



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, November 6, 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**  
**Wednesday, November 6, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**Withdrawal of motions**

**Speaker:** The Chair wishes to inform the House of a change made to the Order Paper. The Minister of Justice gave notice of Motion No. 1101 yesterday. The motion is out of order and has not been placed on the Notice Paper.

**Speaker's statement**

**Speaker:** As I have ruled previously, including on March 13, 2023, "... out-of-order motions include motions seeking explanation, motions urging someone or something 'to recognize' something, or motions urging someone or something to respect the role of something. As well, it is not in order to include within the text of a motion an argument in favour of the motion."

A motion should not be argumentative or in the style of a speech.

I will remind members that each motion must be treated as if it will be brought forward for debate and could become an order of the House. Notices of Motions in the Daily Routine is not an opportunity to engage in debate or make members' statements.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

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

**Speaker:** Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**Unanimous consent re extending time limit allotted for tributes, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 11(6)**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 11(6), I request the unanimous consent of the House for tributes to exceed 20 minutes.

**Speaker:** The Government House Leader, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 11(6), has requested the unanimous consent of the House for tributes to exceed 20 minutes.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

**In remembrance of Joseph Novak**

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I rise today to honour a significant member of our community, Joseph Novak, who passed away in August. At this time of year, many of us are used to seeing both Joe and also Major Red Grossinger in attendance as we honour our veterans. Sadly, both veterans passed away earlier this year. Lance Corporal Joseph Novak was a man whose life exemplified service, generosity, and dedication to his community and to his country. Mr. Novak answered the call to serve our nation during one of its most challenging times. In 1943, Mr. Novak enlisted in the Canadian Armed Forces, joining the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. His bravery took him across the seas where he was stationed in England before landing in Normandy after the historic D-Day invasion.

His journey with the First Canadian Army led him to pivotal places in Europe and his contributions on the battlefield were an essential part of Canada's legacy in the Second World War. For his service and actions of courage, Joseph received numerous honours, including, most notably, being knighted into the French National Order of the Legion of Honour in 2021. This prestigious distinction, France's highest, is a testament to his outstanding contributions during a time of great need.

However, Mr. Novak's legacy reaches far beyond military service. His deep commitment to Yukon is evident in his extraordinary generosity. In an unparalleled act of generosity, Joseph donated over \$1 million to the Yukon Hospital Foundation, a gesture that he humbly referred to as "payback" for the care that he and his family received. His donation enabled the hospital to acquire a new mammography unit and supported mental health services — lasting gifts that will benefit Yukoners for generations to come.

Moreover, Joseph continued his commitment to the community and future generations with a \$150,000 donation to the Yukon University. This endowment established a bursary supporting Indigenous students in the field of communications, a reflection of Joseph's beliefs in the power of education and his enduring dedication of lifting up others.

Lance Corporal Novak, during his time at Whistle Bend Place, became known as the "Quilt Man". He was awarded a 7-by-7-foot quilt of valour in recognition of his services to Canada, made by local quilter Lee Pugh. A quilt of valour is a hug, a hug from a grateful nation. Always thinking about others, Joe was determined to see that his quilt was displayed for everyone to see and to serve as a reminder for all of those who did not come home from war.

When asked about his life, Mr. Novak was always proud to credit his late wife of 73 years, Mary, for making him the person that he became. He said that on their wedding day, while waiting in the church, Mary saw the aisle, the altar, and him and said, "I'll alter him", which is exactly what she did.

Lance Corporal Novak's life stands as a shining example of selflessness, courage, and devotion to the common good. His contributions to Canada and the Yukon are immeasurable and his story will continue to inspire all of us.

On behalf of Yukoners, I extend our deepest condolences to Joseph's family, to his friends, and to all who had the privilege of knowing him. His memory will forever live on in the hearts of those he touched, and he will be dearly missed and never forgotten.

*Applause*

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Joseph Novak. I want to thank all those who are here today, and I want to thank the speakers in the Legislature who pay respect to Joe and to Red, my fellow comrades.

Mr. Speaker, these words were written by Master Corporal Terry Grabowski, who was a good friend of Mr. Novak. Terry was an upbeat guy; I'll try to get through this: "Well what can I say of my friend that is not known by Yukoners. We know of his generosity due to his philanthropy to Yukon University and Yukon Hospital Foundation.

"But there's way more about the man himself. His attitude and personality is something we should all try to emulate.

"L/Cpl. Joe Novak survived WWII. I feel that's why he appreciated the value of life. It's this appreciation for life — which made him live a long one, over 100 years old... He said to me, 'Terry, it's always better to give than receive.' He's correct. That's why we became friends, and although we had a 47 year age difference, I know we both were cut from the same cloth. He cut a circle out of cardboard. Got some bright yellow felt and made a sun. The sun was on his wall. He said during the dark winter months — it gave him warmth and brightness. He had a daily motto which he said when he woke up daily, and that being 'Be happy'... he'd say 'Be Happy, cause I'm alive and I've got another bonus day ahead'. We should all be blessed to wake up and... seize the day. Joe had such a zest for life. One of the hardest things besides my own military and policing career, was to sit down and advise Joe of something. It was me and my family who would be relocating from the Yukon to Alberta. I knew it made him sad, just as sad as I was. We both knew I wouldn't be able to visit him, or take him shopping. We talked via telephone weekly to check in.

"It's interesting the bond, we have of service to community and Canada. When the military, police, fire, EMS, and other first responders — we ALL have this bond. Joe and I did. It was an automatic trust and caring right out the gates for us, when we first met. He was a soldier first. He said his CO or commanding officer in Borden, ON formed everyone up and said, 'boys you can take the solder out of the army, but you'll never take the army out of the soldier' for those who know, know he's correct 100%.

"He's an example of mission or duty beyond self. He gave so much back to others, and never in regards to himself. He was my friend, he was my hero. He showed me even more how to live my life for the time I have left, for the better. When I wake up, I think to myself 'Be Happy', two words to adhere to. I thank my friends for these small nuggets or gems, they are real life lessons. I shall always miss him, he shall never be forgotten. He was a soldier. He was awesome. He called me one time and said 'Yes I'm looking for Master Corporal Terry Grabowski,

this is Lance Corporal Joe Novak calling'. He knew it was me, cause I said hello. He was just being official and respectful. I was smiling when he said this. I know he was too, because he laughed a little too. A wonderful man.

"I think our connection, our friendship hopefully made his remaining years better, for the ones we got to know each other and hang out. I know he's for sure bought me more years, just by being his friend. On this Remembrance Day, I will toast him and remember him. Lest we forget."

*Applause*

**Ms. Blake:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP in celebration of the life and legacy of Joseph Novak. We have heard beautiful words and stories today about Joe, and we couldn't agree more. Joe said that he wanted to be remembered for doing what every human being should be doing: giving back.

Today, we remember Joseph Novak for his generosity of spirit and love of his family and community. We commit to living up to the examples he set: Be kind, be loving, and give back to those around us.

Mahsi' cho.

*Applause*

### In remembrance of Gilles Red Grossinger

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour a remarkable member of our community, Gilles Red Grossinger, who passed away in September.

Major Grossinger's life was defined by service, dedication, and a commitment to the veteran community. At the age of 17, Red joined the Canadian Armed Forces and had a career spanning over 30 years.

After his years of distinguished service in the Canadian Armed Forces, Major Grossinger retired to Whitehorse, where his contributions to the Yukon only grew. Through his tireless volunteer work with the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 254, Red became an ardent advocate for veterans across the territory. He was proud of his uniform, proud to have served, and proud to represent veterans.

His passion and dedication were recognized through numerous honours, including the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal and the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers, testaments to his selfless service to others.

Red was also the recipient of the Meritorious Service Medal in 2009, which is awarded to individuals who have performed commendable service to the veteran community or who represent commendable role models for their fellow veterans. Red's volunteer service to his fellow veterans was further amplified when he received the Palm Leaf, the legion's highest honour. To qualify for this award, a member must have earned the Meritorious Service Medal and then provided at least five more years of exceptional distinct service beyond what earned the initial Meritorious Service Medal.

Red's impact extended beyond his work with veterans. His role in organizing Canada Day celebrations each year brought our community together in shared pride and unity. I know that everybody in the Assembly today will miss seeing Red on

Canada Day next year. He believed that Canada Day was one of the most meaningful events for a community to come together celebrating their shared connection and pride in being Canadian while enjoying a memorable time together. His generosity of spirit and dedication to making our community a better place will not be forgotten.

An outdoorsman at heart, Red was equally passionate about the natural beauty of the north. His fascination with sasquatch led him to become an author as well, and in 2022, he published *Nahganne: Tales of the Northern Sasquatch*, sharing his unique stories with readers far and wide.

On behalf of Yukoners, I extend our deepest condolences to Red's family, friends, and all who were fortunate enough to know him. His contributions to our community were absolutely immense, and his legacy will continue to inspire us all. He will be truly missed.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to a well-known Yukoner, retired Major Gilles Grossinger. I tried to remember when I first met Red, and I believe that it was when we operated our tourism business on the Yukon River — and here comes a fellow who was doing river tours on a pontoon boat. He asked to store some fuel and, as we got to know him, Red and his guests began to spend time with us on their trips downriver.

At 17, Red had joined the Canadian Armed Forces — Royal Canadian Armoured Corps. He retired as major in 1987. He gave back to the community and the Yukon. Red was a steady hand at the local legion — 254 — serving as president and on the executive for years, always involved in the events, fundraising, and working to make the chapter prosper. Cadets, Rangers, Yukon Order of Pioneers, and many other organizations — Red was there, helping and encouraging.

