



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Monday, November 4, 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  
Monday, November 4, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**Withdrawal of motions**

**Chair:** The Chair wishes to announce a change to the Order Paper. Motion No. 1087, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, was not placed on the Notice Paper, as it is out of date.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Speaker:** Are there any visitors to be introduced?  
*Visitors introduced*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In remembrance of Catherine “Kip” Veale**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government and the Official Opposition to mark the passing of an extraordinary Yukoner, Catherine Veale — known to many as “Kip”.

Her life has been defined by a deep commitment to family, community, and the most vulnerable among us. I have just a few short minutes here to describe Kip’s extraordinary life, but I urge us to think about the energy, dedication, and the impact that each of her achievements has had on all of us.

Born in Brandon, Manitoba on October 3, 1943, Kip pursued her education at Trinity College, earning an honours degree in English and a master’s in social work in 1971, setting the foundation for her incredible career in helping people. Kip met her husband, Ron, at Expo 67 — a truly romantic story — and their journey together brought them to the Yukon in 1973, where they raised their two boys, David and Jonathan.

It was here that Kip’s passion for social work truly flourished. From her early work in home care and child welfare to her later role as a social worker for seniors and elders, Kip’s dedication was unwavering. She formed close relationships with her clients, often reconnecting them with their families and ensuring that they had the support and the care that they needed. Her work with seniors was not just a job; it was her true calling and she treated it with the utmost dedication and compassion.

Kip was a tireless volunteer, helping to found several key organizations that have shaped our community and continue to impact the lives of Yukoners to this day. She was the founding president of the Yukon Childcare Association, the founding chair of Hospice Yukon, and the founding chair of Planned Parenthood in the territory. Her work with Hospice Yukon

demonstrated her deep care for others and she honoured loved ones for many years through the annual Lights of Life ceremony.

Her community involvement extended well beyond her career. Kip was an active member of the Yukon Arts Centre, the Yukon Family Services Association, Line of Life Yukon, the Association of Social Workers in Northern Canada, and the Yukon Council on Aging.

Kip believed in this community and made it better at every turn. She was an adjunct faculty member in the social work program at Yukon College, where she played a vital role in shaping the next generation of social workers. She taught courses on aging, bringing her academic interests and professional experiences to life for her students. She also shared her knowledge with the wider community through workshops and a CBC biweekly column on aging.

In 2005, Kip received the Premier’s Award of Excellence for her work on the legislative team that developed the guardianship act, the *Adult Protection and Decision Making Act*, and the *Care Consent Act*. Mr. Speaker, these pieces of legislation are still among the most progressive of their kind and stand as a testament to her vision and leadership.

Kip’s life was one of compassion, service, and dedication. Her legacy will endure in the lives that she touched and the amazing progressive community that she helped to build. She was an amazing mentor and role model.

Her sons describe her as a very strong woman and mother, leading them to marry strong women themselves. She was grandmother to five grandchildren of whom she was very proud. Liam, Finn, Brynne, Isaac, and Elyse were so lucky to have her. She was a very supportive wife and a committed friend. Her home and dinner table were always open and welcoming. Every guest, be it a prominent citizen or someone fallen on hard times, was treated with warmth and respect. Kip’s compassion and hospitality always came from a place of community and inclusion.

Kip loved the Yukon and its many splendors, but she also loved to see the world, instilling adventurous spirits in her sons through their family trips, including one to Tibet and Mount Everest.

Kip was passionate about life, loved to laugh, and never missed an opportunity to celebrate — an attitude that we can all learn from. The lives of her friends and family were so enriched by her, and although we are all so very sad at her passing, we are so much better and brighter for having stood in her light.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP in celebration of the life and legacy of Kip Veale. I thank the minister for her beautiful tribute.

So, if you were lucky enough to know Kip or even cross paths with her, you knew joy. Kip lived her life with a thoughtful kind of joy. She was intentional in her actions and she loved deeply and freely.

Kip never missed an opportunity to celebrate. Any event was worthy of a get-together in a dynamite outfit. I think about

her friends in the gallery, and their Friday-night cocktails were legendary — absolutely legendary.

She made an impact on those who knew her and even those who didn't. Kip made a difference. When she saw a problem or a challenge, she worked to solve it, and the Yukon is so much stronger and more resilient for all of her efforts.

She loved her family and her friends fiercely. She is deeply missed and always remembered.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter from the Department of Health and Social Services to the chief coroner, Heather Jones.

**Speaker:** Are there any reports of committees? Petitions.

### PETITIONS

#### Petition No. 26 — received

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 26 of the First Session of the 35<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Leader of the Official Opposition on October 31, 2024.

The petition presented by the Leader of the Official Opposition meets the requirements as to the form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

**Speaker:** Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 26 is deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation. Therefore, the Executive Council response to Petition No. 26 shall be provided on or before November 14, 2024.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House honours the late Murray Sinclair, former judge and senator, for his commitment to a life serving people, creating change, revealing truth, and leading with fairness throughout his career and for his leadership as the Chief Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Liquor Corporation to make operational changes to maximize operational flexibility and ensure timely and reliable access to a full selection of local products, including:

- (1) licensee direct purchasing from local producers;
- (2) licensee-to-licensee purchasing; and
- (3) off-site liquor production and/or storage.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to work with the Yukon Medical Association and Yukon hospitals to develop a rural family medical residency program in the Yukon to provide locally relevant training for new doctors and increase recruitment and retention.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to reinstate the repeat offender management program that ceased operation under the Liberal government.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the community of Dawson City to expand the Little Blue Daycare.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to abandon its plans for using a public/private partnership model for the construction of hospital infrastructure.

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

### QUESTION PERIOD

#### Question re: Health care infrastructure

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, earlier this Sitting, the Premier outlined the Liberal government's plans to consider a public/private partnership for the construction of health care infrastructure here in the Yukon. The Premier specifically pointed to the P3 model used in the construction of Stanton hospital in Yellowknife as an example that we should consider. However, last week, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada released a scathing report outlining major concerns with the P3 model used in the Northwest Territories. That report found that the NWT government could not show anything close to value for money for taxpayers.

So, now that they have seen the mess that was created using this P3 model in Yellowknife, will the Liberal government abandon its plans to consider a P3 model for the expansion of hospital infrastructure here in the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, what we talked about last week was a request for proposals to have a consultant look at a number of different options. So, there is no plan.

What shocks me is that the member who is asking the question actually had a ministerial post but, looking at the information that we provided, doesn't seem to understand it. It was a consultant hired to look at all the infrastructure that's required. No plan — I've heard that today in a motion and again

by the member opposite that there's a plan. What we're looking at is: What are all the options and how do you finance them?

Things like the member is speaking about in Yellowknife — that should feed in to say that this might be a model that you don't want to look at or that these are the pros and cons of that model, but that's what we're seeing for work. Speaking with doctors over the weekend at the Yukon Medical Association meetings, they want to see different models and they want to see work continue, as we are right now with investment in the hospital.

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, CBC's coverage of the report outlines a number of major concerns highlighted by the OAG, including that the project — and I quote — "... went hundreds of millions of dollars over budget, failed to document potential conflicts of interest in the process, and ultimately short-changed the territory's residents." It's clear that the P3 model is massively problematic for a jurisdiction of our size. In fact, in the case of Stanton, the NWT ended up as a rent-paying tenant in the old hospital building which they still owned.

Mr. Speaker, now that the Liberals have seen the disaster next door, will they agree to give up on their plans to use a P3 model for the construction of hospital infrastructure here in the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the question because it's an opportunity to address this issue, which I am sure Yukoners are listening to, despite the fact that the members on the opposite aisle are not listening.

As the Premier has said, our government initiated a request-for-proposals process, which closed on October 17, aimed at conducting a comprehensive health infrastructure review. Maybe the way that members opposite make decisions is to not gather all the information and not go out with full opportunities to discuss and get ideas about how our health system can be improved, but that's not the way we work.

The member opposite has opposed new building of health care facilities. The members opposite refused a ministerial statement on the health system care that was proposed to be given to give additional information to Yukoners. There is simply a lot of misinformation circulating on this topic.

Let's be clear: Our government wholeheartedly, unreservedly, and absolutely supports our public health care system here in the territory and across Canada. We will continue to work to improve it for Yukoners.

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, so, now that we have such a damning report from the OAG showing the failure of the P3 model to deliver a successful outcome for a territorial government right next door to us, Yukoners should be rightfully asking the Liberal government to reconsider its plans.

The P3 model that the Liberals are considering for Yukon resulted in almost a half-billion-dollar cost overrun, massive concerns about conflicts of interest, and nothing even remotely close to value for money for residents. As well, it simply did not deliver the expected economic benefits to local or northern individuals or businesses.

So, will the government finally admit that this is not the kind of outcome that we want here, and will they abandon their

plans to consider a P3 model for hospital infrastructure here in the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I know that Yukoners are listening; I know that they are listening to the fact that the concept of a P3 model is one line on page 26 of an EOI that went out to determine how to best support new health infrastructure here in the territory. Misinformation from the other side of this Legislative Assembly serves no one.

Our public health care system is supported by this government and by governments across Canada. Ministers of health and social services are all working together. We recognize that doctors, nurses, and other health care providers need modern facilities to provide health care services that Yukoners rely on. Every jurisdiction in this country — including the Yukon — relies on a mix of public facilities. We have several public clinics, for instance, that are in private spaces. They house those health care services across the territory and provide great service to Yukoners.

We are asking our consultants to provide a comprehensive health infrastructure review. We look forward to that review. The fact that the members opposite continue to say that there is a plan to do otherwise is simply a disservice to Yukoners and it should stop.

#### **Question re: Whitehorse General Hospital surgical services**

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, while the Liberal government has been spending its time considering P3 models for hospital infrastructure, they have continued to neglect the growing health wait times that so many Yukoners are facing. This spring, Yukon's orthopaedic surgeons wrote a letter that was released publicly that outlined issues and pressures on their program. They said that, due to a lack of funding and support from the government, they had stopped accepting referrals for elective surgeries and were referring semi-urgent consultation requests outside the territory. They said — quote: "The waitlist for orthopedic surgery in the Yukon has grown exponentially and is well beyond what is manageable with current resources..."

Can the minister tell us what steps she has taken to address this problem and what the current wait-list and wait times are for orthopaedic surgeries?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, what I can speak about with respect to resources for our orthopaedic surgeons here in the territory is that the program has grown exponentially since 2017. Yukoners are able to have orthopaedic surgeries here in the territory, whether they be emergency orthopaedic surgeries or whether they be scheduled replacements of knees, hips, et cetera. This is not something that was done here on a regular basis prior to 2017.

It is supported by this government; it is supported at this point by two-plus locums, amazing surgeons who provide service to Yukoners in the territory. I understand that they are scheduled this year for — I will check the number — more than 4,400 surgeries with respect to the kinds of service that Yukoners can have here in the territory without the need to travel away, without the need to travel outside the territory, and

with the ability to go home to their own homes, hopefully much sooner and sometimes the same day. This is an amazing service.

We are very proud of the opportunities that Yukoners have to have this kind of surgery here in the territory. We are working closely with the orthopaedic team to increase those surgeries to determine how to best serve Yukoners even more comprehensively.

**Mr. Cathers:** To begin with, I would again remind the minister that orthopaedic surgeries have been done in the Yukon for much longer than she thinks they have. We're not only seeing concerning wait-lists and wait times in the area of orthopaedics; there's also a growing wait-list for cardiology. Hospital officials told us that over 300 people were waiting six months. That's twice as long as the target time of three months, according to the minister's spring briefing note.

What steps is the minister taking to address the wait times for cardiology services that are more than double the government's own target?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, again, I always appreciate the opportunity to be able to give correct information to Yukoners about a health care system that is consistently one of their primary concerns.

The Yukon Hospital Corporation is working earnestly with the Department of Health and Social Services as well as the Yukon Medical Association to determine the services that can be provided by specialists here in the territory. Cardiology is one of those specialist services that is provided here in the territory — again, in an absolutely amazing time by having individual specialists attend and run a program that is here in the territory.

We are also extremely well-served by our partners outside the territory.

We work with physicians to address Yukoners' timely and appropriate access to specialty services, again, closer to home to reduce the need for out-of-territory medical travel, remembering that out-of-territory medical travel can be stressful and time-consuming in addition to the fact that any medical procedure, particularly specialty services, can be very stressful for individuals — but imagine the ability to go here in Whitehorse to see that specialist rather than having to travel Outside. This is a program that we continue to support, and it supports Yukoners.

**Mr. Cathers:** Yukoners are facing unacceptably long health care wait times for cardiology, audiology, orthopaedics, mammography, MRIs, and the list goes on.

We recently heard from a local senior who was told that there is a two-year wait time for hearing tests, and some people are resorting to travelling to private clinics Outside for hip and knee surgery.

Meanwhile, this Liberal government has spent most of its years in office failing to act on a plan submitted by Yukon hospitals to expand the surgical services area. Now we have learned that one of the reasons was that they have been dreaming of privatization of hospital infrastructure.

