about — in conversations that we have had with our RCMP leadership, we want to make sure that any citizens or individuals who might be non-compliant do not pose a risk of harm to Yukon police and RCMP members. We are all well aware that many of the provisions of Bill C-21 have not been contentious, but concerns related here in the territory are about the impacts of the legislation on hunters and, of course, on subsistence hunters. I'm very concerned about the impact on individuals who should and must carry firearms for the purposes of carrying out their work or for their safety in places here in the territory.

We continue to work and talk to the federal government to tell them of our Yukon concerns. I can note that on October 18, I met with the ministers from across the country. We continue to speak with one voice. Even though the impacts of firearms legislation and Bill C-21 are different across the country, we continue to speak with one voice that there can be no negative impacts on law-abiding gun owners with respect to any implementation of Bill C-21 and the impacts of that.

While we appreciate — and certainly there are ministers at that table who are dealing with issues different from ours — downtown — fill in a city — Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver, and other places — and certainly smaller places in the country where border security is an issue, where illegal firearms and assault-style weapons are an issue. We had a conversation among the ministers at that recent meeting where we exchanged views and concerns on matters that related to firearms, including collaboration to combat gun violence and the appreciation of those issues for some ministers and frankly the appreciation that is different, for instance, for the northern ministers and for individuals who represent smaller communities in the country.

We continue to make sure that the federal government is very aware of our concerns as they go forward and that the impact of whatever next decisions they make has to be in collaboration with Yukon and has to be one that prioritizes the needs of Yukoners here in the territory.

**Mr. Cathers:** Again, the minister, in talking about what she sees as positive aspects of Bill C-21, is very much out of touch with Yukon firearms owners and with police.

Now I will read the social media post by the Toronto Police Association on Twitter — or “X” as I guess it’s now referred to. This was directly in response, and it has been covered by media across the country — a tweet that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau posted on October 21 talking about — quoting in part — he says: “Two years ago ... we froze the handgun market...”

Here is what the Toronto Police Association said on social media, specifically on X: “Criminals did not get your message. Our communities are experiencing a 45% increase in shootings and a 62% increase in gun-related homicides compared to this time last year. What difference does your handgun ban make when 85% of guns seized by our members can be sourced to the United States?”

“Your statement is out of touch and offensive to victims of crime and police officers everywhere. Whatever you think you’ve done to improve community safety, has not worked. @JustinTrudeau”. That again is from the Toronto Police Association.

The minister attempted to deflect on this by telling me that this was federal legislation that we are talking about. I remind the minister that I think it is fair to say that probably every hunter and firearm owner in the Yukon knows that Bill C-21 and the infamous Mayday 2020 orders-in-council are federal legislation, but as the minister knows very well, several provincial governments have done a lot more than this Yukon government has to stand up for their citizens who would be negatively affected and to listen to the calls coming from police organizations who make it clear that going after legal firearms

owners with this so-called “gun buyback” program is actually diverting resources from where they are needed the most.

This Liberal government has at times tried to talk a good line in the Legislative Assembly when the Premier has talked to firearms owners, but there has been very little tangible evidence of this Liberal government actually pushing back with any strength against the federal government’s proposals or even clearly defining what they are opposed to. It seems that they are simultaneously trying to — they are trying to sit on the fence and simultaneously pretend to Yukon gun owners that they are supporting them while simultaneously being very, very, very careful not to do anything that offends Justin Trudeau or his government by even criticizing in strong language their flawed legislative proposals.

I am going to move on to other matters. I know that the minister is probably going to get up again and talk about what she sees as the positive aspects of Bill C-21, but I do have a list of a number of things that I want to touch on. I want to go back to the question, as I raised in the spring, about the allegations of drug trafficking on the Whitehorse Correctional Centre grounds. Specifically, some of those allegations had involved a part of the facility run by an NGO.

As well, I had raised previously and again touched on earlier this week the coverage by media of the issue of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and its assets, specifically the phone system, potentially being used for the purpose of drug trafficking. As I have stated in the previous times that I have raised this, I am not asking the minister to comment on a particular case but on the policy and other measures. The minister gave me a bit of a stock response earlier this week regarding that matter, but my question is, after these allegations were raised in court — first of all, has the government done anything to strengthen security measures to prevent the Whitehorse Correctional Centre phone system, grounds, or facilities being used for the purposes of drug trafficking? Have they done something, and if so, could the minister please clarify what that is?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I will come to the security at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre in a moment.