People who live in Whitehorse all knew Red as the lead on Canada Day parades and the master of ceremonies at the Remembrance Day ceremony. He was so precise and made it seem so easy.

During my tenure as Commissioner of Yukon, Red was always helpful and ensured that I was well taken care of when attending an event. No matter how busy, he came over to say a few words and made sure that I was comfortable.

I had the pleasure of awarding three special commendations when I left office, and Red was one of the three — a commendation for assisting me in understanding protocol in my work as Commissioner — well-deserved and I know that he was very moved by this gesture.

In November 2012, the legion and the Government of Yukon officially dedicated the Yukon portion of the Alaska Highway to all past, present, and future war veterans. It is an iconic highway and an important part of World War II, and Red was part of this dedication.

As was said, he was known to be a sasquatch investigator and it was a passion that he continued for over 25 years. Believe in them or not, Red was not deterred and published two books on the subject.

I know that the man we all remember may be the military guy, but I want to focus on his warmth and his all-round being a gentleman. He was quiet, but he had a commanding presence.

I've known his wife and widow, Shannon, since we were teenagers just a couple of years ago. Shannon and I went on a student exchange trip together and kept in touch through the years. Red's sudden passing a short while ago — and at his celebration of life ceremony, his many accomplishments were shared. His distinguished military career, his personal life, and his hobbies were combined in a moving bilingual ceremony.

We offer our condolences to his family: wife, Shannon; sons, Darcy, Jeffrey, and Steven; and his grandchildren, Melissa, Nicole, and Torin.

A well-lived life full of stories and giving. Thank you for your service, sir. We will remember him.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP in celebration of the life and legacy of Red Gossinger. Again, I want to thank my colleagues for their words and their stories, because there was a lot to say.

I remember meeting Red when I was a teenager in the basement of the Alsek Street house. He growled from upstairs and it made us silent very quickly.

What I will remember about Red is his quiet demeanor and his calmness and how he could stand in front of a room of hundreds of people and switch back and forth effortlessly between French and English and never waiver. He was very, very confident, and he was very good at public speaking.

When I think about Red, I will think about his ability to see magic, and I will think about his growly hellos and his hugs. I will miss his face at the Legion and at Legion events.

So, our hearts go out to his family and his friends and his community.

He will be missed.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have for tabling today the 2023-24 Yukon Heritage Resources Board annual report, tabled pursuant to section 7(7) of the *Historic Resources Act*, and noting that retired Major Red Gossinger was a member of the Heritage Resources Board.

I also have for tabling today the Yukon Bureau of Statistics' *Yukon Energy Facts, 2023* report.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

## PETITIONS

### Petition No. 27 — received

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 27 of the First Session of the 35<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Leader of the Third Party on November 5, 2024.

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

**Speaker:** Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 27 is deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to the petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation.

Therefore, the Executive Council response to Petition No. 27 shall be provided on or before November 19, 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. Mr. Mostyn:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports the Government of Yukon's efforts to provide seasonally relevant information about firesmart treatment sites through the new off-season wildfire hub and highlight opportunities for Yukoners to salvage fuelwood for free.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to ensure that the project to upgrade the Takhini River bridge on the Mayo Road — north Klondike Highway — includes widening the road surface of the bridge to improve traffic safety and to consult with the public on the details of the project.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to increase the number of hunting permits for deer.

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

This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Energy supply and demand

**Mr. Kent:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, the Premier brought up the Liberals' commitment to the 10-year renewable electricity plan that they released in 2019. That was surprising, because since the Liberals took office again in 2021, their implementation of that strategy has been an abject failure. That 10-year plan relied on several key projects, including the Atlin hydro project, the Moon Lake pump storage project, the expansion of the Southern Lakes transmission network, and the

Southern Lakes enhanced storage project. Unfortunately, every single one of those projects is delayed or dead in the water.

So, can the Premier tell us why his government's implementation of the 2019 renewable energy plan has been such an abject failure?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, just moments ago actually, I tabled the Yukon Bureau of Statistics' "Yukon Energy Facts" for the past decade or so, and they show that, since we have been in office, we have increased renewable electricity here in the Yukon, and we will seek to continue to do that. I agree with the member opposite that the projects that he described have either been delayed or are not yet progressing. So, what we have done is that we have continued to pivot to work on other renewable energy projects.

One that I will just describe is up on Haeckel Hill; it's the Thay T'äw project led by Chu Níikwän and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation in partnership. It is a four-megawatt wind project that is — and this fall will be enhanced by the grid-scale battery that is coming online. We have renewable energy projects going on in Watson Lake, in Burwash, and in Beaver Creek.

So, we will continue to seek out other renewable projects, because Yukoners have asked us to look for renewable energy to electrify the territory.

**Mr. Kent:** I would like to thank the minister for admitting the failings of the 10-year plan. The reality is that the Liberals banked our energy future on that plan, and it failed to deliver any of the major projects in it.

One such project that has been a priority for this government is the Atlin hydro project. In May 2023, the Premier travelled to Ottawa to meet with federal ministers about it. When he returned, he told reporters at a press conference in Whitehorse that he had secured a "strong commitment" from the federal government to close the funding gap.

Can the Premier provide an update on his work with the federal government and the strong commitment that they gave him in the spring of 2023 to close the funding gap of over \$80 million for the Atlin hydro project?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have worked on the issue of energy for a couple of decades here in the Yukon, and what I found to be a failure was next gen hydro, which was led by the Yukon Party. The reason that didn't go anywhere is because you needed to start by working with nations and with communities first.

We know that Yukoners have said to us that they want to build renewable energy projects, but we know that they want to have a say in what those projects look like. So, that is the work that we are doing and will continue to do. We continue to support the Atlin hydro project. We will see whether that project does close the funding gap. It is close to being shovel-ready, so I think that it has that potential. At the same time, we will continue to work on renewable energy projects.

Now, what the members opposite, what they wish to do — sorry, the Yukon Party wishes to do is to just build a big diesel plant. I know that they had arguments about where it should go. I am not sure that they ever landed with that. I heard yesterday from the Leader of the Official Opposition that he believes that

it should be in Whitehorse. Tell me where. I would love to see what they think. Then, I would love to check in with Yukoners whether they agree that is the right approach.

What I have heard from Yukoners, and what we have heard from Yukoners is: Please seek to build renewables; make sure that they are backed up with diesel and LNG, but let's get renewables for our main primary source.

**Mr. Kent:** So much for the strong commitment the Premier received from his federal cousins on the Atlin hydro.

The fact is that the Liberals' 2019 strategy was such a failure that the Yukon Energy Corporation has had to throw it out and start again. We know that they are currently developing a new energy supply plan, which they are planning to release in the next few months. They have had to do this, because basically, none of the things that the Liberals promised in their 2019 plan have happened. In the meantime, Yukoners are left with one very unfortunate option, which is to continue paying for rented diesel generators.

My question for the minister is simple: How long does the Liberal government plan on relying on rented diesel generators to supply backup generation capacity to fill the over 37-megawatt dependable capacity gap?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, the members opposite's commitment is to build a diesel plant, but that will take us backward in addressing the issues of climate change. We will make sure that we have dependable power, and what we had in this very House for witnesses, now a couple of years ago, was the CEO of Yukon Energy describing the difference in cost. In terms of emissions, a rented diesel and an owned diesel emit the same thing. The difference is really about cost. Should we invest for the long term or the short term? In the analysis done by Yukon Energy Corporation, they believed that the rented diesels were cheaper.

The members opposite believe that we should go the more expensive route, which is \$80 million for a diesel plant. What is their price? Just tell me what your price is. Then let's talk that through.

Let's let Yukoners have a think on that. From our perspective, we will always work to make sure that we have diesels or LNG as backup, and if we need it for top-up, we will do that, but what we really want to do is have a sustainable future and invest in renewables over the long term.

I thank Yukon Energy for updating their 10-year energy strategy. I think that's important; I appreciate that work that they're doing —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

### Question re: Renewable energy

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, one of the few energy successes over the past several years has been the microgeneration policy, which was introduced by the Yukon Party. Unfortunately, the Liberal government paused that program last year, which created a significant disruption in the growing renewable energy development industry here in the Yukon.

We have heard from both companies and proponents that were disappointed by the bluntness of the minister's

announcement that this program would be paused until May 2024. We understand that the pause has now been extended even further until January 2025.

Can the minister explain why there was no consultation with industry or any of those affected about the original pause and no formal announcement that the pause was extended until January of next year?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'm not sure what the member means about "no formal announcement". I have talked about it here on the floor of the House. This seems like a pretty formal place to me.

Microgeneration — we are second highest in solar across the country. Just as an engineer, it blows my mind all the time that the Yukon, one of the northern territories, is the second highest in Canada. We are second I think to Ontario, and we got there seven years faster than we thought we were going to get there. It started to create issues for the system — for our electricity system — creating frequency problems, and our utilities asked to pause that and we responded quickly to that. I think that's important, because Yukoners care about making sure that our system is reliable.

At the same time, that energy is really coming — the solar is hitting more in the summer when we have an excess of hydro power, and what we really need is winter energy when we don't have as much solar, so it is great. I really applaud the work of Solvest and other companies that have been investing in solar, and it is really important in our off-grid communities and in our work camps. There are great places for solar, and as soon as we get more storage on the system, solar will be even better.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, I asked the minister why he didn't consult about the pause in the program, because it has created significant disruption in that industry and significant concern among those who are directly affected by that decision.

Following the announcement of the pause of the microgeneration policy, one local executive from the renewable energy industry did a public post on their website about the impact of the program and the pause. He noted that the current rate structure for both the microgeneration and the independent power producer policies did not incentivize winter or low water production.