Will the Premier finally abandon his vision of P3s and provide funding for the expansion and upgrade of the surgical services area at the Whitehorse hospital?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to lose patience on behalf of Yukoners quite frankly, because the members opposite are simply not listening and they continue to tell a story here in this Legislative Assembly that is frankly misinformation to Yukoners. That only serves them, for some reason; it does not serve Yukoners.

Let's be clear: There is misinformation circulating on this topic by the member opposite and that person's colleagues. Our government wholeheartedly —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

### Point of order

**Speaker:** The Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

**Mr. Cathers:** The Minister of Health and Social Services just clearly contravened Standing Order 19(h) by directing her comment about alleged misinformation toward a specific member. I think she actually contravened it earlier in her response. I would ask you to have her retract those statements and apologize to this House for contravening the Standing Orders.

**Speaker:** The Government House Leader, on the point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I think the member is not supposed to stand on a point of order and talk about something that happened earlier. They are supposed to stand in that moment if they have concern with that.

Second of all, 19(h) specifically references that someone said that another member uttered a deliberate falsehood. No one said that in this House. The member is talking about fairly informing Yukoners.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** There is no point of order. This is a dispute between members.

Please continue.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Yukoners deserve to know that our government recognizes that doctors, nurses, and other health care service providers need modern facilities to provide health care services. We have put money in the budget this year and in the supplementary budget to support that. Let's hope that the members opposite also support that funding.

Our government wholeheartedly, unreservedly, absolutely supports a public health care system here in the territory and across Canada, as do my colleagues, the other ministers from across Canada — full stop.

### Question re: Property crime in Whitehorse

**Ms. White:** Property crime has been increasing at alarming rates in recent years, and it affects everyone, but we cannot fall victim to the knee-jerk reactions that we have seen from this government and from the Yukon Party.

Two decades of research in Canada shows that increasing police funding has no connection to decreasing crime levels. The good news is that there are also decades of research on

what does work: Crime prevention works when it is done through evidence-based practice.

Public Safety Canada provides hundreds of resources for programming, each of which are evidence-based and already successfully used across Canada. Programs like Fast Track, LiFT, and SNAP are just a few examples of the many programs that are available and effective. It means that this government can access these resources to respond to the situation here.

So, what work has this government done to implement evidence-based practices for crime prevention?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Evidence-based practice is something that I would say — maybe almost to the day eight years ago — the former Premier spoke about in this Legislative Assembly — certainly upon election of this team going forward. Our government recognized that we must respond to crime through a balance of enforcement activities, supportive social programs, and prevention-based initiatives that address the underlying causes of crime.

We will continue to work with our partners, and we have invested in the system, criminal justice and otherwise, including great support for the RCMP here in the territory for additional RCMP resources and additional RCMP members. Their approach is, of course, evidence-based. Their approach is community-based, and our partners work very hard to invest in innovative community safety initiatives like restorative justice approaches, systemic reform for victims of sexualized assault, supportive housing initiatives, and supports for those with mental health difficulties and substance use challenges, all on evidence-based process, all designed to increase Yukon public safety.

**Ms. White:** Reacting to crime is expensive, slow, and doesn't reduce crime in any meaningful way. The good news is that prevention saves money. It is far more effective, and when it is done well, it can bring an entire community together. The Yukon needs preventive, proactive, long-term visions for what the downtown core should look like.

In a CBC news story last year, Yukon RCMP Superintendent Lindsay Ellis pointed out that harm reduction is the first step and that any solution should include public education. That is how we create a downtown that is vibrant, livable, and welcoming. Yukoners need solutions that actually work, not ineffective, inefficient knee-jerk reactivity.

Will this government commit to investing in our community by implementing evidence-based crime prevention?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, again, I appreciate the question and the opportunity to speak to Yukoners about many initiatives that we have brought forward, including the downtown safety community plan. We have worked with partners throughout our downtown safety core, businesses, individual residents, community organizations, and non-governmental organizations to produce a downtown safety community plan that is being implemented as we speak.

We have First Nation community safety programs, like the Moccasin mobile. We have Car 867, which I had the opportunity to tribute just last week with respect to the impact that this initiative — a partnership between Health and Social

Services, a psychiatric nurse, and an RCMP-trained officer — to prevent mental health crises, to help individuals who are in very serious situations to help them avoid ending up in the criminal justice system or perhaps even at the hospital and get them attached to right services at the right time. It is wildly successful and is supported by both the RCMP and Health and Social Services. These are the kinds of programs that we not only have implemented but will continue to do so.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, last June, Statistics Canada reported that Yukon had the highest youth crime severity index in Canada. It is truly alarming to hear that so many of our youth are struggling, and it really shows how badly this government is failing them. Early interventions for youth are incredibly successful, and they can prevent a lifetime of interactions with the justice system. There are successful programs being used across the country that use things like community-based mentoring, after-school recreation, cognitive behavioural social skills training, and home and community parent training.

I imagine that the minister will again stand up and provide a list of things that she thinks her government has done about this, but if the Liberals' efforts were working, we wouldn't be having this discussion right now and we wouldn't have the highest youth crime severity index in the country.

So, will this government commit to adopting evidence-based practices to prevent crime and support youth?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite are going to ask me about this, I am absolutely going to stand and talk about the great work that this government has done and, more importantly, the great work that this government has done to help Yukoners, to help Yukon youth who are struggling in situations.

We have a restorative justice program that has, by way of its pilot, joined services between adult and youth services and that is second to none in this country. It is a flagship. It is a situation in which we are assisting youth to stay out of the criminal justice system both pre- and post-charge, to be responsible to their communities, to ultimately involve First Nation communities and elders for the opportunity to determine what restorative approaches should be made available for them and that would be restorative for the community. We have community safety initiatives. We have invested in innovative opportunities for First Nations to do on-the-land training and to develop programs with respect to that.

All of these are evidence-based and will continue to be so.

#### **Question re: Nurse practitioner remuneration**

**Ms. White:** Nurse practitioners integrate clinical nursing skills with advanced education to provide care in hospitals, community clinics, health care centres, primary care, and long-term care. They have very different roles than other nurses. For example, registered nurses carry out care, while nurse practitioners can prescribe care, but the way Yukon's pay scales are set up, some nurse practitioners make less than registered nurses. Some recent nurse practitioner graduates who are formerly Yukon registered nurses will take a pay cut in their new roles, and this makes no sense.

Earlier in this Sitting, we asked this government about wage scales for nurse practitioners. We didn't get a concrete commitment, so we will ask again. Will this government commit to providing nurse practitioners with their own wage scale to ensure that their pay is competitive with elsewhere in Canada?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, nurse practitioners are a key cornerstone of service providers not only here in the territory but across the country. We are well aware of the importance of them. They are working to be hired across the territory for the purposes of determining patient-centred care. Care teams led by nurse practitioners are often the way in which we will be able to provide service across the territory.

We look forward to continuing to support them. We work hard to make sure that we are responding to the issues with respect to the nurse practitioners' concerns being brought forward. We are absolutely dedicated to the fact that they will be and continue to be — and we have continued to hire nurse practitioners for the purpose of providing integrated care across the territory, which is the future of the transition of our health care system — as came from *Putting People First* — as determined a step forward with respect to the *Health Authority Act* and work that will continue to evolve and transform our health care system.

That, Mr. Speaker, must be done in partnership with nurses, physicians, and other health care professionals.

**Ms. White:** Having the minister recognize that nurse practitioners are key is one thing, but paying them what they deserve is something else. Nurse practitioners play a critical role in remote and underserved communities. The Yukon desperately needs more nurse practitioners here, and that is why this government needs to do everything it can to attract more nurse practitioners and to support those who are still here.

Unfortunately, the Canadian Institute for Health Information released a report this month that shows that the Yukon is the only region in Canada that is losing nurse practitioners, even though the overall number of nurse practitioners in Canada is growing. It means that nurse practitioners are leaving the Yukon to go work in other regions of Canada.

What is this government doing to improve the retention of nurse practitioners in the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, we are building with partners a process where nurse practitioners will be a cornerstone if not the centre of many community health centres for the purposes of preparing care for Yukoners. They absolutely must be and are the recipients in the past of the bonuses — the retention and recruitment bonuses — that have been so criticized in this Legislative Assembly by the members opposite.

We believe that those are an important opportunity to retain and recruit nurse practitioners, RNs, and LPNs in the territory. We will continue this work in partnership with those nurses and the planning for transformation of our health care system for the opportunity of improving care for Yukoners.

**Ms. White:** So, unfortunately, without nurse practitioners, they can't be a cornerstone of the health care transformation going forward, and that's the problem.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information released a report this month on the state of health care in every region in Canada. One of the more concerning things is that only 78 percent of Yukoners have access to a primary care provider. This is below the level of access for every other province and below the Canadian average of 83 percent.

By increasing the number of nurse practitioners in the territory, we can expand Yukon's access to primary care, and yet we know from that report that nurse practitioners are leaving the Yukon. One of the reasons for this is their pay, which is less here than nurse practitioners in other parts of Canada.

So, how is this government going to attract more nurse practitioners to the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** To continue on with where my colleague left off, when it comes to retraction, retention, and recruiting nurses, nurse employees — including registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and also licensed practitioner nurses — performing in positions requiring a nursing designation will continue to be eligible for signing bonuses, as the minister spoke of, and also reimbursement for exam fees.

Also, I would like to continue that by speaking about the “combined with new nurse group wage grid”, which was introduced in the 2022 to 2024 PSAC/YEU collective bargaining. This is a bonus package that was designed exactly for this purpose. It was to address the wage gaps in other Canadian jurisdictions and tackling ongoing recruitment and retention challenges, providing essential initiatives to attract and to retain staff to serve our community needs.

#### **Question re: Food and beverage sector support**

**Mr. Dixon:** The Liberal government has continued to demonstrate how out of touch they are with what's going on in our economy. Despite many local businesses struggling and the Liberals' own fiscal and economic outlook showing that we are almost certainly in the midst of a recession, the Liberal government has tried to deny these facts.

Well, just last week, I tabled a petition with well over 50 signatures on it that opened with the line — quote: “THAT Food and Beverage sector businesses have suffered multiple years of an extremely difficult economic climate in the Yukon.”

So, will the Premier now at least acknowledge that businesses in this sector are struggling and that his government needs to do more to support them?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Again, when it comes to the petition and it comes to subsidization of liquor, as the Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation, my goal is to make sure that we find the appropriate balances. We need to balance between the needs of the licensees and the need to return dollars to the government to fund critical services for all Yukoners.

We were very blessed to have the ability, the wherewithal, and the connections with the business community during the pandemic to make sure that we provided millions of dollars to



those businesses to make sure that they were kept afloat. I would think that the Yukon Party would be the first ones, as a Conservative party, to maybe ask us to get out of the way of businesses, but instead, they are asking us to subsidize liquor.

Again, no single solution will work for all licensees. We have heard many, many different conversations in this particular industry. They all have different business models and different practices, and they compete against each other as well. Funding programs are available through the Yukon government to support businesses in a variety of challenges that they do face.

**Mr. Dixon:** I am surprised that the Minister of Finance is so confused as to what a subsidy is and isn't.

Just a few weeks ago when the Premier was asked about a letter from the Yukon Chamber of Commerce calling for changes to the operations of the Yukon Liquor Corporation and pricing structure changes for licensees, the Premier dismissed this proposal entirely. He said it was just four or five businesses that were pushing for these changes and that he had heard from several businesses that had concerns with those proposals. Well, Mr. Speaker, last week, I tabled a petition with well over 50 signatures on it. That petition makes it clear that it is far more than just a few businesses that are facing these challenges, as the Premier suggested.

So, will the Premier finally start listening to local businesses and agree to make policy and operational changes at the Yukon Liquor Corporation to support the food and beverage industry that contributes so much to our economy in communities right across the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** We will continue, in the Liquor Corporation, to meet and work with the folks who are running the businesses. We have done so on several occasions under my leadership in this pursuit. Our staff as well has had many meetings with the food and beverage committees to discuss the committees' requests and determine potential options. Staff from the Yukon Liquor Corporation have committed as well to making sure that they are looking at the requests that are related directly to liquor; however, the specific requests changed from the spring to the fall, so we are making sure that we are working to accommodate all of the needs of all of the businesses.

Also, the corporation does have mixed requests from the food and beverage industry, and we will continue to consider all licensees, not just a handful, when we are looking at implementing significant change. As well, we must consider other impacts on Yukon.

Again, it was interesting that the member chose the day when we were tributing MADD to present this petition when we all know that, on a per capita basis, Yukoners are twofold: one, drink more than anywhere else per capita in Canada, but also, the trends are changing. We are seeing a lot more people who go out to parties and go out to bars who are choosing non-alcoholic options as well.

Again, we will continue to work with the business community, and we will continue to support them.

**Mr. Dixon:** Well, I would hardly consider over 50 signatures representing 50-some-odd businesses a "handful", but I will leave that for the Minister of Finance.

Last year, when the Yukon Chamber of Commerce wrote to the minister to express their concerns and make suggestions for policy changes, the government ignored them; the minister didn't even respond to the letter. When we asked about these concerns and suggestions just a few weeks ago, the Premier and the minister both refused to even acknowledge that there was a problem. They suggested that everything was fine and that most businesses didn't even want these changes. Now the government has a petition with over 50 signatures from businesses of all different sizes from all across the Yukon.