I just want to be clear, because I heard some comments being perhaps attributed to me that I want to be absolutely clear about with respect to firearms here in the territory. We have delivered the same message absolutely consistently to the federal government. I say that discussing this at the table with ministers of Justice and ministers of public safety is the most effective way in which to do so in a very timely manner. Our message has been clear, which is that we must focus on criminals, that we not adversely affect lawful gun owners in any way, and that we don’t divert any resources from the Yukon Territory’s other criminal enforcement work. Let’s be clear.

The question now is about the phone system at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and, in particular, allegations that it was being used in some way with respect to trafficking drugs. Let me first say that we have absolutely zero tolerance with respect to any criminal activity on and near the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, and every allegation is vigorously investigated. I can indicate that there have been changes and a



strengthening of security with respect to the phone system in the territory, in the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, and available to inmates who are there. I can't say more about that because it is clearly a security measure. I can reiterate, as I said the other day, that all calls between inmates and individuals outside are recorded, with the exception of privileged calls between clients — inmates — and their lawyers, which, of course, are privileged and not recorded. Others are all recorded and monitored when necessary.

There have also been other additional security measures at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, but again, I will not be permitted to describe those specifically because we are working to thwart activity that is otherwise criminal and inappropriate at or near the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

I appreciate the question and the ability and opportunity to be completely clear that all allegations are investigated vigorously, and there is zero tolerance for any such criminal activity.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do want to first of all note — remind the minister that, when it comes to firearms legislation and standing up for Yukoners to the federal government, that — although the Premier did come out in opposition to the sweeping amendment to Bill C-21 that enraged many across the country — despite calls from Yukon firearms owners to oppose Bill C-21 itself, we have never seen any record that this Liberal government has taken a position in opposition to Bill C-21. So, talking at Justice ministers' meetings is all very well and good, but it is certainly very weak in comparison to the action of a number of provincial governments.

I do want to now move back to the issue of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, and in that case, I appreciate the answer from the minister. I am pleased to hear that they have taken steps to increase security to prevent the use of the facility for drug trafficking, and I do understand, in that case, that the specifics of that, understandably, the minister may not wish to share so that criminals would understand how to thwart them.

I would ask if the minister could clarify with regard to the issues of the allegations of drug trafficking happening on-site through the part of the facility operated by an NGO — by Connective. What steps have been taken to ensure that is not happening? Have additional security measures been taken? Again, recognizing that those allegations have not been proven in court, but as the minister knows, they have not only been raised with me but with the NDP — the member of the Third Party for Vuntut Gwitchin has also heard concerns about the facility. I'm not asking the minister to make a judgment about whether or not that activity has been occurring; I'm simply asking if the minister can confirm that additional security steps have been taken to prevent the use of any part of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre or the facilities on those grounds for being by used by anyone for drug trafficking. So, if she could respond to that when she rises, I would appreciate that.

I would also ask the minister, broadly speaking, with respect to the Victim Services break-in that occurred in the spring — as the minister knows, there was a reference to it in a couple of statements from the government made in a press

release that involved the breach of personal information and assets such as cellphones.

Quoting from the government's March 18 release: "Confidential files and other items have been accessed. Individuals who have obtained services through Victim Services may be affected, as may other individuals who may be referenced in victims' files. It is still unclear the extent to which confidential information may have been compromised."

Again, as I stated when I raised this on April 4, I recognize that no one in government wanted this to happen, and so, in that, my focus is on asking: What has the government done in the wake of the incident to take whatever steps may be necessary to help and protect those whose confidential information may have been released, if they have fully determined the extent of the breach that occurred, and thirdly and finally, whether the government has taken steps to prevent such a breach from happening in the future?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that there are three issues to address here. First, with respect to the allegations of criminal activity at the men's SHARP program run by Connective as part of the property of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, the answer is that, yes, we have taken additional security measures. We are in regular dialogue with Connective, who are as vehement as is the Department of Justice with respect to zero tolerance for such crime. We appreciate the allegations coming forward, and they were properly investigated.

I don't have information about whether or not — I wouldn't be able to talk about it anyway — but whether or not charges resulted from the allegations that were brought forward, but yes, some of the additional security measures that I have mentioned with respect to Whitehorse Correctional Centre as a whole are impacting the operation of that program, as they should.

The second question is about — I guess second and third together is about the break-in at Victim Services — what steps are being taken and what changes have been made to protect individuals' information. Of course, we at the department were devastated by the break-in that occurred at the Whitehorse Victim Services office sometime between the evening of March 15 and the morning of March 16, 2024. The public notification was issued immediately, pursuant to the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, because there was at least the potential that some individuals' private information had been accessed. Not only is it required by law, but we are very keen to make sure that all individuals received notification of this and that those who were receiving services at Victim Services were made aware of the break-in in a very timely manner.