Will the Yukon government consider a change in the rate structure to accommodate variable seasonable rates for the IPP and microgeneration to encourage energy installations that would favour shoulder season or winter production?

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I agree; that is a good question. That is the first good question that I have had from the Yukon Party on energy in a long time and I think that it is a really good one.

Yes, there is a review underway right now about whether we should consider that difference between summer and winter. That work is happening and it is really important.

I mentioned storage at the end of my last answer. If we could get seasonal storage, it would be amazing for solar because solar is more in the summer, but if we have wind — wind is more in the winter. So, if we get, for example, a grid-scale battery on our system, that will make a difference for

wind. What do we have coming right now? A 35-megawatt grid-scale battery — that is what is coming right now, and that is how we are investing in renewables.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, the independent power producer policy is another aspect of the government's plans to develop renewable energy. However, we have heard from some proponents that the government is considering pausing some solar projects in this program as well and that prospective proponents have been hearing from either the government or the Energy Corporation that no further projects will be accepted under that program.

Can the minister confirm that the government is considering pausing the IPP and whether or not any further projects will be considered and accepted under that program?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, so, it really matters where that solar project is. If it is, for example, in Beaver Creek, no, we are going to go for it; in fact, we are. If it is in Watson Lake, we are going to go for it; we are. If it is in our highways camps and off-grid, we are definitely going for it. If it is going to be right here on the grid that is already at risk of having blackouts because of solar, then no — and I don't actually think that Yukoners thought we should check in further once our utilities sent letters. By the way, the utilities have the ability to say no to any of these projects, so once they wrote me the letter, we were in that position straight away, with or without consultation.

This was about making sure that our energy system, our electricity system, is reliable — so important for us as Yukoners with our islanded grid or our off-grid communities. It really matters where that solar is. That is what would make the difference.

### Question re: Rental housing policies

**Ms. White:** Last week, the CBC reported that in Whitehorse, there were 250 active short-term rental listings on any given day. To put this perspective, there were just 40 apartments for rent in Whitehorse this April with a vacancy rate of just 1.8 percent. British Columbia introduced regulations for short-term rentals last year and they are already seeing real progress. A recent study found that, after the BC government regulated the province's short-term rental market, there were more long-term rentals available and that rents were more affordable.

We know that the Yukon needs more housing units and building housing is incredibly challenging, it's expensive, and it will take years to meet demand. Regulating short-term rentals is simple, effective, and fast. BC's experience proves it. So, when will this government start regulating short-term rentals?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Third Party for the question this afternoon. We are certainly in the process of rewriting the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. That is a review going on that is going to look at changing the way we handle our landlord and tenant relationships.

I will note for the member opposite — and I have said this many times on the floor of the Legislature — that municipalities have a responsibility as well for legislating within the boundaries of their municipalities. The *Municipal*

*Act* is a tool and councils have an opportunity to actually regulate whether there are long-term rentals or short-term rentals. That is a municipal power, as you will, so if municipalities decide that they would like to try to regulate short-term rentals, they have that capability.

**Ms. White:** So, if it was left to the Minister of Community Services, we're hooped.

According to Statistics Canada, more than 1,200 Yukon renters were in core housing need in 2021. That means that they were living in unsuitable, inadequate, or unaffordable dwellings and unable to move anywhere else. Among Yukon renters, 23 percent live in housing that costs more than 30 percent of their income, 18 percent live in unsuitable housing, and 11 percent live in inadequate housing.

With historically low vacancy rates across the Yukon, it means that renters have to take anything that they can get. It means that there are no real options to find more suitable housing. Economists consider a healthy vacancy rate to be three percent. They consider this a good balance between supply and demand, but with this government's investments in businesses that run short-term rentals, the Yukon is never going to get there.

When nearly a quarter of Yukon renters can't find suitable housing, why is this government investing in the business of short-term rentals?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I will note to the member opposite that we are investing in many different forms of housing. I know the Minister of Yukon Housing Corporation certainly has many options that he is exploring and actually building.

I myself am responsible for land development in the territory. We are well on track to develop 1,000 lots in the territory during a five-year period since the last election. That is also part of our plan to make housing more affordable for Yukoners.

I understand that the member opposite is concerned about renters in this territory. I share her concerns; that's why we are working so hard to rewrite the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. It is something that the Member for Takhini Kopper King and I agree on. We are going to continue to work on that and to provide more housing opportunities for Yukoners.

It is a problem — there's no two ways about it — that we have a very low rental market, but it is also indicative of the great work that we're doing on the economy and how many people want to come to the territory because it's such a great place to live. Our social programs, our wages, and the economy are all drawing people to the Yukon. That is certainly driving some of these problems.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, so, that's a problem; there is no place to rent when you come to the Yukon and the minister doesn't seem to understand that.

The Yukon NDP, Food Banks Canada, Safe at Home, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, and others have all pushed for the protection of housing rights by ending no-cause evictions. The Premier has made promises about protecting renters. He made a commitment to end no-cause evictions and to put that in legislation, yet here we are with a government that can spring



into action for landlords and investors but drags its feet on its promise to put legislative protection in place for renters.

This government's hesitancy is driving this housing crisis and there are answers right there at their fingertips. When is the minister going to fulfill his government's promise to put no-cause evictions into legislation?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I'm a bit surprised at the tactic of the member opposite. Public engagement on the review of the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* concluded earlier this year, garnering more than 1,600 responses and the summary of all of that feedback was received and released in August — just a couple of months ago. Following the public engagement period, Community Services evaluated policy options to draft new legislation that incorporates best practices and public input on key issues such as ending a tenancy, rent control, roommates, deposits, mobile homes, and several administrative changes to improve clarity.

The policy directions aim to balance the needs of tenants and landlords, enhance security and stability in the rental market, ensure a viable rental market, and adapt effective practices from other jurisdictions. The initial drafting of this legislation is underway, with the goal of tabling amended legislation in the spring of 2025.

I know that our team has been in close contact with the member of the Third Party on this very issue. Her assertion today that we are dragging our feet is frankly just not true.

#### **Question re: Government of Yukon hiring policy**

**Ms. McLeod:** In an information note prepared for the Minister of the Public Service Commission last spring, we discovered that the Liberal government is establishing a "do not hire" list. The list would ban some Yukoners from employment with the Yukon government.

The government redacted parts of that briefing note, so we're wondering if the Minister of the Public Service Commission can answer some questions about the Liberal plan.

Can he please explain how the Liberals will determine who was put on to their "do not hire" list?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, this is news to me. Maybe the member opposite can expand.

**Ms. McLeod:** The Liberals' plan to make some Yukoners ineligible for employment with the government would have some serious consequences for employees. We have seen evidence of this government's strained relationship with the Yukon Employees' Union and the Yukon Association of Education Professionals this Sitting.

Can the minister tell us if they have shared their plans for a "do not hire" list with the unions? And since he previously shared the bargaining positions of both the government and the union regarding the upcoming collective agreement, could the minister please share if they're proposing their "do not hire" list as part of their negotiations with the union?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** You know, Mr. Speaker, there is a theme this year with the Yukon Party of just complete misinformation and leading with that, and if they say it enough times, they will believe it.

Again, I'll take the high road on this and say when it comes to negotiations, we have an excellent rapport with the unions and representatives and will continue to go down that road. We will continue to expand opportunities for rural Yukon in our plans. We put forth the *Breaking Trail Together* plan, the people plan. We have had lots of different engagement strategies, working with our partners to make sure that we are doing more to have a representative community service.

I would challenge the members opposite's interpretation of whatever they are trying to pull here today, and I will go back to the Public Service Commission and talk to them about the accusations being levelled here by the Yukon Party about our public service.

#### **Question re: 5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers site development**

**Ms. Clarke:** Salamat, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this year, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Premier announced that the property referred to us as "5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers" would be sold for a dollar to a local group of companies. At the press conference, the minister told local media that there would be shovels in the ground this summer. Obviously, that didn't happen.

Can the minister tell us what the current timeline is for this project?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I think there was the — the proponents were there — gosh, was it September or was it August? But anyway, it was just recently that they were there. I know that they did have some activity starting on the site. I'm sure they're doing a lot of prep work in the background. So, yeah, I think that happened late this summer.

**Ms. Clarke:** In their project update in September, the group purchasing the site announced a number of activities that were underway. They also noted in their press release that the sale agreement that was signed in March 2024 included a number of conditions related to the liabilities and costs associated with the cleanup.

Can the minister tell us if that sale has gone through fully? Does the site now belong to the group? Has the title been transferred to them?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, look, I'm happy to rise and talk about 5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers. We watched for a number of years where this particular lot had been promised to a number of different groups. I know that, coming into the role, there was a number of groups who had echoed to us that the previous government had promised them that lot, and really, what we saw was no development at all.

A great group of Yukoners — private sector, First Nation development corporations, companies that are majority owned by Yukoners — have now come together to make sure that there is an opportunity here.

What I really want to speak to is the question earlier around rental and rental capacity. I think that's the key to this. There is the opportunity to build out almost 300 units on that particular lot. I know that the organizations involved right now are looking at different infrastructure funds — some that were mentioned by the Member for Watson Lake last week — and looking at ways to offset the capital costs for horizontal services

and to tie into city services as well as looking at a number of design options on what to build out on the lot.

So, some of the particulars that were asked today, I can go back, and I'm happy to bring a legislative return, but on this particular project, I think it's important that all of us in the Assembly see the importance of it and how good it is to have Yukoners building for Yukoners.

**Question re: West Dawson access to services**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, Yukoners continue to be concerned about the level of service that this government is providing to rural Yukon. With the challenges that have been experienced over the past years, with the development of an ice bridge in Dawson and the recent removal of the *George Black* ferry from the Yukon River, there have been concerns raised about the level of service in West Dawson. Top of mind for many who live there are the emergency services.