So, will the Liberal government finally admit that many Yukon businesses are facing serious economic challenges and that the government needs to do more, or will they keep sticking their heads in the sand and ignoring the facts and pleas from the business community to provide more support before we start seeing even more closures or job losses?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, we are not ignoring the business community, and we did not ignore the business community during the pandemic; we provided subsidies and supports for the business community, and the Yukon Party voted against those supports.

Following the letter from the food and beverage committee in the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, we met with the food and beverage folks — not only me but also the Premier — not ignoring at all, contrary to the narrative that the member opposite would have you believe.

Again, I said that our staff continuously meet with the members of the food and beverage committee to discuss the committee's requests, and we also have had — as far back as April 4, the Yukon Liquor Corporation hosted members of the Chamber of Commerce to provide tours of the liquor facilities and gave presentations to clarify liquor operations, such as the sourcing and the supply of liquor and pricing and social responsibility. The Yukon Liquor Corporation holds ongoing discussions with liquor licensees, and this has included industry working groups as well.

The corporation has actioned industry requests when possible — for example, making sure that we had a variety of increased and available special-order products. We have gone from 2,000 products in 2022 to 6,000 products — a year — and that's including our 1,500 core products in the Yukon as well.

Again, we will continue to work with a variety of different licensees to continue to support this industry.

**Speaker:** The time for the Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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*

## Appointment of Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

**Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 5(3), I appoint the Leader of the Third Party as Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole.

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

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.

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

**Acting Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

### Department of Environment

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

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you, Madam Acting Chair, for the opportunity today to present the supplementary estimates for the Department of Environment. To my left to assist me, I have Marc Cattet, who is one of the acting assistant deputy ministers, and to my right, Dennis Berry, the Deputy Minister of Environment.

Today I stand before this Assembly to provide an update on the Department of Environment's work to ensure that the Yukon's natural environment is managed responsibly while we build stronger and more resilient Yukon communities. The supplementary estimates that I am presenting today highlight an increase of \$1.87 million — the department's budget — of which all funds are fully recoverable through our partnership with the federal government and work with industry stakeholders.

I know that during the time of economic constraint, the department's ability to advocate on behalf of Yukoners and the Yukon's environment to secure funding through our partnerships to advance incredibly important work is appreciated by many.

The department's supplementary budget accounts for over \$2.47 million to the department's operation and maintenance budget and a deferral of \$600,000 in the department's capital budget. Of this increase to the department's supplementary budget, over \$1.4 million of these funds is being used by the

Department of Environment to fulfill the Government of Yukon's commitment in *Our Clean Future* to produce flood-hazard maps for flood-prone Yukon communities. These funds are 100-percent recoverable through our work with the Government of Canada. This funding is in addition to the \$316,000 that was included in the 2024-25 main estimates, which is also recoverable through our partnership with the federal government.

In recent years, the Yukon has experienced significant flooding that has threatened our communities' public infrastructure and Yukoners' way of life. We know that climate change is causing more frequent and severe weather events and it is important that Yukon communities and Yukoners have the tools and support that they need to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Flood-hazard maps show an area that may be impacted by flooding during different flooding scenarios. They are a critical tool for land use planning, flood preparedness, emergency management, and awareness of flood risk. In 2024, the Government of Yukon released the territory's flood-hazard maps for Carcross, Tagish, Marsh Lake, Lake Laberge, and Carmacks, which can now be found on yukon.ca. Flood-hazard maps were also released for Teslin this past October.

In addition, multiple flood-hazard mapping studies are underway for Old Crow, Dawson City, and the Klondike Valley. As official flood-hazard maps continue to be developed for all Yukon communities at risk of flooding, the Department of Environment will continue to work with all levels of government, including the Yukon's Emergency Measures Organization, to support flood preparation, mitigation, and response.

Producing flood maps for flood-prone Yukon communities fulfills an action under *Our Clean Future*, the Yukon's climate change strategy. *Our Clean Future* is an adaptive strategy that we work with to strengthen year over year as we consider new research and technology while assessing our progress and input from others.

In 2023, we announced 42 *Our Clean Future* actions that will enable our territory to adapt and build our resilience to climate change impacts and to reduce our collective greenhouse gas emissions.

Madam Acting Chair, in 2024-25, the department has dedicated over \$1.1 million to help us to fulfill our actions under *Our Clean Future* and meet our emissions-reduction target. In addition to this amount, the department's 2024-25 budget includes \$1.25 million in additional funds that will help Yukon communities prepare for and build resiliency to more frequent and severe climate impacts that our territory is seeing.

The investments that we make now to ensure that our infrastructure and communities can build resiliency to climate change will pay dividends in ensuring that future generations of Yukoners do not have to carry the large cost to deal with climate change impacts to our communities in the future.

The Department of Environment is also taking steps to protect more Yukon lands and waters. Through the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement*, the Government of Yukon is advancing efforts to protect and conserve the Yukon's natural

landscapes while supporting Indigenous leadership in conservation, protecting species at risk, and monitoring our effects on the environment.

The Yukon now has the highest percentage of protected area of any province or territory in Canada at over 101,000 kilometres of protected land, which is comparable to the size of Iceland. In 2024-25, the Department of Environment, through our partnership with the federal government, is investing over \$7.4 million to advance land use planning and creating protected areas under the agreement to support Canada's goal of conserving 25 percent of land and water in Canada by 2025 and 30 percent by 2030.

The funding is directly supporting Indigenous leadership in conservation through the establishment of a fund called the Indigenous-led conservation and capacity fund, which supports Indigenous-led projects that promote conservation, climate change adaptation, habitat and species protection, and the transfer of Indigenous knowledge.

Through the fund, the government has directed \$2.1 million over the next two years to support seven Indigenous-led projects that promote conservation, climate change adaptation, habitat and species protection, and the transfer of Indigenous knowledge.

Recently, the Government of Yukon, the Government of Canada, and the Inuvialuit parties signed the *Aullaviat/Anguniarvik Traditional Conservation Area Agreement*, affirming our commitment to the co-management of wildlife and habitats on the Yukon North Slope and to the implementation of the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*.

The *Aullaviat/Anguniarvik Traditional Conservation Area Agreement* ensures the protection of almost 8,500 square kilometres of the eastern Yukon North Slope and creates the Aullaviat/Anguniarvik stewardship and guardians program, which will guide the management and monitoring of the area and provide meaningful jobs in Aklavik.

As the Government of Yukon works with the Inuvialuit and the First Nation governments and groups to protect and conserve more land in the territory, we are also working with partners to better understand and protect wildlife across the territory. The Department of Environment's supplementary budget increase also accounts for \$228,000 in funding for the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, an inflationary increase that is fully recoverable through our partnership with the Government of Canada.

This funding will ensure that our planned implementation projects can proceed this year, including wildlife research projects, such as Porcupine caribou use of the Yukon North Slope, conservation officer community engagement and start-up support, Herschel Island Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park operations, and the Yukon North Slope conference in 2025.

In addition, \$15,000 of federal funding is included in this budget to support the Porcupine caribou monitoring program in Ivvavik National Park in accordance with the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*. This amount is in addition to the \$24,000 included in the department's 2024-25 main estimate to support Porcupine caribou herd research. The Porcupine caribou monitoring program is a joint project with the Northwest

Territories and Alaska to monitor the herd's population and health to help make informed decisions to conserve the herd and ensure that Yukon First Nations and residents of the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Alaska can continue to sustainably harvest caribou for generations to come.

This supplementary budget includes funding to support multiple wildlife monitoring projects that will happen across the territory to ensure that we can better manage wildlife and understand and mitigate the impacts of industry on our territory's wildlife. Federal funding of \$197,000 through the Canada Nature fund is included in this supplementary budget to help us determine how industry and development could impact wolverine, lynx, and other predator species in the Yukon South Beringia Priority Place.

The Yukon South Beringia Priority Place is about 89,000 square kilometres stretching from the Ogilvie Mountains in the north south to Dezadeash Lake and Carcross. This funding will support the development of study designs and protocols, training for personnel, deploying camera traps, acoustic recording units, drone surveillance, and conducting data analyses. There is also \$47,000 in federal funding allocated to undertaking, alongside the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board, moose monitoring in the north Richardson Mountains area. This funding is in addition to the \$109,000 allocated in the department's 2024 main estimates to research and monitor moose and wolf in the Porcupine caribou range in the Vuntut Gwitchin traditional territory.

This work will include monitoring moose and muskox populations, evaluating wolf diet and pack strategy, and identifying areas where we can integrate Indigenous knowledge in our monitoring efforts. The Government of Yukon is committed to continuing to work with industry stakeholders and other Government of Yukon departments to ensure that we mitigate the impacts that industry can have on the Yukon's natural environment while allowing for our territory to continue to prosper and grow.

This supplementary budget also includes \$100,000 to continue the work that was started last year with Newmont Corporation to complete surveys of wildlife populations in and around the potential future Coffee Gold mine. These funds are 100-percent recoverable from Newmont and will help to ensure that this project can proceed in a responsible way and contribute to the territory's growing economy. There is also \$70,000 set aside in this budget to conduct population estimates of black and grizzly bears in the Klondike Plateau region. This work will help us to better understand bear populations in the area and manage human activity, such as hunting and land use planning.

While we work to better understand how many bears are in the Klondike Plateau region, we know that everywhere in the Yukon is bear country. As of August 2024, the department responded to approximately 140 bear-related calls across the territory. Unsecured birdseed and unsecured garbage accounted for approximately 52 percent of attractants involved in all bear conflicts.

We can all take steps to ensure that we reduce human-wildlife conflicts. Recently, with the support of the Yukon community development fund and the department's

Conservation Officer Services branch, the Lobird community installed five new bear-proof garbage bins. The Government of Yukon is committed to continuing to work with communities to identify how we can reduce human-wildlife conflicts.

This supplementary budget includes \$169,000 in federal funding to work with Yukon communities and Yukon First Nations to identify sources of human-bear conflicts in and around communities and to develop community-based solutions to mitigate and address bear conflicts.

I also want to draw the Assembly's attention to the work that we are doing on behalf of the Yukon Housing Corporation to investigate contamination at their main office located in Whitehorse. Contamination was found following the removal and decommissioning of five underground fuel storage tanks. The investigation was expected to start in October of this year and results will provide guidance on future remedial approaches.

The Department of Environment has also received additional requests from proponents for technical reviews as prescribed under section 11 of the contaminated sites regulations. Technical reviews are conducted by external consultants while the Department of Environment manages the contracts to ensure that the technical reviews meet the requirements under our regulations. The department facilitates technical reviews for air emissions monitoring data, air dispersion models, hydrogeological assessments, site assessments, screening level-of-risk assessments, and comprehensive risk assessments. Technical reviews ensure an unbiased assessment for an applicant's project to determine potential environmental impacts and concerns while promoting its long-term stability. The department has allocated \$90,000 for this work in 2024-25, all of which is recoverable from proponents and permit applicants. These funds will support technical reviews of the Dawson, Watson Lake, and Haines Junction land treatment facilities as well as the former Carmacks highway maintenance facility and the J.V. Clark School in Mayo.

The Department of Environment is responsible for ensuring that our territory continues to have clean air, water, and land. From day one of the Victoria Gold Eagle mine heap leach failure, the department's scientists, biologists, and experts have been working with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to monitor the upstream and downstream environmental conditions in the surrounding area of the mine site. This includes working with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to monitor water quality in the Haggart Creek watershed. The department compares water samples to objectives in the water licence for the Eagle Gold mine site and to national aquatic guidelines and standards, including the Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment guidelines and British Columbia's approved water guidelines. Water quality results are helping the Government of Yukon and those responding to the slide to understand how and where contaminants are spreading and to inform mitigation measures to protect the environment and the wildlife that call the area home.

The department is working with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to implement short- and long-term monitoring of fish populations in the mine's surrounding area. The Department of Environment and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun have collected samples from over 50 locations in the Haggart Creek watershed, 21 of which were previously assessed in 2010. Fish-sampling efforts have concluded for the open-water season, and the department is working with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to prepare a report detailing the 2024 efforts.

In addition, the department and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun have worked together to ask those who harvest moose or caribou in the game management subzones north of Mayo to collect samples of liver, kidney, muscle, and incisor bars to support monitoring of contaminants. Sample kits were first provided to the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun in order to distribute to their citizens and were also available at the department's Mayo, Dawson, and Whitehorse district offices. Samples will provide the department with baseline data to monitor long-term impacts to moose or caribou in the area.

The department is also working with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to develop plans to monitor carcasses from trapped species in the area, including otter, muskrat, lynx, fisher, and beaver.

I thank the Department of Environment for their immediate and critical action in responding to the Victoria Gold heap leach failure. I know that community leaders, environmental groups, and Yukoners are appreciative and support the department's ongoing work to implement environmental monitoring on and off the site of the mine. Their incredibly important work is helping everyone to better understand the magnitude of the situation and ways that we can mitigate the impacts of the heap leach failure on the Yukon's environment.