The department takes the matter extremely seriously and has implemented changes to improve the security of the building and the safety of victims' records. The public notification did identify personal information of victims of crime and said that it may have been accessed during the break-in. It also outlined steps being taken by the Department of Justice to respond. There was an inventory of paper records, and cases with high risk of potential harm to clients were prioritized in the aftermath by Victim Services. Where Victim

Services identified concerns about the integrity of personal information or if there was reason to believe that the information may have been seen by the intruder during the break-in, efforts were made to notify those clients directly and speak to them directly. Many records are contained in an electronic database, including client case notes, and an audit of that database confirmed that it was not accessed, nor were other electronic files accessed during this break-in or by this intruder.

Charges were laid and a conviction has been entered on the matter; however, I can't say more about that. I was very pleased with the way in which the public notification urged clients to come forward if they were concerned and also the quickness with which that was put out and also the breadth of the follow-up with individual clients.

All client information that was stored at the office was reviewed to identify potential security concerns, and another public notification was issued on March 21 — a few days later — to make sure that there was full coverage of that information.

Stolen cell phones were disabled remotely using security software installed on the phones, and subsequently, it was confirmed that they had not been accessed prior to when they were disabled, which was again good news.

New phones intended to be given out to clients were also stolen during the break-in. However, they did not contain anybody's personal information, having not yet been properly set up.

Since March, several physical security improvements have been made to the Victim Services office space. In response to the break-in, the Information and Privacy Commissioner has made recommendations aimed at reducing the risks to affected individuals and preventing similar incidents in the future.

As minister, I accepted all of those recommendations, which the department has implemented within the required time.

Thank you for the question.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate that information. I would also ask about — regarding Connective generally, the minister, when speaking of this earlier in the week, indicated that a broader, more independent review of the work that Connective does was expected at the of October.

The minister indicated as well that — in response to talking about following up on recommendations from the coroner's inquest jury — quote: "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."

So, I would just ask the minister if she could clarify with regard to those. When does she expect the report regarding the recommendations related to the coroner's inquest jury and the broader, more independent review of work of Connective? When does she expect to be able to share that information with the Legislative Assembly and the public?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the question. I have a final version of a letter that will go from the Department of Health and Social Services to the coroner with respect to the

recommendations made by the coroner's inquest jury back in April of this year. I have that sitting on my desk, actually — right here. So, a final review of that will take place. I expect it to proceed to the coroner by way of the Department of Health and Social Services. She wrote to a director there, and the response should properly come from that individual.

I had the opportunity to look at it to avail myself of that information. I expect that will go by end of business today or tonight to the coroner. As I said earlier in Question Period, the most respectful and appropriate thing in my view is that the response go to the coroner and that we seek her permission to make that information public. I don't expect any reason why that won't be granted, but that is the most appropriate route and responsibility — to make sure that Yukoners are aware and reminded of the important recommendations that came from the coroner's jury and the work to implement those in the meantime.

**Mr. Cathers:** I look forward to seeing that information when the minister can share it.

I want to move on to an issue that has come up in this House previously regarding the definition of "anti-Semitism". Unfortunately, we have seen in the last year and a bit, in the wake of the October 7 attacks on innocent Jewish people, a rise in hate crimes and hate speech targeting Jewish Canadians and Muslim Canadians. Like most Canadians, I am appalled to see the increase in hate speech and hate crimes targeting Jewish Canadians as well as that targeting Muslim Canadians. It's something that — we're seeing images here in Canada that — I think it's fair to say that many of us never thought we would see in Canadian streets.

It is notable that the rate of increase of hate crimes and hate speech has been increased the most as it pertains to Jewish Canadians. We have seen horrifying scenes of one Jewish school in Canada that has been shot at, at least twice. We have seen Hamas slogans being chanted in the streets and terrorists chanting death threats in the streets, including in Vancouver, and the recent appalling incident that involved Samidoun burning a Canadian flag and chanting calls for death to our country, to the United States, and to Israel.

I want to move to an issue again that we have raised with the government on a number of occasions in the spring. On March 18, 2024, my colleague the Leader of the Official Opposition asked the minister a question about whether the government intends to adopt, formally or otherwise, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of "anti-Semitism". He noted that he had previously written to the minister on this topic on May 2, 2023 but had not received a response to his letter and followed up on January 16, 2024 with another letter that the minister did not respond to.

Again, quoting from my colleague on March 18, 2024: "So, I put the question to the minister today: Does the government intend to formally adopt the IHRA definition and, if so, in what way?" I would hope that the minister will give us a clear response on that matter here today.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. My recollection is that, when I spoke about this before, there was never any issue with the adoption of the suggested definition.