Can the minister responsible tell folks who live in West Dawson how the government intends to deliver EMS or other emergency health services to the more than 150 people living there?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question from the member opposite.

Of course, this is an important issue to this government. The safety of Dawson City residents and the travelling public is our government's priority when considering the timing and construction of the ice bridge. This past winter proved challenging for the residents of West Dawson, as the ice did not form to a thickness that was safe for the construction of an ice bridge. The Yukon government understands the importance of the ice bridge for the West Dawson community and is actively exploring options to improve its success in future years.

Highways and Public Works supported the early opening of the US-Canada border in the spring by launching the *George Black* ferry ahead of schedule and providing Canada Border Services Agency personnel with priority crossing. Based on feedback from the community, the department also began the review of alternate options to the traditional crossing.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, I wasn't asking about the ferry service; I was asking about EMS and emergency services. So, we continue to hear about a lack of coordination from the Yukon government with other organizations that provide emergency services in Dawson, so I will put this question to the minister: If someone in West Dawson calls 911 due to a medical emergency, who will be dispatched to respond? Is the minister aware if there is a helicopter in Dawson capable of transporting a stretcher?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We, of course, take emergency preparedness in rural Yukon very seriously, and my good colleague has spoken about the efforts that he has undertaken as minister of highways to make sure that there is a crossing in Dawson City. This is a challenging situation. The climate is shifting, and we have jurisdictions around the world struggling to deal with crises like these; we are no different. This is a change in the weather brought about by a changing climate, for which we have a plan and for which they have no plan.

So, we are going to continue to work to provide rural services to Yukon and invest in rural Yukon, which we have done throughout our tenure as government. We take rural Yukon very seriously. We know how all communities matter, and we invest in those communities in terms of infrastructure. We have seen record infrastructure development in Dawson City, and we are going to continue that work.

As far as this particular issue, it's an emerging issue. It's because we are now currently in a situation where the river is not freezing again. Believe you me, I have dealt with this issue in my role as highways minister, and as a government, we are going to continue to look after the community of Dawson and all communities.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Again, I didn't get an answer.

Seeing as the Community Services minister answered the last one, there's another concern that we have heard from West Dawson about access to water. We understand that the Yukon government has drilled a well in West Dawson for fire safety but that it is padlocked and unavailable for residents to access.

Can the minister explain why residents can't access the government's well in that community?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** That's a very good question, Mr. Speaker, and I wish the member opposite had reached out ahead of time to give me some lead time to actually be able to come up with an answer for them. I will certainly endeavour to get a good answer for the member opposite. Bushwhacking like this is really not in the best interest of Yukoners. I understand that this is probably a very serious issue to the citizens of West Dawson, and I will endeavour to get an answer to the member opposite.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed. We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

#### MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

##### Motion No. 1086

**Clerk:** Motion No. 1086, standing in the name of Mr. Istchenko.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Member for Kluane: THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to explore opportunities to rehabilitate the Canyon Creek bridge.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Motion No. 1086, urging the Government of Yukon to explore opportunities to rehabilitate the Canyon Creek bridge. I hope that, when I bring this motion forward, the government will consider the value and history of the Canyon Creek bridge by protecting it from demolition and look at rehabilitating or refurbishing it.

We all know Sam McGee as the unfortunate soul from Robert Service's *The Cremation of Sam McGee*, the famous 1907 poem of the Klondike Gold Rush era. What many don't know is that Sam McGee was a real person who came to the

Yukon in 1898 and has ties to the very bridge I'm talking about today.

Sam McGee's work as a prospector in Whitehorse led to notable achievements, but his work building roads throughout the region surrounding Whitehorse helped to connect inhabited areas of the Yukon, established trading posts, and increased access for staking.

In 1903, he saw a gold strike in the Alsek River drainage, bringing miners to the area around Kluane Lake. Sam McGee and Gilbert Skelly constructed a bridge over Canyon Creek, and Annie Chambers started a trading post. That same bridge was rebuilt in 1923 by the Jacquot brothers from Burwash when they upgraded the road.

The bridge saw further changes in 1942 when it was dismantled during the construction of the Alaska Highway, and a new one was hand-built by the US Army 18<sup>th</sup> Engineers. That construction took 18 days and was described as the most ambitious and important bridge built at that time.

The bridge was left standing when the public roads administration later built permanent bridges along the highway. A pioneer bridge from another time, it stood as a piece of history and provided a glimpse into the past.

The Canyon Creek bridge was reconstructed by the Yukon government in 1986-87 and refurbished once more in 2005. The history of Canyon Creek goes back thousands of years. It is known as Tthe Yänlin in Southern Tutchone or "water flows through rocks". Artifacts have been recovered in that area and have been dated to over 7,000 years old: a broken spearhead and a small collection of stone tools left behind by what is thought to be a small group of bison hunters. These artifacts form part of the "Little Arm Phase" archaeology culture of southern Yukon, with other artifacts being recovered in the Kluane Lake region.

Over the past thousand years, the people of the region have continued to use Tthe Yänlin and the Ashèey, or the Aishihik River as we know it. It was an important camping spot for hunters. Later, Canyon Creek became such a convenient stopping place that the trading post and roadhouse constructed helped to serve the people travelling the old wagon road to the Kluane goldfields, and a small community grew in that area.

Of course, today, Canyon Creek is one of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations' main residential communities and home to many residents.

I want to thank "Sights and Sites", that website, and the Alaska Highway website for providing some of the information that I just shared with the Legislature today.

This bridge serves as a major Yukon tourist attraction with a very busy rest stop. In the past days, I have had many people reach out to me in support of saving this heritage bridge, and I want to read a few comments from some of those people. Here is one: "As a new Yukon resident, history buff, and carpenter, travelling to visit the Canyon Creek bridge was one of the first stops I made after arriving in the territory. I was pleased to see that it still stands as one of the last-remaining wooden bridges from the Alaska Highway. It is a unique log structure with character-defining A-frame trusses, making it an iconic landmark along the highway."

Another reads: "I live in Canyon Creek and was very disappointed when the Canyon Creek bridge was shut down last year. I feel this bridge makes for a wonderful stop for travellers, tourists passing through on the Alaska Highway. Over the years, I have seen many people stop to take photos from the bridge and to cross over and explore the riverbanks and the old structure — cabin — on the other side of the river."

Another reads: "Given the rich history and the natural beauty of the Canyon Creek bridge, I want this e-mail to be in support of saving and rehabilitating the bridge."

Mr. Speaker, in advance of this discussion, the president of the Yukon Historical and Museums Association reached out to me and said that they had seen my notice of motion on October 30 to urge the government to explore opportunities to rehabilitate the Canyon Creek bridge rather than demolish it. They are very much in support of this motion, understanding that demolition is not the only alternative. When I chatted with the president, he spoke about the importance of this bridge and how much value it has for history and tourism. We chatted on the phone for a while, and they were also going to reach out to the minister to convey their support for this motion.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say: Save it forever. I saw this bridge for the first time when I was a kid, and I had many, many opportunities to play on that bridge. I'm just hoping that this motion is one that we can all agree on today to support the Canyon Creek bridge. I do look forward to seeing what my fellow colleagues have to say on this motion.

Thank you for your time today.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking the member opposite, the Member for Kluane, for this motion.

For — I don't know — it's probably close to 20 years now, I volunteered with the Engineers Yukon bridge building competition, and I love watching kids build bridges. I know that we have had many bridges that were an homage to the Canyon Creek bridge, and it's always great to see them come in.

So, just right up front, we are exploring the opportunities to rehabilitate or how to address the Canyon Creek bridge. So, I'm going to try to give some background information, but overall, I agree with the motion broadly. I think it's good, and as the member has noted, we should start by acknowledging the heritage value associated with the bridge and the location and this history.

As he noted — and I found it interesting when I was informed that it was Sam McGee and his building partner, Gilbert Skelly, who built the original bridge in the early 1900s — I'm not sure if it was 1903 or 1904 — and it was for wagon traffic bringing miners from Whitehorse to the Alsek River drainage hunting for gold. This eventually became the route of the Alaska Highway.

As that wagon trail got upgraded and as we started to have the era of cars here in the Yukon, the bridge underwent some major repairs in the early 1920s, and the heritage team thinks it was most likely by the Jacquot brothers of Burwash Landing.

As the member opposite noted, just in the middle of the Alaska Highway construction, the old bridge of the 1920s was

dismantled and it was rebuilt in 18 days — a little over two weeks — which is a remarkable feat — but just after that, the Alaska Highway came through and came — I think it's just downstream maybe about — well, call it between 50 and 100 metres downstream.

So, even though the site itself hasn't been designated as an historic site, the Canyon Creek bridge sits on a heritage reserve, and it's Tourism and Culture that manages it, and that's why I am the person on my feet to respond to this motion.

In the early 2000s, there was an Alaska Highway west interpretation plan that included the Canyon Creek bridge and its scope. In about 2006, we installed a couple of interpretive panels to the bridge rest area explaining the history and significance of the bridge and the importance of The Yänlin on the Ashèey\Chu — the Aishihik River — as an important camping spot for hunting caribou and moose for Southern Tutchone-speaking people of the region through time.

Over time, though, we have noticed that there is getting to be more variation in the weather, and as that happens, we get years with some sort of significant ice jams and ice accumulation. There are some challenges both in terms of loading on the bridge but also in the integrity of the structure itself.

There were a couple of times, after years and years of slow degradation — I think one was in 1994 and one was in 2009 — there was work done to sort of replace a bunch of the timbers and support logs to bolster the bridge itself.