There is also deferral of \$600,000 of funding in the department's 2024-25 supplementary estimates capital budget. This funding has been requested in the 2025-26 budget in order to continue our shared work with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in development corporation in order to formalize and develop the Charcoal Ridge trail in Tombstone Territorial Park.

The Government of Yukon manages 57 territorial parks, including 42 frontcountry campgrounds and 12 recreation sites, along with natural environment parks, wilderness preserves, and ecological reserves.

I do have more information to provide to Yukoners; however, at this time, those are my introductory comments. I look forward to answering questions from members opposite.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I want to thank the staff who are here today. Like I always say, I know there are staff on the phone out there ready to provide the good information that I will be looking for.

So, I would like to start with some questions that I raised last week about the bison conservation plan. It's specifically about action item 4.15. The term "refugia" — it isn't one that I'm aware of that has been used before in Yukon wildlife management. I'm not aware of it appearing in the land claims anywhere. I'm not aware of it being used previously.

I was actually on the bison tech team for quite a few years, and I was on my renewable resources council as a co-chair and as just a member, and I don't ever remember seeing the word or hearing the word "refugia".

All our resource councils, under the guidance of the board, hired Dave Joe and Richard Sidney to come and spend the day with us to explain chapters 16 and 17 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and how it pertains to wildlife management and the resources councils being the primary instrument in resource management.

So, I've never seen it nor heard of it. No one whom I talked to in that industry, including some of the staff who work for the minister, have ever heard that.

Can the minister tell us what this is and what it's intended to be?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite and thank you for the opportunity to answer questions in Committee of the Whole today. Nationally, bison are a threatened species, but in the Yukon, the population is healthy and growing. Action 4.15 of the conservation action plan enables the bison technical team to recommend to the Yukon government areas that should be temporarily set aside as refugia. This targeted approach will be used to close specific areas when needed to reduce hunter-induced impacts on bison, moose, and other wildlife. These areas will be identified using scientific data and local and traditional knowledge, and they may vary in size according to the needs of the animals. While these areas are set aside as refugia, other areas of the bison distributional range will remain open for hunting.

Creating hunting refugia is a traditional harvest management approach that lets an area rest and recover from hunting pressure. This action was added to the management plan based on input from First Nation partners. At this time, no areas have been identified or suggested for closure. I think I provided that answer to a question from the member opposite about a week ago. Action 4.15 will only be implemented on an as-needed basis.

So, to specifically answer the member opposite's question, creating hunting refugia is a traditional harvest management approach that lets an area rest and recover from hunting pressure. This action was added to this action plan based on input from First Nation partners, and I must concede that this is a new concept to me as well.

**Mr. Istchenko:** My next question on this is: What is this action item going to mean for the Yukon hunters and those involved in wildlife management — the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the renewable resources councils? The minister was just talking about a partnership with the First Nations, but he didn't mention the renewable resources councils, which are actually in chapter 16 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and are the primary instrument for resource management.

In his legislative return to me — in here, it says: "Action 4.15 of the conservation and action plan compels the Yukon government to work with the Bison Technical Team to identify and create one or more bison and moose hunting refugia. This

targeted approach will be used to reduce hunter-induced impacts on bison, moose and other wildlife, as needed."

When it comes to our bison population, we have had very healthy and very successful bison management since the bison were brought here. We are a sought-after jurisdiction. One of the reasons that we have hunting for bison is that the first of hunting season is open to a three-kilometre corridor, which keeps the bison off the road for vehicle collisions. It is a healthy population, so you can understand why people would be concerned.

I will throw this out to the minister. How big are these areas going to be? Will they be permanent? Will they change over time? How will they be chosen? Will they be communicated to the wildlife management community? Will their selection and designation be something that occurs by regulation, and if so, will it be brought through the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board regulation process?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** There were some fairly specific questions there with respect to area. We will certainly endeavour to get those answers to you this afternoon if possible. If not, I will endeavour to get back to the Member for Kluane.

Just for Yukoners listening this afternoon who will be interested in the Aishihik bison technical team, I will just provide some background. The Aishihik bison technical team, which includes all governments and organizations with a role in bison management, has collaboratively drafted a new management plan for the Aishihik wood bison herd in southwestern Yukon. This plan updates the 2012 management plan and seeks a better balance between bison control and harvest as well as managing the impacts of bison hunters on people, other wildlife, and the land. It also provides interim bison harvest guidelines.

The Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board completed a 60-day public engagement on the draft plan and made recommendations for changes that the Department of Environment subsequently accepted. The Government of Yukon completed consultation with First Nations on the draft plan and released the new conservation and action plan for the Aishihik bison — also known as "Bison bison" — population on October 22. This new collaborative plan articulates a longer term vision and recommendations for conservation and management of the Aishihik bison population. The updated plan is available on yukon.ca.

Just to confirm some of the observations that the member opposite made with respect to this bison population — where I do agree with the Member for Kluane — a 2022 population survey estimated that the Aishihik bison population was just under 2,000 adult animals, indicating continued population growth. One of the goals of the new draft plan is to ensure that a viable bison population is restored to the land, which will require managing harvest to maintain the population of — it says here "1,000 bison", but we have obviously exceeded that. The plan supports the national recovery strategy for bison, which is a requirement under the federal *Species at Risk Act*. The Aishihik bison population contributes significantly to the global conservation of bison. As the current population of bison remains healthy and viable and is above 1,000 adult animals,

hunters will not see a reduction in bison harvest opportunities for the 2024-25 season.

Let's just see whether I can provide the member opposite with some of the specific questions that were posed.

With respect to the specific questions on potential area, I think that I will have to get back to the member opposite. But briefly, action 4.15 is enabling, meaning that if there are specific areas where bison and other animals such as moose need a short break from bison hunters during the hunting season, we can consider that. At this time, as I have indicated, no areas have been identified or suggested for closure. The member opposite will have this information, but just for the record, the Aishihik bison technical team has representatives from the territorial and federal governments, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, the Kluane First Nation, the White River First Nation, the Asek, Carmacks, Dän Keyi, and Laberge renewable resources councils, and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. It also includes observer participants from Parks Canada, the Yukon Fish and Game Association, and the local outfitter.

The process by which a refugia will be identified will be up to the work of the bison technical team. If a regulatory approach is identified, that would flow through the regulation change process overseen by the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the department.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that action 4.15 will only be implemented on an as-needed basis and, once again, that there are no closures or changes to bison hunting at this time. Just before I finish these comments, I do agree with the member opposite that so far the Aishihik bison population appears to be healthy and is being well-managed. I commend all the stakeholders and all resident and non-resident hunters and the impacted outfitter in that area.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I do thank the minister for that, but it was important that we ask this question about the designation being something that occurs by regulation and through the regulation change process because this Liberal government — the previous minister and this minister — has gone and done stuff without using that process set out in chapter 16, and it's concerning to residents, it's concerning to First Nations, and it's concerning especially to our resources councils and the board.

Next I would like to ask about the method that the department uses for counting bison. I have been part of this and seen many methods. I am just wondering if they are still using the paintball gun method where they shoot bison with paintballs and then return the following day to count those not marked. Does the department think that this is a sound method? In my experience, bison have become pretty sensitive to the sound of helicopters, snowmobiles, and hunters and will quickly move away. They will actually hide for a couple of days in the forest, and when the helicopters come back to look for them, they can't find them.

I will then throw this in: The department recently used drone surveys for deer, so I am just wondering if they will be

using drones more frequently and what the department thinks about the paintball method.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Specifically with respect to the question about the so-called "paintball method" for aerial surveys, I will endeavour to get an answer while I'm on my feet, but the preliminary information that I have from the Environment team is that Environment is, in fact, moving away from that method.

I'll just put some information with respect to wildlife survey and data use on the record.

The Department of Environment works to understand wildlife populations through collecting and analyzing population data and evaluating harvest sustainability. This is done through collecting and analyzing wildlife survey data, data submitted by licensed harvesters, and shared data and concerns from our co-management partners.

Our partnerships with Yukoners, First Nations, and Inuvialuit help us evaluate harvest sustainability and fill the gaps between survey years. With this information, we make informed decisions about harvest opportunities for residents and non-resident hunters and anglers.

Collecting and analyzing wildlife data requires significant resources and is work that the department undertakes to ensure that we make evidence-based decisions about wildlife in the Yukon. We prioritize surveys based on species, population concerns, community concerns, land use planning needs, species recovery needs, and risks to populations from impacts such as industrial activity and climate change.

This work involves close collaboration with partners to analyze and report on population levels, harvest trends, and risks. Through this work, we aim to ensure that fish and wildlife populations remain sustainable for future Yukoners.

Surveys are ongoing throughout each year. In 2024, we continue to focus on surveying populations of caribou, sheep, bison, deer, lake trout, Arctic grayling, pikas, and bats.

Survey results are first shared with wildlife co-management partners, including Indigenous governments, renewable resources councils, the Wildlife Management Advisory Council for the North Slope, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and then with interest groups such as the Yukon Fish and Game Association and the Yukon Conservation Society. We continue to share our work, research, and monitoring activities with the public through information that we post on yukon.ca.

In 2024, the Department of Environment allocated approximately \$35,000 for one moose-related project, a late-winter moose distribution manual from major project proponents, and approximately \$258,000 for elk- and deer-related projects, including, as the member opposite indicated — and I can provide him with additional information on this when I get back on my feet — a drone contract to census both elk and deer and seven collar deployments for deer.

In general, the budget for additional surveying resources for all manner of surveys was increased about three years ago and has remained quite steady.

With respect to the bison, population estimates are obtained using mark recapture methods where previously

collared animals are used as marks to determine what proportion of the herd is seen during aerial surveys, thus obtaining a population estimate based on the proportion of collars that are observed versus those that were not seen.

The Department of Environment continues to explore alternatives to helicopter surveys, such as the drone project that the member opposite just mentioned, to survey deer and elk. As technology advances, we hope to continue to move toward wildlife management approaches that minimize disturbance to wildlife populations. I know that there were concerns raised by a number of groups but certainly hunters with respect to a pika survey which was being conducted this fall that may have caused some disturbance to other animals and hunters.

I certainly have more information with respect to surveys and I can provide additional information for the member opposite with respect to drones. I will get started and then, if the member opposite has follow-up questions, we can certainly continue with these questions. I have responded to the member opposite with respect to drones.

There was one question about how well a drone will operate in the Yukon's winter climate and challenging terrain. The Superwake drone is a battery-operated drone that uses solar energy to supplement energy to ensure that it can stay in the air for more than seven hours at temperatures as low as minus 30 degrees. Even with moderate levels of sunlight, the battery solar-powered drone is highly effective. This allows the department to scan an area of up to several thousand kilometres while navigating challenging terrain within a short period of time.

With respect to the deer survey, the drone's intended purpose will be to survey deer populations. Deer are very difficult to spot, as their coats provide excellent camouflage and they tend to hide undercover. The drone has been proven to spot deer much more effectively than helicopter surveys and has been able to navigate the Yukon's challenging terrain. The department is conducting its first aerial deer survey due to this technology now being available in Canada.

With respect to accreditation — a question was asked — Superwake Ltd. has a standing beyond visible line of sight, also known as BVLOS, a waiver from Transport Canada that is applicable across the country. It is the responsibility of contractors to ensure that they can legally complete this work, which is consistent with any contract issued. The contract, with respect to that specific survey which the member opposite asked about, was for a maximum of \$190,000 for 25 days of flying. This includes the cost for image and video processing and the cost of transporting the drone and the three technical experts to the Yukon. The survey is expected to be completed in November and includes an option to renew for up to two additional years. I have more information as well.

So, specifically with respect to the paintball approach to bison, I can endeavour to get more information on that topic.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I just want to stick with the deer population. I can remember back when I asked the department about increasing the permits for deer, and they said that they have to go survey and study. Then I asked them back how they came up with their first number, which puzzled them. I know

that the survey has just finished, and I am almost sure that more vehicles hit deer than actual hunting opportunities that we have out there. Two were hit in the Lake Laberge area — I think that my colleague said last week — and one flew over my vehicle not long ago.

When will they be increasing the deer permits and how many more?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I agree with the member opposite that Yukoners are seeking greater opportunities to harvest deer and that the anecdotal information is that the deer population in the greater Whitehorse area appears to be fairly healthy. I have heard this loud and clear from the Yukon Fish and Game Association, and I am meeting with the Yukon Fish and Game Association in the near future. I certainly value their input in the meetings that I have had with them over the course of the last three and a half years.

I will provide some information and certainly advise the member opposite and the House that we are looking at providing more opportunities for deer permits. The Government of Yukon currently offers 12 deer permits per year through the permit hunt authorization — PHA — process. Deer permits are only offered to licensed resident hunters. Two of the 12 permits are reserved for youth hunters aged 14 and 15.

During the 2023-24 hunting season, seven deer were harvested in the Yukon. To better understand this, the PHA — the number obviously wasn't met in that hunting season.