There was a pause given with respect to what the mechanism might be for us doing that. I can confirm that there is at least one, and I am looking for the second one — I may have to come back with that information later. On the motions on the Order Paper, one is brought by the Leader of the Yukon Party Official Opposition, and I understand that there may be a second one. Those motions could be called for debate and then perhaps the definition adopted through that process with support from the parties and then an adoption of that statement from this Legislative Assembly, which is one mechanism to do so.

I believe that the hesitation has been that it would probably be the strongest way in which we could make such a declaration of adopting that definition. Perhaps the Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition could discuss that going forward. As I said, there may be — more than one motion could be called, or they could perhaps be combined for the purposes of discussing them, but it has always been a matter of figuring out an appropriate and strong mechanism.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the answer from the minister. I know that my colleague the Leader of the Official Opposition would be quite willing to discuss this with the Premier if it would move forward with adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition of “anti-Semitism”.

Just before I move on to other topics, I just want to note that hate speech and hate crimes directed toward our fellow Canadians who are Jewish or Muslim is unacceptable and it is important that we all condemn it. As we’ve said before, it’s important to condemn anti-Semitism in all its forms, and “never again” is now.

So, moving on to a few of the other issues on my list, I want to move next to the topic of the National Police Federation recommendations regarding smart bail initiatives and bail reform.

As the minister will recall, the National Police Federation met with premiers in the summer of 2023 and released its paper entitled *Smart Bail Initiatives: A Progressive Approach to Reforming Canada’s Bail System*. I am quoting from the National Police Federation’s press release dated July 12, 2023: “The paper, titled *Smart Bail Initiatives: A Progressive Approach to Canada’s Bail System*, discusses opportunities for various levels of government to collectively address Canada’s widely acknowledged Criminal Justice System issues on bail reform.

“The topic of bail reform has become front and centre for Canadians, for police officers, and for government leaders...”

The press release then goes on to outline a number of recommendations specifically made by the National Police Federation. With a number of them, there are specific references to provinces and territories, including recommendation 2, “Improve Post Bail Release Monitoring”. “Recommendation 2: The Government of Canada, provinces, and territories should invest in deploying technologies that are proven effective at monitoring bail condition compliance.”

They also recommend a comprehensive national systemic study of the bail system and call on provinces and territories to commit more resources to collection and sharing of data.

As well, recommendation 7 says in part — quote: “All governments should invest in creating a community bail enforcement monitoring system...” — through — “... dedicated law enforcement units, and cutting-edge technology throughout Canada.”

My question for the minister is: With regard to the recommendations made by the National Police Federation, could the minister update us on whether the government is working to implement any of the recommendations that called for territorial action? If so, could the minister please provide us with an update on what actions have been taken to date and what actions are planned?

While the minister and officials prepare that information, I will also just add a question: With regard to the replacement of RCMP detachments in the territory, could the minister confirm which detachment is currently scheduled to be next on the list for replacement and when that is expected to occur?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am mindful of the time, so I would like to try to get some of this information to the member opposite.

Yes, I certainly have looked at and taken into account the smart bail initiatives from the National Police Federation. There are — as I have said previously, I believe — there are very good ideas there. Part of our work going forward on bail reform includes monitoring, includes the use of technology, and includes those things as well in our repeat offender concept of reinvestigating that.

We received a letter today from the Minister of Justice, the Hon. Arif Virani, talking about this issue and the continued opportunity for us to collect data and compare data going forward. We are committed to doing this and determining how that can best be done so that all improvements with respect to bail can be accounted for and assessed, including those noted by the National Police Federation.

I believe that I have this right with respect to the RCMP capital under the *Territorial Police Service Agreement*. New detachments were constructed in cycle 1. Cycle 2, where we are including three major projects: the renovation of the Ross River detachment building, which was done; and next, two new detachment buildings are in Carcross and Faro. I also understand there is a part of the renovation budget being put forward to repair and renovate the Old Crow detachment.

I hope that is of assistance, and lastly, I will say that, seeing the time, 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:** 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. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.*

**The following sessional papers were tabled October 31, 2024:**

35-1-176

*Government of Yukon Financial Report For the Period April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024 — Mercer Marsh Benefits (Silver)*

35-1-177

*Yukon Liquor Corporation's Annual report for liquor April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024 (Silver)*

35-1-178

*Yukon Liquor Corporation's Annual report for cannabis April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024 (Silver)*

**The following legislative returns were tabled October 31, 2024:**

35-1-153

Response to oral question from Mr. Istchenko re: extended producer responsibility (Clarke, N.)

35-1-154

Response to oral question from Mr. Istchenko re: Aishihik wood bison herd management (Clarke, N.)