In 2020, we did some assessments around the Yukon to look at some of the heritage sites, and the Canyon Creek bridge was one of the ones that was looked at. We noted then that it was in poor condition and estimated that it might have about five years of life left in it. That was in 2020; here we are in 2024.

We have been doing sort of these follow-up assessments. We did another one in 2023, and we noted that the decay had advanced and started to pose a risk to the public. That last summer — I guess in June of 2023 — we closed the bridge and let the public know. We have since been sort looking at what we should do with the bridge over time. I noted that the Canyon Creek bridge is just upstream from the Aishihik River bridge. You have to be careful: If the Canyon Creek bridge were to collapse, that could cause problems for the Alaska Highway, so we need to be thoughtful of that.

I know that, because of the deteriorating situation, our Historic Sites unit folks go there every several months just to monitor for any significant changes in how the bridge is and whether the risk is increasing around that deterioration.

Okay. What should we do? I have a couple of reports. I will table the most recent one here in a little bit for everybody. This is from March of this year, and it sort of takes a look at the bridge. I know that what they did was they did a scan of everything so that they could get an historic record of it all, and they went through and sort of did some high-level potential costs, sort of a range of options around what we could do.

I am going to try to outline those a little bit here, but what I will say is that we have not taken any decisions. There is an application in front of YESAB, and I will explain why in a few

minutes here. Generally speaking, the department has not taken any position on it. They haven't come to me yet for any direction. They are totally willing to hear from the public, and I thank all the members of the public who have reached out to show their support and sent letters. I haven't had much of a minute yet to get back to them, but I will.

I encourage the member, if he knows of folks, he can point them to today's debate, because we will all be talking about it, and that would be one way that they can hear some of this information. Again, I thank them for sharing their support and concerns.

Let's just talk about the range of options. We can try to rehabilitate what is there, and this is what has happened in the past, but the sense from the team is that even that is going to be pretty short-lived — that if we do rehabilitation, if we replace critical structural members there or new timbers — put them in place — you still are going to — the overall bridge is not in great shape, and it will probably — if we do something like that, it is likely to be pretty short-lived, like another handful of years.

If we get to the larger scale thoughts — let's say that you were going to replace it and that maybe that replacing, it could look — there is a range of possibilities. For example, you could try to rebuild it to the 1943 version — kind of the one that we have now — and it would not be exactly right, because, of course, you are rebuilding something with fresh timbers, but it would be in the style of — although, one of the things that the folks at Tourism and Culture said to me is that probably everything has been replaced since 1943. It is all — over time, that will have rotted out and they would have had to replace it, whether it is the cribbing underneath or whether it is the decking or the A-frame or all those pieces, probably have all been replaced by now. You could rebuild it sort of in the style of — you could have a whole suite of other options where you keep a crossing there and you make it something that is going to last longer, and you could keep some of the outward-facing elements so that there is still that homage to the heritage bridge. I don't know; all of those things are possible.

But in all of those routes, you pretty much do have to deconstruct the bridge anyway. Of course, there could be an option as well to just not have a bridge there. I'm pretty sure that when we talk with Yukoners, they are going to want a bridge there. We are in dialogue and have an open engagement right now. Of course, we are talking to Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. I think they had meetings this week.

So, there are a few things to think about, because those options haven't really been selected out — about what might be the preferred option to go with.

But it's not free to do. If we stuck with the bridge as is and we replaced it and rebuilt it, we are looking at somewhere — it is certainly way over a million dollars. I don't want to get too close, but let's call it in the range of \$1 million or \$1.5 million. That's the starting estimate — so, not cheap. I think those things have to be weighed against all of the other things that we're trying to decide here for importance.

Of course, I think that heritage is incredibly important, so we have to make that consideration, but I think it should be eyes

wide open when we think about it. We also have to think about how functional we want the bridge to be and what we want it to do. That brings me back to the notion of why there is a YESAB application in front of us right now and probably what gets people engaged. It's great that people reach out.

It's around the risk. Right now, the bridge is not open. It hasn't been open for a year and a bit. Right now, that bridge may come down, so there's some risk and that risk isn't just to people who might be crossing it — because you have the Alaska Highway downstream — so we have to think about that. There is a question of the time it would take to get through YESAB. The thinking from the department was to do this as a piece of diligence to get ready. It is also part of the path. If ultimately the choice is to rebuild a bridge in the style that it has been, then you still need to get to the deconstruction of the bridge and that would still push you back to YESAB, so this is just sort of — I don't know — getting ready in case that is the approach.

Let me just go over how we have been talking with the public about this. Once we sort of discovered several years ago that the bridge was not in a decent state — that it was degrading — we did this broader sort of exercise in 2022-23 and we gathered input from the public on a whole range of historic sites. The Canyon Creek bridge was one of those. We asked the public for their thoughts about it generally.

Then we sort of did a little bit more targeted in the fall of 2022, so we had a community engagement website with an online questionnaire and an open house in a couple of places around the Yukon. We had some direct outreach to some groups, including the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

What I would like to do, Mr. Speaker, is just table this report, please. This is the *Canyon Creek Bridge — Replacement Bridge Preliminary Design*, dated March 21, 2024. It's a thick report; it has a ton of great pictures that helped me.

In terms of this motion, I think we absolutely are exploring opportunities to rehabilitate the Canyon Creek bridge. We want to continue doing that. I think we want to hear from Yukoners about that. I would love to hear from the members opposite about that, including how they feel that this priority weighs against others and what they think about — at least those preliminary prices that I've shared — and just collecting views.

I think that we're not at a decision yet, although we recognize that our hand may get forced if the bridge collapses or partially collapses.

We may be forced into stuff, and so what I can say to Yukoners is that the team at the heritage resources unit made sure to do a full scan of the bridge so that we had all the information about it — so, if the worst case came due to some ice jam or snow and ice loading and we lost parts of the bridge, we would have a record of that bridge. You will see some of that in the report that I just tabled.

Again, I really appreciate the motion before us, and I am looking forward to further debate today.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Kluane for bringing this motion forward, and I thank my colleague the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern

Lakes for his response. I have to say that this is far, far nicer of a conversation and debate than when we were talking about the removal of the Ross River bridge by the Yukon Party, which then reversed it back. Thanks to the Liberals for investing in that historic and really important community asset, to be honest.

I understand that the Canyon City bridge is not from one community into an old townsite, but it is still important. I appreciate the historical perspective that was brought by the Member for Kluane and the current perspective that was brought forward by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. I look forward to further conversation and I look forward to passing this and seeing a viable Canyon Creek bridge in the future.

**Mr. Kent:** I too would like to thank the Member for Kluane for bringing this motion forward here today. I want to read a little bit from the document that is before the YESA board right now, which was submitted by the Yukon Tourism and Culture Historic Sites branch and was prepared by a private consultant. This is the YESAB submission.

The project overview is that this project entails the demolition of the historic Canyon Creek bridge located 30 kilometres east of Haines Junction near Alaska Highway kilometre 1547.8. It goes into some of the history and I won't repeat that because others have talked about the history of the bridge.

Then when you go down a little bit further, under section 4.2, "Project Alternatives", it says: "The Canyon Creek Bridge has a unique design and plays a significant role in Yukon history ... which prompted Historic Sites to investigate the feasibility of rebuilding the bridge to preserve its historic and engineering legacy, as well as its functionality for local access.

"To this end, Historic Sites commissioned the engineers who conducted surveys ... to generate engineered drawings and cost estimates for a replacement bridge that would be an historically accurate replica ... Unfortunately, those studies showed that under current budgetary restraints it would be prohibitively expensive to build a replacement bridge, leaving Historic Sites in a position where demolition is the only fiscally prudent and responsible option from a standpoint of public safety."

It goes on to conclude, under "Project Alternatives": "However, while demolition will entail the removal of the bridge's deck and superstructure, the rock-filled wood abutments will be left in place as monuments to the bridge's legacy and Historic Sites will install interpretive signage at the east abutment."

To me, Mr. Speaker, that seems like the department has made a decision that the only option is to tear down the bridge and not rehabilitate it, but I take the minister's words here this afternoon that they will explore options to rehabilitate. I hope that, as part of that — the YESAB submission I believe is still in the adequacy phase, so the designated office evaluation hasn't started yet. I hope that the minister and his officials can change the application to show that there still is an option or

opportunity to rehabilitate the bridge, which is not spelled out in the project description that is before YESAB right now.

I am just hoping that the minister can do that. With that, I will conclude my comments and thank the Member for Kluane for bringing forward this motion.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, I see that the Official Opposition has decided not to discuss our growing economy or the significant investments and improvements that we are making to health care. They aren't talking about our tangible effort to curb crime or blunt the ravages of the ongoing health emergency. They aren't discussing the environmental failure at the Victoria Gold site and the impact that it poses to our mining industry. In fact, they prevented the public from hearing these discussions when they vetoed ministerial statements on many of these subjects.

They have chosen instead to discuss a compromised heritage bridge near Haines Junction. This appears to be their primary subject of concern over the last two weeks. That's good news, Mr. Speaker, because it means that many things are well in hand according to them.

Today, I'm reflecting on the conversations I've had about preserving the territory's heritage with my old friend Brent Slobodin. Slobodin was a fierce advocate for the territory's heritage, and he taught me a lot when I was a newly arrived Yukoner working at a paper not far from here.

Another person who helped educate me about the territory's history was Rolf Hougén. He bent my ear, and I consider him another fierce advocate for chronicling and preserving our past.

I really do thank both those gentlemen. I hold them up for informing me about the importance of Yukon history.

The Canyon Creek bridge that we're talking about this afternoon is certainly a part of our history. As my colleague has said, our government is looking for ways to preserve or possibly restore the bridge, and that's something that we are exploring. Of course, that could be expensive, and my colleague has talked about the price today. We haven't heard from the Official Opposition yet about how much they would be willing to spend on such a project.