To better understand deer behaviours and numbers in the territory, we have launched the Yukon's first-ever deer project using trail cameras, collars, and the aerial drone survey, which I started speaking about in my prior response. The collaring and cameras are part of a movement and habitat study being done alongside Yukon University. To date, the department has collared 16 deer. It is the department's intention to collar an additional 14 during February and March.

In addition, during December, we will run an aerial drone survey to count deer in the Takhini Valley along the Takhini Hot Springs Road and the north Klondike Highway to Grizzly Valley. The drone surveys will be conducted during times of clear weather and daylight, and efforts are made to avoid disturbances to people and domestic animals. The result of this project should provide a population estimate and sex ratio of deer, which will inform decisions on future deer harvest opportunities, including a possible expansion of the deer hunt.

So, yes, I do hear loud and clear from the Yukon Fish and Game Association and from the member opposite — and, of course, the Yukon Fish and Game Association has in excess of 2,000 members who are avid Yukon hunters and want to be provided with as many hunting opportunities as possible that can be supported through the data. The Department of Environment is, as I indicated in my notes, in the process of getting the best available data possible, and I look forward to hopefully being in a position to authorize and provide additional deer hunting opportunities for Yukoners.

As I've indicated, we want to have a good understanding of the size of the wildlife population and the associated sustainable harvest. The Department of Environment plans to survey the deer population, which we're doing. The department

continues to work with Highways and Public Works to identify mitigations to reduce vehicle-wildlife collisions. Work to date includes public awareness campaigns, new roadside signage, analysis of collision hotspots, and strategic mowing of roadside vegetation in order to enhance visibility along roads where deer and other wildlife are most present.

I agree that, as one exits Whitehorse on the Mayo Road, that is absolutely an area that is of significant concern to Laberge and Whitehorse — all motorists — and that those deer in that area do pose a risk. I absolutely agree; that is a concern.

Anyway, there is a lot of surveying that is occurring right now, and I hope to be in a position to make a decision to provide greater deer hunting opportunities for the upcoming hunting season.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I want to move on to some outfitter stuff now. Can the minister provide an update on the number of cases before the Concession and Compensation Review Board, and what is their status? Also, the same question for the outfitter appeal board.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I do have some information with respect to the status of the appeals, but if I don't have the specific numbers today, I will certainly provide same in a legislative return, but just generally speaking with respect to outfitting, our government continues to work with the Yukon Outfitters Association to support the industry while ensuring the sustainability of Yukon wildlife.

Despite the COVID-19-related setbacks, the Yukon's outfitting industry has flourished in recent years. The seven highest annual number of licences sold to non-residents occurred over the past 10 years. Annual harvest by non-residents has been increasing since the 2020-21 hunting season. Non-resident annual harvest numbers in the Yukon are now at a level seen prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The information that I have received is that the harvest numbers for the outfitting industry in the Yukon are robust. In fact, as I indicated, the seven highest annual number of licences sold to non-residents occurred over the past 10 years.

With respect to the appeals, I'll just put some general information to the Assembly.

In 2021, the Department of Environment was made aware that issuing multi-year quotas and rollover provisions did not comply with the *Wildlife Act*. As a result, the department worked with outfitters to place them on annual quotas. Since 2022, the department has been issuing annual quotas.

Given the changes made to the quota process and the fact that some outfitters were assigned quotas for the first time, the Outfitter Quota Appeal Committee and the Concession and Compensation Review Board received an unprecedented number of appeals in 2022 and 2023. Our government responded to all timelines and information requests from the secretariat coordinating the scheduling of appeal hearings, but the number of appeals did create significant delays in the scheduling of hearings.

However, in the most recent year, the Department of Environment is aware of only one outfitter who has filed a quota appeal in 2024. The Government of Yukon recognizes and supports outfitters' rights to appeal. At present, the

Government of Yukon remains committed to supporting quota appeals and decisions under the Outfitter Quota Appeal Committee and the Concession and Compensation Review Board process; however, the Government of Yukon has communicated that the Government of Yukon will not be attending Outfitter Quota Appeal Committee hearings when the same matter has previously been addressed through the legislated Concession and Compensation Review Board process and a decision has been made and communicated to the outfitter.

The Department of Environment is working through the appeals. The member opposite will know that the outfitters have been provided with letters of comfort from the Deputy Minister of Environment with respect to creating flexibility for multi-year quotas. We recognize the certainty and flexibility that multi-year quotas provide to Yukon outfitters; however, our legal opinions provided indicate that the issuance of multi-year quotas do not comply with the *Wildlife Act*. The Department of Environment has implemented an interim solution to provide outfitters with certainty, flexibility, and predictability. This interim process states that unless a legal, environmental, or socio-economic factor necessitates a change in the non-resident harvest allocation, quotas will remain unchanged until there is a new quota process established. The interim process also allows outfitters who had a quota agreement before 2022 to access unused moose and caribou quotas from the previous four years up to a maximum value as per their most recent agreement.

We remain committed to working with the outfitting industry, the renewable resources councils, Yukon First Nations, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and licensed hunters in order to ensure that a fair, transparent, and sustainable approach to harvest is applied.

Just to be clear, in order to try to address the legal opinion that we have, the interim process stated that unless there is a legal, environmental, or socio-economic factor necessitating a change in the non-resident harvest allocation, quotas will remain unchanged until the establishment of a new quota process.

That is my understanding; yes, my understanding is that a lot of the appeals in 2022 and 2023 arose largely due to dissatisfaction with that legal opinion, but the department is working with outfitters and has a strong line of communication. As indicated, the seven highest annual number of licences sold to non-residents occurred over the past 10 years.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I know that the Fish and Wildlife Management Board wrote the minister about reviewing the outfitter quota guidelines, so I will stick with that. The minister has asked them to review those guidelines. When I met with the board about this, there were some questions and concerns about whether or not it made sense to have them lead the review or whether the government should lead it.

So, I am curious why the minister thinks that the board should lead the review. What is the status of the review? How much funding is allocated for the review, and can the minister tell us what the timeline is for the review?



**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I just wanted to confirm that my officials and I did just meet with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board on this topic and they remain committed to leading the review, but I'll just provide some details for members, for the Assembly, and for Yukoners listening at home.

The Government of Yukon recognizes the Yukon's unique and valued wildlife hunting opportunities. We are committed to ensuring that a licensed harvest is done sustainably while respecting wildlife conservation and Indigenous subsistence harvest rights. Managing human activity, particularly hunting, is our primary tool to conserve wildlife and support the continued availability of licensed hunting opportunities in the future.

The Department of Environment is considering developing a harvest-sharing framework to support increased transparency, fairness, and public harvesting — of harvest-sharing decisions in the Yukon. A harvest-sharing framework is an important step to clarify and improve how hunting is managed in the Yukon.

Last year, the Department of Environment received the recommendation from the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board to modernize the guidelines to establish outfitter quotas. We agree that the modernizing of those guidelines is necessary for various reasons, including ensuring that they conform with the Yukon *Wildlife Act*, addressing the Yukon's legal obligations to consult First Nations, and ensuring better alignment with how wildlife management is conducted in the Yukon.

The Government of Yukon invited the board to initiate the review and engagement on the guidelines given its mandate to make recommendations on all matters related to Yukon fish and wildlife management, legislation, research, policies, and programs. We are supporting the board with their development of a work plan and budget for potential review and engagement on the guidelines, which will enable the board to evaluate their capacity and resource needs and to determine if it is practicable to undertake this effort at this time.

There is an RFP that the Fish and Wildlife Management Board has issued to identify a proposal writer, and that budget, I'm advised, is \$12,000, which is supported by the Department of Environment.

So, the discussions continue with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board — as recently as last week with respect to this project — and they are on side, and we will support them. Just to be clear, we are supporting the board with their development of a work plan and budget for potential review and engagement on the guidelines which will enable the board to evaluate their capacity and resource needs in order to determine if it is practicable to undertake this effort at this time.

With respect to a timeline, I can get back to the member opposite, but it will certainly take some time to write the proposal and then to engage a contractor. So, this endeavour — this review — will certainly take some time.

As far as the first step, the request for proposals to engage a proposal writer — that should be completed by the end of November as the first step in this process.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. Solid-waste permits — the Department of Environment issues permits for the operation of solid-waste facilities in all of our municipalities. We have heard that there have been a series of new requirements and conditions placed on municipalities through this permitting process. Those include things like increased water monitoring and the installation of new monitoring wells as well as other infrastructure. These requirements place a significant financial burden on the communities.

Just for the minister, the Minister of Community Services told us lots about that when he was closing dumps down — or regional landfills — correct word — I'm sorry.

Can the minister tell us why they are imposing new burdens? Is it driven by a new water-quality standard or some new federal standard? Does the department take into consideration a financial implication that such permit conditions have on municipalities?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I think I did provide some preliminary answers to the member opposite in questions raised during the Fall Sitting, but this is a good opportunity to put the framework on the record. This is under the category of landfill adaptive management plans. The Department of Environment regulates landfills in the territory. The Department of Community Services and municipalities operate those landfills for the benefit of all Yukoners.

Based on the most recent groundwater and surface water data at 20 Yukon landfills, the Department of Environment requested that landfill operators prepared adaptive management plans. Adaptive management plans, or AMPs, are a tool under the contaminated sites regulations that allow landfill operators to consider future mitigation scenarios when contamination is found to be present. For example, how should operations change at a landfill if concentrations of certain contaminants like manganese or selenium in groundwater increased, stayed the same, or decreased? AMPs support the ongoing analysis of each unique landfill, and the information is used to outline better operational practices to protect the environment.

In August, the Government of Yukon notified six municipalities and the Department of Community Services that adaptive management plans were required for their specific sites. Next steps for the landfill operators are to analyze the data and start to draft the plan through the winter of 2024-25. Adaptive management plans have been used for other landfills in the Yukon in 2019 and 2022. The costs associated with adaptive management include the costs of the planned preparation and potential costs associated with additional data collection and potential costs of the necessary adaptive measures, which are very site-specific.

The Department of Environment is working with municipalities and the Department of Community Services to ensure that mitigation and management of landfills is done efficiently and cost effectively. Each municipal or community landfill will be considered as unique, and thus, the cost of an AMP will vary based on the unique considerations of each landfill. The adaptive management plan process starts with an assessment of the site-specific conditions at each location. The

assessment confirms the need for contaminant mitigations and suggests measures for improvement.

It also helps to determine whether the landfill in question must engage in the full adaptive management plan process or whether specific mitigation measures may suffice. This means that some sites may be able to demonstrate that a full adaptive management plan is not required.

We recognize that there will likely be data gaps that will need to be filled to inform the final adaptive management plans. Any additional water monitoring or installation of groundwater wells required for further data can be completed in the summer of 2025. We aim to have the plans submitted to the Department of Environment for review and approval by the fall of 2025.

The approximate cost for developing adaptive management plans is in the range of \$25,000 to \$40,000 per plan. The shared costs of additional monitoring, well installation, and other actions set out in the plan cannot be quantified until adaptive management plans are developed.

Currently, the Site Assessment and Remediation Unit pays for water monitoring and well installation at Community Services sites that, going forward, could cause financial stress, which may have to be addressed through a Management Board submission.

As the regulator of solid-waste management facilities, the department is responsible for ensuring that the facilities are managed in a way that is protective of the environment. I'm aware that additional monitoring and management that are protective of the environment sometimes come with additional costs and that the Minister of Community Services is working with the communities on how to address these costs.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, the minister didn't answer the question on some new water-quality standard or some new federal standard. We know that the municipalities already test the water. This sounds a little bit like this landfill adaptive management plan, something through contaminated sites regulations — six municipalities. Questions are: How were these municipalities identified? Is this something that someone in the department dreamed up to make it more difficult for the municipalities, more expensive for the municipalities? As we know, with the new EPRs dealing with lots of other stuff, it's going to be an expense out there, so can the minister confirm where this actually comes from?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I have a high degree of confidence that the adaptive management plan was not dreamed up in order to cause additional burden on communities, but I can get additional information with respect to the methodology, but — and I will wait to see if there are some additional responses, but if not, I can certainly provide a legislative return on the methodology for adaptive management plans. The overarching concern — just briefly again, the Department of Environment is responsible for ensuring that facilities are managed in a way that is protective of the environment. The adaptive management plan requirement has been a condition of the permit.

Recently, we have had the opportunity to evaluate several years of groundwater monitoring data and to identify facilities where surface-water or groundwater quality parameters exceeded regulatory limits. This is not the result of a new

standard but changing water quality. Just to confirm what I said in my prior comments, adaptive management plans have been used for other landfills in the Yukon in 2019 and 2022.

The assessment confirms the need for contaminant mitigations and suggests measures for improvement. It also helps determine whether the landfill in question must engage in a full adaptive management plan process or whether specific mitigation measures may suffice.

I understand the member opposite's question, but there are already adaptive measurement plans in place in the Yukon, and to confirm as well, this is not the result of a new standard but changing water quality based on tests and assessments. I am certainly very cognizant of the fact of the member opposite advocating strongly for his community and other communities outside of Whitehorse, but those discussions are ongoing with the Department of Community Services to hopefully mitigate costs, but ultimately, at the Department of Environment, the overarching concern is the protection of the environment.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. I will share that with all municipalities.

I want to switch to the Old Crow gasifier. I know in the minister's briefing notes from the Spring Sitting — quote — it says: "The operator is not in compliance with the *Environment Act* and requires a renewal permit." Can the minister tell us if there is currently an air emissions permit in place for the Old Crow gasifier or for the Old Crow solid-waste facility? Is the open burning of waste at the Old Crow solid-waste facility a breach of the *Environment Act*, and has the minister had this discussion with the Minister of Community Services?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I do have some information on this question and can certainly get additional detail if required. I'm advised that there is an air emission permit for the Old Crow gasifier. Community Services, I'm advised, has a draft update permit and meanwhile are operating — they are, in fact, operating under an expired permit, which I think is consistent with information during — that I have heard in answers from the Minister of Community Services; however, there is no open burning allowed. We are advised that Community Services has ceased the open burning of waste in the community. The Department of Environment is planning an inspection in the next several weeks in order to confirm. The Department of Environment is generally satisfied that Community Services is actively working toward re-permitting and is adhering to their expired waste permit either by using the gasifier or landfilling the solid waste when the gasifier is down.

Community Services has a short-term compliance plan, which the Department of Environment reviewed and agreed with. Community Services is working on a long-term compliance plan for the Department of Environment, due later this year. So, in fairness to the member opposite, it does sound like more work is required. Our advice — my advice is that open burning has ceased in the community, and I will certainly endeavour to follow up to get more information with respect to this question.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, the minister just confirmed that there is no open burning in Old Crow?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** So, just to be clear, I personally do not know whether there is open burning in Old Crow. My officials from the Department of Environment — this is what they have advised: The Department of Environment's understanding is that Community Services has ceased open burning of waste in the community. If that is, in fact, not the case and the member opposite has information to the contrary, certainly bring that to my attention, to the department's attention, and we will make best efforts to remedy. Of course, that's a suboptimal situation if that is what's actually occurring in Old Crow.

So, just to be clear, to the best of the Department of Environment's knowledge, they're unaware of there being open burning of waste in Old Crow. But from the member opposite's question, it sounds like he or members of his caucus might be aware of something else occurring, but as I indicated previously, the Department of Environment will be attending — will be in Old Crow to conduct an inspection in the near future.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that.

So, my next question is about the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement* — a simple question. I understand what the agreement is, and we've debated this before. I just want to know how many positions have been hired under this agreement.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I am just endeavouring to get the update as of today — the number of positions that have been hired.

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

Across 2023-24, we were able to make meaningful progress toward the outcomes of the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement*, including: reporting an additional two percent of lands and waters to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database to bring Yukon's total to 21.1 percent, which is currently the highest percentage of reported protected areas of any province or territory in Canada; taking steps to advance Indigenous-led conservation initiatives by inviting Yukon First Nations and transboundary Indigenous governments and groups to apply for funding under the newly established Indigenous-led conservation capacity fund; co-hosting a workshop with Environment and Climate Change Canada to discuss challenges and opportunities for conservation with the Yukon government, Yukon First Nations, and transboundary Indigenous governments and groups; signing a memorandum of understanding with Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, City of Whitehorse, and Parks Canada to protect the Chasàn Chuà/McIntyre Creek area of Whitehorse; and developing tools and advancing studies to support

conservation and monitor species at risk. In addition, protecting new areas and ensuring conservation in the territory is complex and challenging work, but it is more important than ever as we face challenges like population growth, industrial development, climate change impacts, and loss of biodiversity.

This year, the Government of Yukon will continue to work toward protecting areas in the Yukon that are of important ecological and cultural value. New areas for conservation will always be collaboratively identified with Indigenous governments and groups. Work is currently underway to advance protected area planning in the Peel watershed where we are exploring the feasibility of establishing a new national park with the Gwich'in Tribal Council, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and Parks Canada as well as the Pickhandle Lake Habitat Protection Area with the Kluane First Nation and White River First Nation and the Chasàn Chuà/McIntyre Creek area with Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, City of Whitehorse, and Parks Canada.

We have also initiated pre-engagement work with Indigenous governments and groups on the co-development of an ecological cumulative effects framework and approach to protecting species at risk in the Yukon. We look forward to continuing this work across 2024-25 together with Indigenous governments and groups in the territory and with the support of the Government of Canada.

To the specific question that the Member for Kluane had, we have filled 13.7 positions that are fully recoverable through the agreement that we have with Environment Canada. These are term positions that end with the term of the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement*. These positions are filled and include technical positions to support our monitoring and surveying efforts in addition to staff to support the policy and administrative aspects of implementing the agreement.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that.

The next question I have is about the Kluane sheep permit. Does the minister anticipate offering the Yukon government-run permit hunt authorization this coming year?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** No.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that.

I want to switch gears a little bit to camping planning. Now, I am going to ask the minister about the latest on creating new camping opportunities. I know that he's going to read about the 40 new campsites at Congdon Creek. I know that because I was a part of building them in 1992 and 1993, but I'm looking at new camping opportunities.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the opportunity to speak on campground improvements and planning. Certainly, there has been a lot of great work done by the Parks branch in the Government of Yukon over the course of a number of years, and I certainly applaud the member opposite for his work — was it in the 1980s? but anyway — a while ago in the actualization or the beginning of the actualization of Congdon Creek. Maybe it was the 1990s; maybe the 1980s was a bit —

**Some Hon. Member:** (Inaudible)

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** That was a bit harsh, yes. But I think that both the Member for Kluane and I were doing things in the 1980s.

So, I will do it in reverse. I do have a lot of information — probably more than might be required for this response — and I will answer the questions about the most up-to-date — but since 2017, the Government of Yukon has invested in the development of 126 campsites across the territory. These include 80 drive-in sites and 46 walk-in sites, and that adds up — the member opposite is correct — as follows: 63 sites at Congdon Creek, four sites at Ethel Lake, six sites at Five Mile Lake, eight sites at Little Salmon, 15 sites at Marsh Lake, 10 sites at Snafu Lake, seven sites at Grizzly Lake, three sites at Twin Lakes, four sites at Wolf Creek, and six sites at Conrad.

Since 2021, we have completed 30 infrastructure projects to enhance Yukon campgrounds; several more projects are in progress. We know that Yukoners and visitors value recreational experiences while camping. To help to facilitate more recreational activities and to access the outdoors and upgrades that have included — and kudos to all of the Parks staff and to all of the subcontractors who made all of this work possible — 11 new boat launches at Aishihik Lake, Otter Falls, Tagish bridge, Ethel Lake, Twin Lakes, Nunatuk, Frenchman Lake, Frances Lake, Simpson Lake, Little Salmon Lake, and Teslin Lake; eight new docks at Watson Lake, Simpson Lake, Nunatuk, Frenchman and Tatchun lakes, Pine Lake, Squanga Lake, and Twin Lakes campgrounds; and two trail improvements at Lapie Canyon and Conrad.

As I talked about in my supplementary Budget Address at the beginning of this afternoon, working in partnership with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in community development corporation to develop the Charcoal Ridge trail in the Tombstone Territorial Park through a transfer payment agreement.

That is sort of the nuts and bolts of what we are up to. Subject to regulatory approvals, we plan to add new campsites and an improved day-use area and trail system to the Tatchun Lake campground. In 2024, we increased camping opportunities in the territory by approximately 14 new campsites; 10 new sites were added, as I indicated, to the Snafu Lake campground to address unmanaged camping in the area. We also improved campground design and added four sites to the Ethel Lake campground.

To improve the backcountry camping experience, Yukon Parks' north region staff completed a full revamp of facilities at the Grizzly Lake campground, including tent pads, cook shelters, bear-proof food storage, outhouses, and grey water barrels.

So, it has been busy in the last three years.

There is more, but that's a high-level overview of what Yukon Parks has been doing.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I agree wholeheartedly — 100 percent — with the minister about the hard-working staff who increased the opportunities, and a shout-out to the team that works out there and a real shout-out to Beth for coming back to work.

Can I get a quick update on the status of the boat launch at Teslin Lake, please?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I am advised that the boat launch is currently under construction and we're hoping to have it completed by February of 2025.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. I have a quick question about fishing licences. As we know, we have gone online, which is a good thing for fishing licences, but one of the things is when you are a rural business in the summertime, sometimes you administer fishing licences for the department. A good example would be a fishing lodge. In the past, at the end of the season, there was a piece of paper you filled out where you sold an X amount of fishing permits and then you submitted the cash to the department. Now the department requires a monthly piece of paper and an update, which is a burden on the business community. Can the minister comment a little bit on that and what the reasoning is for it?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I believe the specific question is about what's perceived to be a change to monthly reporting requirements and that creates an undue administrative burden on small businesses. I'll endeavour to get an answer to that specific question while I'm on my feet.

The Department of Environment is committed to improving online service delivery for Yukoners and out-of-territory visitors. Permit and licence services are offered online and in person at Department of Environment offices and authorized licence and permit vendors, providing quick and easy access to the outdoor opportunities the Yukon offers.

Department of Environment is also committed to reducing waste, and by increasing our online service offering, we are generating less paper waste. Clients can manage their hunting, trapping, and fishing licences and can apply for annual hunting lotteries through their online e-licensing account. Daily and annual camping permits can also be purchased through the e-licensing portal during the summer camping season.

This year, we also began online camping reservation services, which I could talk about at some length, but offering online reservations at four of the territory's most popular front-country campgrounds.

Specifically with respect to fishing licences, this year, we made fishing licences available to the public earlier. Fishing licences were available for purchase online beginning on March 18, 2024. The licence is valid from April 1 to March 31 of the following year. Sport fishing licences are required for fishing using a dipnet for whitefish and suckers, fishing using set lines for burbot, fishing at Tatlain Lake or Wellesley Lake, snagging cisco for bait off the Tagish bridge or Carcross foot bridge, the Nares River, and fishing derbies.

So, just for the interest this afternoon, the stats between 2022-23 and 2023-24 — resident fishing licences in 2022-23, 7,029 were sold, and the next year was 7,661 — so, not an insignificant increase; non-resident fishing licences, 3,342, increasing to 3,960; and with respect to resident hunting licences, 4,546, a modest increase to 4,634; and non-resident hunting licences, 1,114 to 1,143. This is all electronically, so what a great uptake for the e-platforms that the Department of Environment provides. I can attest having used that e-portal for a number of years now.

Specifically with respect to the issue about whether there has been an additional administrative burden provided, I have a fairly detailed answer here. This is more in the nature of streamlining — the new e-vendor system will move sales from

paper to electronic, increasing the services available to the public and improving the overall efficiency of sales, inventory reporting requirements, and responsible data collection.

The e-vendor system connects directly with customers' Environment e-services accounts so that all licences and permits are up to date. Customers no longer have to produce their hunting licence to purchase seals, only a valid government-issued ID, and their shopping cart availability will be auto-adjusted based on the products that they are eligible to buy. Permits will automatically be added to their licences with the purchase of hunting seals, meaning quicker access to hunting opportunities.

The Department of Environment is committed to improving service delivery for all Yukoners and supporting Yukon businesses. The e-vendor system will reduce the administrative burden of the current paper system and simplify the commission payment process between private vendors and the Yukon government. The Department of Environment transitioned to an online vendor licensing system. There is one lodge — the Kluane lodge — that submits returns in order to receive commission. All other vendors have moved online and receive their commissions at the point of sale.

I'm not sure if that entirely answers the question about monthly reporting, but it does sound like there is some streamlining occurring, and hopefully, this reduces the administrative burden to the private industry.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. I'm just hoping that citizens of Teslin will be able to buy a permit there soon, as they are unable to do that right now.

My last question before I turn it over to the Third Party is about the status of work establishing a national park in the Peel. Has money been budgeted by the federal government, and how much? What is the estimated cost of creating the park?

Also, I want to thank the staff who are here today and the staff who are providing information to the minister.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you as always for the insightful questions from the member opposite, the Member for Kluane. I do have some information with respect to Peel land use planning, but if some of the specific questions are about costs, I may not be in a position to provide those today but will certainly endeavour to do so in the near future.

We continue to work with our First Nation partners — Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, and the Gwich'in Tribal Council — to implement the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*.

Our government has been working together to designate specific special management areas identified in the Peel plan as protected areas under legislation. We are working with the federal government on a feasibility assessment for a national park for the areas including Turner Lake wetlands, Caribou River, and the Peel River corridor. We are also working toward designating special management areas that cover the Wind, Snake, Bonnet Plume, and Vittrekwa rivers as territorial parks. Combined, these three areas will cover over seven percent of the Yukon.

Recently, the Government of Yukon — in close partnership with the Gwich'in Tribal Council, the First Nation

of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and Parks Canada — announced that we are working together on a feasibility assessment for a new national park in the Peel watershed. The national park feasibility assessment will provide the opportunity to consider a national park as the permanent protected area designation, determine the protected area boundaries, and discuss longer term management of this area.

The feasibility assessment for the national park in this area is a key step toward implementing the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan* and supports the conservation and protection goals of the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement*. If established, a new national park would permanently protect this area, which includes 3,000 square kilometres of rich and diverse landscapes. All governments involved in the feasibility assessment are preparing for upcoming public engagement as part of the work to determine whether a national park is feasible and desirable.