I would love to hear that, because the colleagues on the bench opposite constantly talk about the need for fiscal restraint and public service cuts. They say this while demanding spending, so they're saying they want spending, but they don't, and they want to cut spending. I have a ledger of all their spending demands, and there are lots of them. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I get whiplash listening to their demands for spending even as they talk about service cuts — cutting the civil service — or just spending in general.

All right, so, today, we're championing the Canyon Creek bridge, which dates to the early 1900s, as you've heard this afternoon, around 1903, but as the Leader of the Third Party alluded to, there is a wider history about historical preservation at play this afternoon.

There was another heritage bridge in Ross River — the Ross River foot bridge — which the members opposite faced most of the caucus — most of the Yukon Party caucus on the

opposition bench today faced a very similar situation around 2014.

I have before me a March 19, 2014 *Yukon News* story from Jacqueline Ronson about that bridge. I'll quickly summarize it for you, Mr. Speaker. It was an old heritage bridge in a First Nation community that was compromised, and the Yukon Party was not going to fix it. In fact, they were going to tear it down.

That was in 2014, as I said, and virtually the entire opposition bench was in on that decision. The Member for Kluane was part of that Cabinet and so were the members for Copperbelt North and South, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin; the Member for Watson Lake was part of the caucus as well.

The community protested the demolition of the historic bridge, which was built in 1944. The protest in Ross River forced the government to dispatch the Yukon Party's Gord Steele and Rick Nielsen to negotiate with the Ross River Dena Council and protestors who wanted to save the bridge and had been sitting out there for weeks. The Yukon Party — in fact, most of the current opposition, as I have said — planned to continue to demolish the bridge. Like the Canyon Creek bridge, the Ross River foot bridge was at risk of collapse. Like the Canyon Creek bridge, the Ross River foot bridge put existing bridge crossings at risk. In Ross River, it was the ferry; at Canyon Creek, it's the existing highway bridge across the Alaska Highway.

The Yukon Party studied the problem in 2014; they chose to put public safety and the public purse ahead of the historic asset. Then, in response to the protestors, they reluctantly did do the barest minimum and built two pillars to support the bridge. Then today, we have a motion that is basically asking us to tackle the exact same problem. It seems a little bit hypocritical — just a smidge. As I wrap up, I want to say that it's important to note that the Ross River foot bridge was restored by my predecessor, the former Minister of Community Services, who spoke earlier this afternoon.

I have another *Yukon News* story, this one by Ashley Joannu, dated January 11, 2017, shortly after we were elected. The headline reads: "Ross River bridge to be fully repaired". That's how we approached this heritage resource, Mr. Speaker. Now, at Canyon Creek, we are seeing a similar challenge; we are exploring options, as my good colleague has successfully done in the past.

So, we on this side are committed to doing everything within reason to preserve the important heritage resources that we still retain. Again, I have every confidence in my colleague to do so. I look forward to hearing from the opposition how much they would be willing to spend on this motion, because they are very concerned about such things.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues in the House today. I was looking forward to actually posting the transcripts of this. I want to thank the minister in charge for his wholehearted support toward looking

for an option for this bridge. I want to thank the Leader of the Third Party and the Yukon Party House Leader for their comments. It was important — the comments from the Yukon Party — our House Leader — because that's why it made the radio: because of the YESAB submission and that there were no plans to rehabilitate it.

I am not sure — the Minister of Community Services stood up and he talked a lot about things, nothing really related to the Canyon Creek bridge, so maybe I just won't share those comments with the good people who are interested in saving this bridge or at least seeing something done in a partnership working together.

Lots of people reached out to me. One of the comments on this bridge was: Hey, we have offices full of government engineers so I am pretty sure that they could come up with some great ideas about how to rehabilitate it. We have another riding, but we do have a municipality in the Yukon called "Dawson City" that has a theme: You build, but it has to be historic-looking. I am sure that there are ways — simple ways, probably fairly cost-effective ways — that, through a little ingenuity, partnerships, and work, we could build something that was safe, something that could still be able to be used as a tourist attraction, keep its iconic historic look, which is really important, and keep it for the community who lives around there.

I look forward to getting to the vote here so that we can move on. I thank everyone for their comments.

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

**Some Hon. Member:** Division.

## Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

## Bells

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Blake:** Agree.

**MLA Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.  
*Motion No. 1086 agreed to*

## Motion No. 1098

**Clerk:** Motion No. 1098, standing in the name of Mr. Dixon.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to launch a formal process to consider alternative locations for the replacement of École Whitehorse Elementary School.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the opportunity to bring forward this motion and discuss it today. This is an issue that has come up for discussion a number of times over the course of the last several months and years as the government announced their intention to construct a replacement for the École Whitehorse Elementary School on the softball diamonds in the Takhini neighbourhood next to the Takhini Elementary School.

This decision has obviously prompted a significant level of concern from a number of different groups, and those groups have been consistently asking why this location was chosen.

I should note, Mr. Speaker, that just a few weeks ago — I believe it was just over a month ago — the Yukon government announced a formal process for the determination of a site of a new downtown elementary school. They did so by a statement from the minister that indicated that they had committed to a downtown school and wished to start a process that would engage the community and determine an appropriate location for a downtown school.

When the minister made that announcement, there were several people in the school community whom I heard from who wanted a similar process but for the replacement for École Whitehorse Elementary School. That prompted me to do this motion and bring it forward today, because I think that it would be a worthwhile exercise for the Yukon government to launch a process and actually hear from Yukoners and those in the school community about the location for the replacement of École Whitehorse Elementary School.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that they did no such process to determine this location. While there was a process to choose between three specific locations on the Takhini education reserve, there was no broader consultation or discussion about the location of the Takhini education reserve itself. That is what we are seeking here.

Since the government made the decision to locate the school next to Takhini Elementary, we have heard significant concerns from a number of groups. One of those groups is the Takhini Neighbourhood Association. The Takhini Neighbourhood Association has made their views known publicly. They have published a number of pieces of correspondence and information on their website that outlines their concerns, but in short, those concerns relate to the impact of the construction of a large school — the Yukon's largest elementary school — in their backyard. That would almost certainly require considerable clearing of forested area in that community and would significantly contribute to the traffic issues that so many folks in the Takhini neighbourhood face already.

The City of Whitehorse has also raised some concerns about traffic as well. We know that the City of Whitehorse was not consulted about the position of that school at this location. I know from discussing this with both current and former councillors and mayors that they had heard considerable concerns about the traffic existing currently on Range Road. The addition of a school the size of Whitehorse Elementary would absolutely contribute to the furthering of those traffic issues, and I know that the City of Whitehorse ought to be considered in any steps forward.

We have also heard significant concerns raised by Softball Yukon. The plan from the government is to construct the new school directly on two of the most well-used softball diamonds. As members will probably know, the sport of softball is Yukon's most popular summer sport by number of participants. It's a very popular activity for many Yukoners and those diamonds that would be interfered with would be a significant loss for the community.

Now, I know that the Minister of Community Services, the Minister of Education, and I believe the Minister of Highways and Public Works have met with Softball Yukon to discuss their concerns. I know that Softball Yukon has expressed the concerns that they have and outlined what they would need put in place and committed to in order to support the construction of the school there. They have not yet had those formal assurances by way of a memorandum of understanding with the Yukon government.

A few weeks ago, the minister tabled a letter from the École Whitehorse Elementary School Council that expressed support for the replacement of the school, but it was noticeably silent on the location. As far as I know, having spoken to the current and former council over the years, I don't believe that the school council was ever consulted about the location of a replacement of École Whitehorse Elementary School. I think that the school council deserves to have an opportunity to have a say about the final location of the school.

Then, of course, the Takhini school community would have some questions and concerns as well. The Takhini Elementary School falls under the auspices of the First Nation School Board. So, between the First Nation School Board and the Takhini administration and the Takhini students and their families, I think that this school community deserves to have a voice in this as well. While we have heard from the government that the impacts on Takhini Elementary would be minimal, I think that a lot of the folks at that school question that. Having a major construction project in their backyard that would by design disrupt their current soccer field and much of the surrounding forest in their area would absolutely have an impact on the school during construction. Also, constructing the Yukon's largest elementary school directly adjacent on the same lot as Takhini Elementary would absolutely provide some sort of disruption to the learning environment for the students and administrators at Takhini Elementary.

So, there are many stakeholders in this that deserve to have a say. Our intent here is to compel the Yukon government to launch a formal process — similar to what they have launched

in the downtown area — to seek and consider new locations for this school.

I think everyone agrees that the construction of a new school to replace Whitehorse Elementary is a good idea. It's a good thing to invest in, but there are significant concerns about the location and those concerns deserve to be addressed through a formal process that allows stakeholders to have a say, for the school community to voice its concerns, and for the folks in the City of Whitehorse who are affected by the construction and operation of a school this size to have a say about which location will be chosen.

So, with that, I will conclude my remarks. Obviously, I look forward to hearing from my colleagues about their thoughts on this, but in the end, it's my goal to compel the Yukon government to launch a formal process to find a new location, because the current location that they have chosen, quite frankly, is in the best interests of no one, as far as I can tell.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I'm happy to stand today to speak on Motion No. 1098, brought forward by the Member for Copperbelt North, and to talk about how our government has already undertaken a process to identify a suitable location for the new École Whitehorse Elementary School. Our government is committed to investing in school infrastructure that meets the evolving needs of our growing community, ensuring that students and educators have access to high-quality, modern facilities.