The parties to the Peel plan have recommended that, in addition, natural environment parks be established under the *Yukon Parks and Land Certainty Act*. We are working to designate these parks and hope to have them established next year. Once designated, the Yukon will work with our First Nation partners to co-develop the management direction for these protected areas, which will include an opportunity for the public to provide input. One park will include the Wind and Bonnet Plume watersheds, and one will be known Tagé Héninlin (Nijin Han Niinlaidi) Territorial Park. This territorial park will cover about six percent of the Yukon and will be 14 times larger than Tombstone Park. The second park, which has not been named yet, will include the Richardson Mountains and the Vittrekwa River.

Other implementation activities from the Peel plan include the establishment of two hydrometric stations on the Snake and Wind rivers. These stations monitor water levels and flow, and the data can be accessed by the public in real time. Accessible water data increases the safety of river users and is valuable for understanding environmental change in the areas. We have also produced publicly available mapping products that use satellite imagery to map wetlands and areas of existing disturbance. These products can be used to inform future land management planning and decision making.

Two areas within the Peel watershed have been nominated by the Gwich'in Social and Culture Institute to be national historic parks. These are areas of great cultural importance to the Tetlit Gwich'in. The nominations are supported by all five parties to the Peel plan. We look forward to continuing collaborative work with First Nation partners to implement the *Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan*.

Yukon government does not anticipate costs for the establishment and operation of the national park. Costs of operation of a national park will be covered through Parks Canada. Of course, there would have to be consideration for the territorial parks — budgeting considerations for the territorial parks under the *Parks and Land Certainty Act*.

Exciting times in the Peel. So, we look forward to future work on the Peel land use planning implementation.

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 215, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Is there any further general debate?

**MLA Tredger:** I will start by thanking the officials for being here today, for all those folks with me on the phone and able to answer questions, and thank you to the minister for making this opportunity for us to ask questions.

I want to start by asking about the *Our Clean Future* report for 2023. Prior to last year, the *Our Clean Future* annual reports were coming out each year in about September. Last year, the report for 2022 didn't come out until late December 2023, and we were told that it was late because the recommendations of the Climate Leadership Council were being incorporated in the report and that was going to take some time. Now we are in 2024 and we haven't seen a report. We don't have any information later than from the end of 2022 and we haven't seen the report yet for this year. I am wondering why it has been delayed this year past September — by two months — and when we can expect to see the 2023 *Our Clean Future* annual report.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I look forward to ongoing debate and answering questions in Committee of the Whole and welcoming the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

The 2023 *Our Clean Future* annual report will be released before the end of this fall session. We look forward to highlighting the good work that has been done in 2023. We have taken the necessary time to ensure that the report is strategically aligned with our goals, working in collaboration with 14 departments and agencies. As a government, we will continue to work together in implementing the actions of *Our Clean Future*.

Recognizing and acknowledging the Member for Whitehorse Centre's comments with respect to the release last year and also recognizing that this will perhaps be later than one would like, I have certainly implored the department to have this document ready to go before the end of the Fall Sitting. We do anticipate that it will be tabled and released in the time frame that I have indicated.

**MLA Tredger:** I thank the minister for that. It's good to hear that it sounds like it will be out in the next month. I am curious; he said that the reason why it has been delayed is because it needs to be "strategically aligned with our goals" — I believe that is the quote. I would have thought that, being a report, it would just be what it was — that it didn't need to be aligned with something per se. Can he explain a bit more what he means by that?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** We recognize the urgency of the climate emergency and launched *Our Clean Future* in September 2020 to map our route forward. The Government of Yukon continues to make significant progress on implementing *Our Clean Future*. In 2023, we announced the addition of 42 new actions to help us to reach our climate goals, which brings the total number of climate actions to 178. These new actions are a product of the important work of many organizations. We continue to track our progress on goals, targets, and actions. Information on our progress was most recently published in 2022 in the *Our Clean Future* annual report and on the *Our Clean Future* website. The 2023 *Our Clean Future* annual report will be published, as indicated, prior to the end of the Fall Sitting.

Since releasing *Our Clean Future* in 2020, the Government of Yukon has completed 45 *Our Clean Future* actions, 129 are in progress or ongoing, and four have not yet been started.

Just to be clear, we are working with many departments to ensure that the content is accurate and reflective of the great work completed in 2023. This takes an enormous amount of work, and we appreciate all of the work of all public servants.

So, it is more in line with the goals set out in *Our Clean Future* of 2024 — I understand the member opposite's question, but it's more just ensuring that the content is accurate — reflective of the work — and is cross-referenced with all of the action items in the original *Our Clean Future* document.

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

It would be a lot easier to have this conversation if we had that report in hand, but since I don't have it, I'm going to have to ask about a bunch of items. That's just how it's going to have to go. I know that information will be available soon, but I won't know which information will be available soon until it comes, so I will just have to ask about it all now.

I'm going to start by asking about item L23, which is in appendix D. It's one of the new actions in the 2022 report. So, L23 reads: "By 2024, work with various levels of Government to develop guidance on greenhouse gas emissions accounting practices that support consistent, simple and transparent reporting of emission reductions." That's supposed to be done by 2024, so we have another — I don't know — six or seven weeks of 2024 left. I'm wondering if that is on track — if that has happened or if it is on track to happen by the end of December 2024. If so, I'm curious about what that's going to look like and how that is rolling out.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I do have a high-level response to — I think it is L23.

Government of Yukon is currently developing guidance materials on greenhouse gas emissions accounting practices. Guidance will be tailored based on type of organization and the needs of the organization. Specifically, we are developing guidance on: corporate and organizational GHG accounting; jurisdictional greenhouse gas emission accounting, for instance, for use by municipal and First Nation governments; and project-level greenhouse gas emission accounting, for instance, to measure the impact of a specific project.

I'm advised that this is on track to be completed by, as the member opposite indicated, the end of 2024. This will enable organizations to determine their greenhouse gas emissions with clear guidance on how to calculate them.

**MLA Tredger:** Thank you to the minister for that. It is great to hear that it is on track and I think that will probably be really helpful to a lot of folks.

Is that going to be used in departments? I know that one of the recommendations at the Climate Leadership Council was that all submissions for projects included the counting of what the greenhouse gas would be of the project. Is that related to what he is talking about? Is that going to be a way that — I don't know — when a department makes a submission for a new infrastructure or a program, they could figure out what the greenhouse gas emissions impact would be of the project?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Greenhouse gas emissions accounting guidance is for use by organizations outside of YG. The government already has its own greenhouse gas emissions accounting, and this new work is consistent with providing guidance to these organizations. We will release our Government of Yukon and Yukon-wide emissions report, along with our annual report, before the end of session, and the methodology is included in those reports.

As the member opposite has heard before — I will just briefly put it on the record as well.

I think that does answer the question, but climate risk assessments are being conducted for all major transportation infrastructure and major building projects with a projected cost above \$10 million, which the member opposite will know is T28 and H15. These assessments determine the infrastructure's vulnerability to climate change. They focus on determining risk for permafrost, fire, flood, and other environmental factors. In our analysis, we now consider questions like: What can happen, how likely is it to occur, and how can we better prepare our infrastructure for the consequences of climate change?

The specific question that the member opposite has is with respect to greenhouse gas emissions calculations and, as I indicated, it does appear that the Government of Yukon and Yukon-wide emissions reports will be in the annual report, and the methodology will also be included.

**MLA Tredger:** Thank you for that clarification.

The next question I want to ask is about H24 in *Our Clean Future*. That one reads: "Amend the Air Emissions Regulations by 2025 in order to regulate air emissions from commercial and institutional biomass burning systems to minimize the release of harmful air pollutants." My first question is: Does the minister anticipate that this will require legislative changes or just changes at the regulations level? I am wondering if drafting has started for that.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** With respect to H24, I can advise that the process to amend the air emissions regulation is currently in progress. I can receive guidance from the department as to timelines and can report back to the member opposite, but it is an amendment to a regulation and that work is currently in progress.

**MLA Tredger:** Thank you to the minister; that is great to hear.

I wanted to ask about P11, which is: "Expand monitoring of concentrations of particulate matter in the air from biomass burning and forest fires to all Yukon communities by 2023." So, I am wondering if that has happened yet and, if so, if the monitoring data for communities outside of Whitehorse — if those data are publicly available and where people might be able to find them.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I can report that purple air monitors have been installed in all communities across the Yukon. These monitors offer real-time data on particulate concentration and the information is made accessible to the public at [cyclone.unbc.ca/aqmap](https://cyclone.unbc.ca/aqmap).

The science on climate change is clear. We will continue to face extreme events like wildfires, flooding, poor air quality, landslides, and highway washouts more frequently as our climate continues to change. To protect and enhance human health and well-being in the face of a changing climate, purple air monitors have been installed in all communities across the Yukon. These monitors offer real-time data, as I indicated, on particulate concentration and I indicated where that information has been made accessible to the public. It seems like it's a partnership with the University of Northern British Columbia.

**MLA Tredger:** I actually just pulled up that link while the minister was talking and was really excited to find it there; it looks really helpful. I wonder if it could be better advertised, because I was actually asked about this over the summer.

Someone was asking if they could get — if there was any way to tell what the air quality was like in the communities outside of Whitehorse, and I wasn't able to find anything, and it turns out that it was here, which is — I think that it would be really helpful if it could be easier for people to find so that, when they are trying to make decisions about their health or their plans in times of wildfires in particular, they have all of the information, especially because there is such a great tool here. I would love for it to be fully utilized.

Thank you for all of that. I'm going to turn now to the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement*. I want to start by asking about one of the Yukon's commitments. So, they are listed in Annex A of the agreement. I'm looking in Annex A, table A4-1, and there is a commitment to — quote: "Drafting instructions for Yukon species at risk legislation grounded in Indigenous support and understanding (with monitoring data that speaks to the cumulative effects framework and land use planning)..." The timeline for that is: "Cabinet approval to be sought in Fiscal Year 2023-2024". I'm wondering if approval has been sought and if those drafting instructions have been approved.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** As Yukoners, we have a unique connection to the territory's wildlife. We have a duty to monitor and protect species at risk, including mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, insects, and plants. The Yukon has 43 species currently listed as being at risk under the federal *Species at Risk Act*, while another 10 species are under review. There are specific legislative tools in place to list and conserve species at risk in other parts of Canada, and this is a priority for the Government of Yukon as well.

As we have heard, in December 2022, we signed the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement*. This commits us to increased surveying and monitoring of species at risk and engaging with First Nations and the Inuvialuit on approaches to managing species at risk. As a result, Yukon's capacity and resources for collaborative work with other parties on species at risk matters is significantly increased in 2023, 2024, and 2025. This work will include: long-term monitoring of little brown bats in southern Yukon, including the installation and maintenance of bat houses to shelter and protect maternity colonies at risk in the boreal forest; annual monitoring of collared pika at several hundred sites in Tombstone and Kusawa territorial parks; investigation of the potential effects of winter recreation like snowmobiling, dog mushing, and cross-country skiing on woodland caribou in southern Yukon; monitoring of the Aishihik wood bison herd in the southwest Yukon and the transboundary Nordquist herd in the southeast Yukon; remote camera-trap monitoring of grizzly bears on the Klondike Plateau and in the South Beringia priority place; monitoring of wolverine population trends using non-invasive camera traps in multiple areas of the Yukon; and new and expanded monitoring of at-risk vascular plants and alpine meadow and dune ecosystems.

This new funding is also supporting engagement with First Nations and Inuvialuit to build our shared understanding of species at risk, determining how we work together and how we manage species at risk in the future, including whether we should proceed with legislation for species at risk in the Yukon.

We continue to work on species at risk conservation with our partners in wildlife management, including Yukon First Nations, the Inuvialuit transboundary Indigenous governments and groups, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the renewable resources councils, the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope), interest groups, and other government organizations.

Other jurisdictions in Canada have specific legislative tools to protect species at risk and their habitats. There is a current gap in the Yukon. Over the next two years, the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement* will increase the Yukon's capacity to work collaboratively with other parties on a variety of species at risk. This includes the potential to develop species at risk legislation in the Yukon. We are discussing the potential for legislation and other policy tools to protect species at risk in the Yukon in a way that fits our unique situation and legislative landscape. We have met so far with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, White River First Nation, and the Gwich'in Tribal Council, with other meetings being scheduled.

Regarding timelines, we are working at a pace of our First Nation and Indigenous partners. This is an important initiative given the global context of biodiversity loss and it is important that we do this work together. Co-development of policy and legislative initiatives takes time, and our government is ensuring that this is done well.

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

So, my understanding is that this is a three-year agreement. I might be wrong about that, but I was just reading the appendices that lay out the funding commitment, so I believe

there is funding for about three years and we're about a year and a half into that.

My question is: Does the minister anticipate that they will be able to pass species at risk legislation within that three-year time period given that we're about a year and a half away from the end and it sounds like there is still quite a lot of work ahead?