École Whitehorse Elementary School, as all folks in this House for sure know, was built in the 1950s and has served generations of students and has played a central role in the community for decades. However, as educational needs have evolved, the limitations of an aging facility have become increasingly clear.

We need to build not only a new École Whitehorse Elementary but numerous new Yukon schools to accommodate the growing population. This is a commitment that we have not only made — but we have made good on. Our government opened Whistle Bend Elementary School, the first new elementary school in Whitehorse in more than 20 years. We also completed the construction of CSSC Mercier, and we are in the process of building a new school in Burwash Landing, the Kêts'ádañ Kù school.

Our government knows the necessity of building new infrastructure for not only our children but for our communities, which is why we have worked with all of our partners and stakeholders to move forward and to accommodate not only the needs of students but the wider community.

Our government conducted a review of different locations for the new school, carefully considering factors such as accessibility, community impact, and long-term sustainability. The current location of École Whitehorse Elementary is not a suitable location to build or to refurbish at this point. The small size of the current lot would require the closure of playgrounds, which would deprive children of valuable outdoor play space, which is crucial for their physical health, social skills, and overall well-being, and would include the loss of parking for two or three years. Demolishing and rebuilding the school



would force some 425 current kindergarten to grade 7 students into other Whitehorse schools that are already facing some capacity issues. At present, we have some schools that are close to capacity, and even newly rebuilt. F.H. Collins is already facing capacity issues.

Our government looked at the feasibility of other locations within Whitehorse. These include the Whistle Bend Educational Land Reserve, which was determined to be unsuitable for a French immersion school due to the location being not centrally positioned. This area would result in significant busing challenges, making it difficult for students from across Whitehorse to attend the school.

I'll just make note that there is one site designated for a secondary school at the Whistle Bend community. A second site in Whistle Bend is designated for an elementary school, which is zoned for public service, which includes uses other than schools.

The official community plan requires the City of Whitehorse, the Government of Yukon, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and Kwanlin Dün First Nation to identify suitable locations for the school. The second elementary school lot is in phase 12, which is being developed and will be done by next summer. This elementary school site is approximately 2.72 hectares. Just for comparison, the current École Whitehorse Elementary land reserve is 1.7 hectares.

While potentially a viable location for an additional elementary school, this site would create busing challenges, as students attend École Whitehorse Elementary from throughout the city and it's not a central location. Grey Mountain Primary School was also considered, but this location is not ideal due to the high concentration of schools already in the Riverdale area. I am sure many folks who may live in that area, including our MLAs, have heard and have experienced the amount of traffic in and out of the neighbourhood. We can all see it with our own eyes, for sure.

I will just dig into that education reserve a little bit more. It's a large educational reserve and enough to accommodate an additional elementary school. There will be, of course, objections due to the additional traffic that a 500-student school would generate when the neighbourhood is experiencing traffic challenges due to the already numerous schools and public infrastructure and only one bridge. This site would create busing challenges, as again, the students who attend École Whitehorse Elementary are from throughout the city and it is not a central location. Grey Mountain Primary is also under the First Nation School Board, so that would be a consideration as well.

The area next to the Porter Creek Secondary School was also considered. The site would place significant pressure on the current school, potentially encroaching on parking and the outdoor sports field. Additionally, building in this location would prevent the school from being expanded in the future and welcoming new students from the growing community.

Building on the site for the Porter Creek Secondary School — the École Whitehorse Elementary School will be built for 500 students. The Porter Creek Secondary School operational capacity right now is 756 — a school the size of EWES would

put considerable pressure on the site. The position of the Porter Creek Secondary School on the site, combined with parking requirements and outdoor sports fields, limits options for the location of a second school, and the new school may have detrimental impacts on the current secondary school. Additionally, a second school on the lot would limit opportunities to expand this secondary school. I think, also, combining elementary and secondary schools on a single lot may cause safety concerns, for sure.

These factors make it clear that locating the school to a more suitable site, such as the Takhini Educational Land Reserve, offers a more viable and cost-effective solution for building a modern, accessible facility without the disruptions associated with renovating the current downtown location.

A modern facility is essential to provide access to innovative and inclusive programming, such as experiential and hands-on learning opportunities that foster creativity, critical thinking, and engagement. Moving École Whitehorse Elementary School to the Takhini Educational Land Reserve addresses these challenges while placing the school in a convenient central location that allows easy access for French immersion students from across Whitehorse.

The new École Whitehorse Elementary School that our government is building is more than just a place for learning. It is a vibrant community hub designed to serve everyone in the area. We have heard from our community — and we know — that there's a growing need for facilities that provide space for recreation and Sport Yukon programming. The new facility will feature spaces for sports, recreation, and after-school activities, creating gathering points where residents of all ages can come.

We are working closely with Sport Yukon and will expect to be in receipt or maybe have already received some supporting documentation for the approach that we are taking with this new facility. We are working very closely with Softball Yukon toward finalizing an MOU. We had a productive meeting late last month, in October, and we are working closely with the organization to finalize some details around that MOU.

In August 2023, we awarded the prime consultant contract to Kobayashi and Zedda Architects Ltd. through a public tender process. Since then, significant progress has been made. A site analysis and test pit assessment to identify suitable locations on the Takhini Educational Land Reserve have been completed, and we are now in phase 2 of the project. This stage includes an in-depth traffic study that will assess local impacts, focusing on ensuring pedestrian safety and optimising traffic access and egress to and from the site. Traffic studies are complex and intricate, involving very in-depth work to analyze patterns, safety, and future needs — similar to the one that our government conducted on the Whistle Bend subdivision to ensure safe and efficient infrastructure planning for the community. These steps are essential to making sure that this development is both efficient and safe for our community.

Moving École Whitehorse Elementary to the Takhini Educational Land Reserve is an exciting opportunity that does not prevent us from considering additional school facilities

downtown in the future. Downtown residents have told us that they value having a school in their neighbourhood. This past September, I committed to the downtown community and to Yukon that our government would work to build a new school downtown, and we are working with stakeholders, partners, and the broader community to understand their needs and to identify potential locations. The downtown area is home to several important educational facilities already, including, right now, École Whitehorse Elementary School, which will be in place until a new school is built and children are moved. We have, also, the Wood Street Centre, the Individual Learning Centre, and the Aurora Virtual School. We have numerous early learning childcare facilities in the downtown area as well.

Each of the schools mentioned play a unique and essential role in Yukon's educational landscape, providing a diverse range of learning opportunities tailored to meet varied student needs. Together, these schools form a vital part of our portfolio, enriching the downtown area and ensuring that our education system is both comprehensive and adaptable. These facilities highlight our commitment to providing students with choice and flexibility, supporting diverse learning paths, and making education a central and vibrant part of our community.

However, as has been made clear through our government's numerous studies, École Whitehorse Elementary School is in need of replacement. The school's current location, age, and condition present challenges and limitations that make it the top candidate for Whitehorse school replacement. Again, the Takhini Educational Land Reserve offers a unique opportunity to enhance the learning environment for students with a spacious serviced land and central location. This large parcel provides convenient access to expansive green spaces that support modern educational needs, foster outdoor learning opportunities, physical activity, and connections to nature that are essential for student well-being and consistent with our unique Yukon way of life.

By approving this site, we are able to create an educational hub that aligns with today's standards for well-rounded, holistic learning experiences that extend beyond the classroom. This project presents an important opportunity to elevate French immersion programming by creating a new modern learning environment tailored to the unique needs of bilingual education. With updated classrooms, innovative resources, and flexible spaces that support immersive language learning, the new facility will empower students to engage deeply with the French language and culture. Placing the new school in a central location is key to creating an accessible, dynamic hub that will bring renewed vibrancy to the neighbourhood. This optimal location will make it easier for new families and parents to connect with the school and the community, fostering a sense of belonging and shared purpose.

The facility will be fully accessible, designed to meet the needs of all students and equipped with modern resources to support French immersion learning. This new school project offers a valuable opportunity for our government to work closely with stakeholders and community partners in building infrastructure that meets the needs of our community.

By engaging collaboratively with educators, families, local organizations, First Nations, and experts, we can ensure that the new school reflects shared goals and community priorities. This partnership-driven approach will help us create a facility that serves not only as a place of learning but as a vibrant community asset. Together, we are laying the groundwork for a sustainable and inclusive future where every detail in this new facility is thoroughly designed in support of growth, accessibility, and lasting benefits for generations to come.

On October 29, 2024, the École Whitehorse Elementary School Council reached out to our government to underscore the importance of creating a modern educational facility that meets the evolving needs of our students and community. In their letter, the school community expressed their strong support for the Government of Yukon's commitment to constructing the new École Whitehorse Elementary School. Recognizing the opportunity to enhance learning spaces with a facility designed for today's standards, they emphasize that a modern school is essential for fostering both academic success and student well-being.

The school council also highlighted their enthusiasm to continue collaboration with stakeholders, including families, educators, and local organizations, and noted their dedication to working closely with the project advisory committee. The project advisory committee was put in place to work in partnership with the Whitehorse Elementary School administration, the City of Whitehorse, Government of Yukon, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and the Takhini Neighbourhood Association. The project advisory committee provides the department with key aspects of the school's planning and design, including ways in which the school can help to meet community needs.

On October 18, I had the opportunity to meet personally with the Takhini Neighbourhood Association to discuss the new school project. I listened to their perspectives and concerns, and I am committed to working closely with them to address any questions and ensure that the project aligns with the community's needs. This shared commitment reflects a unified vision for an inclusive, accessible, and innovative learning environment that will serve generations of students, reinforcing the importance of collective effort in bringing the project to life.

The school council's willingness to actively participate in the planning and implementation process is a testament to the community's dedication to building a school that reflects the values and aspirations of Whitehorse families, ensuring a lasting positive impact on education in the area.