I can understand that it might not be possible for lots of very good reasons and that it is important to do things in a good process in a way that works for everyone, but I am just curious if he anticipates being able to finish this commitment by the end of the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement* or if he expects that it will need to be extended.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I think that I would agree with the member opposite that, yes, there will be challenges with respect to the timelines, but just for the record, I would just say that, regarding timelines, we are working at the pace of our First Nation and Indigenous partners. This is an important initiative given the global context of biodiversity loss, and it is important that we do this work together. Co-development of policy and legislative initiatives takes time and our government is ensuring that this is done well.

This coming spring, we plan to dive in to be able to explore the development of legislation using the resources available through the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement*, and I don't disagree that the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement* has provided us with additional horsepower to expedite these important meetings and engagements, but there may very well be time constraints based on the number of conversations that have to take place in a good way.

We are committed to working toward protecting species at risk at the pace of our partners. This agreement is providing, as I indicated, much-needed resources to do this, and we certainly are appreciative of having been able to sign the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement* in order to provide us with more resources to move forward. I commend the staff at the Department of Environment for the good work that they are doing and their ability, with the additional what I would refer to as "horsepower" and person power, to be able to ramp up those discussions.

**MLA Tredger:** I thank the minister for that.

I'm curious if the minister can tell me what percentage of the funding from Canada has been flowed through to Yukon First Nations and what percentage of the funding has stayed in the Department of Environment in the Government of Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** The Government of Yukon has responsibility and a commitment to work together with Indigenous partners to protect our lands, waters, and biodiversity for generations to come. Under the nature agreement, the Indigenous-led conservation capacity fund was developed to support Indigenous partners to lead or participate in identifying areas of conservation interests in their traditional or asserted territories. So far, seven Indigenous governments and groups have applied to the Indigenous conservation capacity fund. So far, the project allocations for these seven initiatives are over \$1.2 million, and we continue to look at opportunities to fund additional projects and First Nation governments.



We have also established a two-year funding agreement with the Council of Yukon First Nations to support capacity toward an Indigenous lens on management approaches for protecting species at risk in the Yukon. We look forward to supporting and continuing to build on this important conservation work with our Indigenous partners.

As the member opposite will likely have heard, there are so far 13.7 — I guess that I shouldn't be thinking or assuming anything, but it was in the range of 13.7 FTEs that have been filled to advance work as set out in the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement*. I can come back with the most recent breakdown by legislative return, but the bottom line is that this was an agreement between the Government of Yukon and Canada. I will leave it at that.

**MLA Tredger:** I am just doing a little bit of really fast math. From what I can see — very ballpark numbers — the Yukon has received about \$13 million so far as part of this agreement or will have by the end of this fiscal year. It sounds like about 10 percent of that has gone on to First Nations, if I am correct in that. I say this not to try to suggest that the work being done by the Department of Environment and by the Government of Yukon is not valuable. I think that there is lots of really important work happening because of this agreement, but I do just want to draw attention to who is being funded to do the work.

Two pillars of this agreement are about reconciliation and Indigenous engagement — such a key part of this plan. I just want to really think about how that money is being distributed and to whom it's being distributed and who is going to end up doing that work because of the way the money is flowing.

I am going to leave the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement* for now. I want to ask a little bit about extended producer responsibility. I wonder if the minister could give an update on what is happening with the extended producer responsibility organization stewardship plans. I believe that some have been submitted to him already, and I'm wondering what is happening with the review of those plans and when they will be approved and released to the public.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Government of Yukon is working with national producers, local businesses, municipalities, and industry representatives to establish the details of an extended producer responsibility framework and implement the programs. The first step in the implementation process is producer-led stakeholder consultations to inform the development of stewardship plans. Some of these engagements have been completed as of August 2024, and one is anticipated to start soon. These stewardship plans will be reviewed and approved by Government of Yukon. It is anticipated that these producer-led waste diversion programs will begin operation in 2025. The stewardship plan review and approval stage will allow our government to ensure that the final plans align with service-level expectations, recovery targets, and our waste-diversion objectives.

The Government of Yukon has maintained an ongoing dialogue with Yukon businesses and recycling stakeholders in order to address concerns and inform the development and implementation of the framework. We are committed to

continuing this dialogue throughout the implementation of an extended producer responsibility framework in the Yukon.

Over the next year and a half, the Government of Yukon will transition the responsibility for managing non-refundable recyclables and a range of hazardous and special products to the producers of those materials. Once implemented, large producers and manufacturers of residential packaging and household hazardous waste will be tasked with funding and managing the collection, handling, and recovery of those materials. While the specific details of the Yukon's new waste management approach will be determined during the stewardship plan development, review, and approval period, Yukoners can expect the same or better access to waste collection and recovery services as they do now.

As the Department of Community Services works toward regionalization of waste-service delivery across Yukon, we know that some community transfer stations have been closed. Where possible, waste and recycling services should align to support an overall efficient system. So far in the draft stewardship plans released, proposed service levels align with existing services and have considered any changes planned to happen during the transition period. This is why it is important for the local governments and communities to participate in the remaining producer-led engagements, which will take place over the coming months.

Producer responsibility organizations submit stewardship plans on behalf of producers. As of September 2024, four out of five producer responsibility organizations have completed producer-led engagement for stakeholders, and three stakeholder stewardship plans have been submitted so far.

We are on a good path and certainly would commend the — it's part of the equation, part of the solution — the discussions that were had between the City of Whitehorse and the Department of Community Services with respect to — well, the City of Whitehorse's commitment to a blue bin curbside recycling program and the Department of Community Services supporting that transition period.

Certainly, I know that many Yukoners are happy to know that there will be curbside blue bin recycling, and kudos as well to the City of Whitehorse for providing the interim measure of providing recyclable drop-off at the Whitehorse landfill. I have gone there a few times, and it's a very efficient set-up. I commend the city for implementing that transitional period.

So, it's an exciting time. We look forward to being the first jurisdiction north of 60 to implement an extended producer responsibility program.

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

So, if I heard correctly, three of the stewardship plans have been submitted. Does he have a sense of when those will be approved or sent back for changes? When is he expecting the rest of the stewardship plans to be submitted?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I certainly endeavour to provide greater specificity, but what has generally been communicated to me over the course of the last year or 18 months is that the plan is that extended producer responsibility would be implemented in the Yukon in 2025. What I might anticipate the question might be from the Member for Whitehorse Centre is:

That's a year — so, is that December 31 or is that June 30? I mean, I get it — I get it. There will be a question as to when we are going to implement.

Timing of the approval will depend on when each plan is submitted, what additional information or review is needed by the PROs — the producer responsibility organizations. Plans are at various stages, but we're doing our best to approve it all by 2025.

As anticipated, there are a lot of moving parts, and I certainly commend all of the officials at Environment who are working on this and some who have worked on this for a number of years. It has been, you know, their passion, and we are getting close to the finish line, but I certainly understand that there would be — there is some urgency to get this done, and I certainly would love to see this get done sooner in 2025 than later in 2025, but recognizing that there are a lot of moving parts.

**MLA Tredger:** Thank you to the minister.

I would like to turn now to wetlands. During budget debate in the spring of 2024, the minister said that a draft wetlands map of the Yukon would be completed by 2024. I am wondering if that is done or is expected to be done in the next couple of months and, if so, if it is or will be available to the public.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** In 2023-24, year 1 of this work with respect to wetland mapping, Environment evaluated our predictive wetland mapping methodology and compiled existing wetland field information. We are collaborating with Environment and Climate Change Canada to this advanced territory-wide wetland mapping. The draft wetland map is complete. In 2025, we completed an extensive field data collection campaign that will be used to produce a wetland map for the Northern Tutchone region.

I just have a bit more information here.

We are working to improve guidance for operators and project proponents to identify and mitigate potential impacts to wetlands during the environmental assessment stage. We are in year 2 of a four-year project to complete territory-wide wetland mapping. So far, we have established, as I indicated, a partnership with Environment and Climate Change Canada, evaluated our existing data and methodologies, and completed extensive field data collection. We have developed a draft guidance document for the nomination and evaluation of wetlands of special importance. Once the guidance document is finalized, we will be able to accept the first intake of nominations for wetlands of special importance.

We have also drafted Yukon-specific wetland classification standards. These standards will establish a common foundation for all future work relating to wetlands in the territory. We intend to engage with First Nations and other interested parties on both documents in late 2024. As the draft product will not yet be available online, the full territory-wide wetland map will be available to the public once it has been completed.

So, good work is being done and there is a significant draft product, but it appears that there is still work to be done.

Just briefly, during the summer of 2023-24, we collected aerial imagery to support local-scale wetland mapping and

vegetation mapping in the Klondike goldfields region. This information is needed to support more detailed local-scale wetland mapping. We also supported Ducks Unlimited Canada to develop an accessible and user-friendly field guide to identify wetlands. This document is now available through Ducks Unlimited Canada.

We are also supporting a new research effort by the Wildlife Conservation Society Canada that looks at how carbon is stored and released in Yukon wetlands and how it may be impacted by industrial activities. You can now find information about Yukon wetlands, how the policy is being implemented, and guidance for industry on yukon.ca. We are also developing a new public-facing information hub for wetlands, maps, and related spatial information.

**MLA Tredger:** The minister mentioned that the draft guidelines for nominating a wetland of special importance are in draft form. When does he expect to have the finalized form finished, and when does he expect to have the first intake of nominations?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** We have developed a draft guidance document for the nomination and evaluation of wetlands of special importance. Once the guidance document is finalized, we will be able to accept the first intake of nominations for wetlands of special importance. We have also drafted Yukon-specific wetland classification standards. These standards will establish a common foundation for all future work related to wetlands in the territory. We intend to engage with First Nations and other interested parties on both documents in late 2024. I guess the answer is: As soon as possible, pending the outcome of the engagement.

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

I ask about the timelines because the nomination of protection of wetlands of special importance can't begin until that nomination process opens, whereas the development of the wetlands can continue up until then. So, it's not that we're waiting and nothing is happening while that document is being prepared and we're getting feedback on it; we're waiting and those wetlands are potentially being developed in a way that is not reversible in that time. That's why I ask about the timeline. I think that it's really important that it happens as quickly as possible.

I want to ask a little about Environment's role in the response to the Eagle Gold slide. I appreciated the minister talking about the work that the department did in terms of response. I am really grateful that the department was able to do that response. I think that the monitoring piece and the research piece were really important. I am wondering what the cost of that has been to the department so far in terms of both having to — I can imagine that there are costs for paying for testing or bringing in outside experts, but there is also the cost of the staff in the department who I'm sure had other projects that they were planning to work on over the summer and had to be shuffled over to do this response — as they should, but I suspect that the costs have been significant. I am wondering if there is a sense of what those costs are and if the minister knows whether those will be recoverable through the security that Victoria Gold had.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I will try to be fairly brief on this. So far, the total as of October 1 is approximately \$637,955, and this doesn't — well, it comes close to adding up here — breakdown of costs: aquatic species monitoring, \$287,531; water monitoring, \$281,682; communications, \$42,432; geotechnical mapping, \$26,310.

As to its recoverability, I think those are still active questions with respect to the receiver and litigation and as to what might be recoverable that is off-site — off the Eagle Gold or Victoria Gold site, but those are the expenses to the Department of Environment as of October 1.

**MLA Tredger:** Thank you to the minister for that. I do have a few more questions, but I understand that we are expecting the Commissioner soon. So, at this time, I will move that the Chair report progress.

**Acting Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre 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.

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

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

### ASSENT TO BILLS

**Commissioner:** Please be seated.

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

**Clerk:** *Technical Amendments (Environment) Act (2024); Act to amend the Forest Resources Act (2024).*

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

I would just like to take a couple of minutes to mark the passing of the Hon. Murray Sinclair. The passing of the Hon. Murray Sinclair will be felt across Canada for some time. He was one of the exceptional people who had the innate ability to see a better future for Indigenous peoples of Canada, which guided his life. He knew that to move forward we had to look back, and no matter how painful, we needed to recognize the dark past to see a brighter future. He encouraged us to work together in the spirit of reconciliation. He leaves behind an incredible legacy, and we will continue to advance the conversation of reconciliation.

The Hon. Murray Sinclair made his mark in history, and we will remember him.

Thank you very much.

*Applause*

*Commissioner leaves the Chamber*

**Speaker:** Order.

Please be seated.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:22 p.m.*

### The following document was filed November 4, 2024:

35-1-277

Implementation of the recommendations made by the coroner's jury in the inquest into the deaths of Cassandra Warville, Myranda Aleisha Dawn Tizya-Charlie, Josephine Elizabeth Hager, and Darla Skookum at 405 Alexander, letter re (dated November 1, 2024) from Stephen Doyle, Director, Social Supports, Department of Health and Social Services, to Heather P. Jones, Chief Coroner for the Yukon Territory (McPhee)

### Written notice was given of the following motions November 4, 2024:

Motion No. 1097

Re: jail sentence credits (Cathers)

Motion No. 1098

Re: alternative locations for École Whitehorse Elementary School replacement (Dixon)

Motion No. 1099  
Re: École Whitehorse Elementary School replacement  
consultation (Dixon)