I note that the Yukon Party continues to misrepresent the complexities of building a new school, oversimplifying a process that requires careful consideration and input from all stakeholders. The opposition's stance against building new schools is a stark example of their, I think, irresponsible approach to our growing community's needs.

As our population increases, a demand for access to well-designed educational facilities is more critical than ever. Unlike the short-sightedness of plans that really have led us to overcrowded and poorly equipped schools, our government is

committed to constructing schools that truly accommodate every child.

We prioritize spacious and inclusive learning environments where students and teachers can thrive. Their failures to address these pressing educational needs underscores a disregard for the future, where our government invests in sustainable solutions. Really, we are putting our children first. We have thoroughly weighed various location options, taking into account not just the needs of the students but also the perspective of the school community.

Our government is currently, as I've stated, in phase 2 of the project, diligently working through logistical and practical considerations, such as conducting a traffic study to ensure that the development is both sustainable and beneficial for everyone involved.

As I've mentioned, I met with the Takhini Neighbourhood Association. One of the requests that they have is to provide the — they have referenced it as “terms of reference”, but it is the scope of work for the traffic study. We're working with our primary contractor to provide that information to them and then work toward how we will engage with the community once that process is all complete.

While the opposition seems to be fixated on criticizing without offering real, tangible solutions, we are focused on delivering a well-planned, collaborative outcome that addresses the needs of the community, the school, and all partners. Our government's goal remains clear: to build educational infrastructure within a pragmatic time frame that serves both the immediate and long-term needs of our shared growing community. For those many reasons that I have outlined, we respectfully disagree with the opposition's motion, as we are confident that our approach best addresses the needs of students, families, and the broader community.

On that note, I will thank the folks for allowing me the time to respond to this motion, and I will end my comments.

**Ms. Blake:** In response to the motion urging the Yukon government to consider alternative locations for the replacement of the École Whitehorse Elementary School, it is essential to emphasize the importance of maintaining accessible community-centred education for families in downtown Whitehorse. Families living in the downtown area benefit significantly from having a school within their neighbourhood, allowing children to walk or bike to school, reducing traffic congestion, and supporting a vibrant, family-oriented community core.

Relocating the school away from downtown could create logistical and transportation challenges for parents, particularly for those without access to reliable transportation. Keeping the school within the neighbourhood reinforces local support networks among families and helps foster a sense of community. The location also enhances accessibility for families with diverse needs, ensuring equitable access to education for all residents. Maintaining a school in downtown Whitehorse aligns with broader urban planning principles that prioritize walkability, environmental sustainability, and community cohesion.

The government should strongly consider these factors to ensure that the new location supports the well-being and convenience of downtown families and preserves the accessibility that is vital for a thriving neighbourhood school. Having a school in downtown Whitehorse is crucial for fostering a vibrant, accessible, and family-friendly community.

Schools serve as the heartbeat of a neighbourhood where families gather, children build friendships, and community bonds strengthen. For the downtown area, a local school supports walkability, reduces reliance on transportation, and promotes an environmentally friendly, sustainable lifestyle. When children can walk or bike to school, it not only encourages a healthy, active lifestyle but also lessens traffic congestion and air pollution, benefiting the entire community.

A centrally located school in Whitehorse also addresses equity and accessibility, as not all families have the same access to reliable transportation. A neighbourhood school means that more families, including those who may be economically or socially vulnerable, have easier access to quality education for their children. It supports parents with busy schedules, making drop-offs and pick-ups more manageable, which is especially important for working families.

A downtown school builds a sense of place and belonging among students who can see their city as an extension of their learning environment. This connection to the local area fosters responsibility from a young age, as children grow up feeling integrated into the fabric of their community. A school in downtown Whitehorse strengthens the social infrastructure, ensuring that the area remains family-oriented and inclusive, which ultimately enhances the city's quality of life and long-term resilience. Engaging children and families in this conversation about a school in downtown Whitehorse is vital to ensure that the decision reflects the needs and aspirations of the community that it will serve.

Children and families are the primary stakeholders of any school, and their perspectives bring essential insights about daily challenges, community values, and the qualities that make a school feel like a safe and welcoming place. Involving families creates a sense of ownership and pride in that outcome, as they are more likely to feel invested in a school that they had a role in shaping. For children, being included in discussions about their own educational environment can foster a sense of agency and civic responsibility. This engagement teaches them about the importance of active community participation and shows them that their voices matter in shaping their surroundings.

Family input also ensures that decisions account for practical aspects, like accessibility, safety, and convenience, which directly affects parents' and children's daily lives. It allows parents to raise concerns about issues such as commute times, traffic safety, and after-school care, which can be critical to the success of a school's location. By actively including families and children, the Yukon government can make a more informed, inclusive decision that genuinely meets the needs of the downtown community, resulting in a school that enhances neighbourhood life for generations to come.

Preserving downtown Whitehorse as a welcoming place for children and youth is essential for creating a balanced, inclusive community. When young people feel at home in their city's core, it not only enhances their sense of belonging but also contributes to a more vibrant intergenerational downtown area.

A school in downtown Whitehorse helps to make the area feel accessible and inviting for children and youth, ensuring that they see it as a place that values their presence and participation. Creating a youth-friendly downtown also encourages young people to view their surroundings as a safe, supportive environment. This can lead to healthier social interactions as they engage with local resources like the parks we have, the library, the cultural centre, and other cultural landmarks in the downtown area. A school situated downtown means that children grow up connected to their city's cultural and historical identity, fostering a sense of pride and understanding of their community's roots.

Additionally, by keeping the downtown family-oriented and accessible to young people, Whitehorse can reduce the risk of the area becoming solely focused on business or tourism. Instead, it will remain a space that reflects the community's diversity and supports for all ages. Children and youth who feel welcomed and included are more likely to engage positively with their community, building relationships that can deter isolation and enhance their well-being.

Ultimately, a downtown that prioritizes a school and other youth-friendly resources creates a stronger, more inclusive and resilient community that values its youngest residents. Having a school in downtown Whitehorse deeply enhances the community by bringing people together, fostering connections, and promoting a sense of neighbourhood pride. Schools are not just places of learning; they are community hubs where families gather, friendships form, and a shared identity is built.

A school in the heart of downtown becomes a lively centre of activity where parents, teachers, and neighbours interact regularly, creating a sense of unity and shared responsibility for the area's well-being. A downtown school supports local businesses as well, as families frequent nearby shops and services before or after school. The influx of daily foot traffic can stimulate economic growth, sustaining small businesses and enhancing the vibrancy of downtown Whitehorse. Moreover, community events, sports games, and school performances bring even more people to the area, fostering local traditions and celebrations that strengthen the ties between residents.

Schools also provide a foundation for civic engagement as parents and community members come together to support educational initiatives, address neighbourhood issues, and volunteer for various activities.

In this way, a downtown school fosters an engaged, invested community that works together to ensure the success of the neighbourhood. By maintaining a school in downtown Whitehorse, the city not only ensures access to education but also enhances the overall quality of life, creating a neighbourhood that feels inclusive, supportive, and vibrant for

all who live, work, and play there, especially for the many children and youth who call downtown Whitehorse home.

Mahsi' cho.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to rise for a minute here.

First of all, I think we have agreed with a downtown school. I think it's super important and the Minister of Education put out a statement just over month ago to initiate this process of looking at a downtown school.

But the motion that we have before us today is talking about École Whitehorse Elementary School. For that school, the catchment is the whole of Whitehorse. It's not about a catchment from downtown. Of course, there are kids from downtown who go there. One of them is a neighbour of mine.

I think that the comments that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin just made are super important — about having a vibrant downtown, about having a community hub, and about having a school downtown. That's why we have a process going right now to talk about that location.

The issue that we're discussing today, I think, is about what we do with École Whitehorse Elementary. Because that school needs to be replaced more quickly, there's pressure on it. That's why we had taken the decision to use the educational reserve that exists.

Anyway, I appreciate the comments around where we are going to place a school, but I think really this initiative was moved ahead because of that imperative of making sure that we're replacing this infrastructure, which clearly has aged out.

**Ms. White:** It's a pleasure to join the debate today. I'm actually just going to start on the comments from my colleague the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, because it felt a little bit like gatekeeping, but I'll point out that the Minister of Community Services had a lot of different things to say on the previous motion about the Canyon Creek bridge.

So, I still maintain that it's important to have a downtown school. I appreciate the comments from my colleague the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin in reminding this House — because it wasn't that long ago that the Minister of Education didn't agree with that.

When we talk about the formal process to consider alternative locations for the replacement of École Whitehorse Elementary, I think it's important that we go back. There was a press conference held with the grand statement that École Whitehorse Elementary was moving to Takhini, and it came out of nowhere. It came out of nowhere for my colleague the Member for Whitehorse Centre and me. We would have thought that it would have been covered under the "no surprise" clause of the confidence and supply agreement, but it didn't appear like it did. So, we were caught off guard when that press conference happened, and then we asked for follow-up. We said: Well, what's the plan and what's going forward? The really interesting thing is that there wasn't a lot of information at that meeting, but more interesting than that is that there was radio silence for the entire community for more than a year. It didn't seem like anything was happening. There was no

discussion; there was certainly no public engagement; there were no public meetings — no real public meetings — and there were no conversations with the downtown community; there certainly weren't conversations with the Takhini community. So, we continued to press. We asked: When are you going to meet with downtown? When are you going to meet with Takhini?

I appreciate that the minister just highlighted her meeting with the Takhini Neighbourhood Association fairly recently, but interestingly enough, Takhini has been asking for that meeting for quite a long time. I've asked for an engagement with my community since the announcement was first made. I think it's important to hear from folks who are not just in that association but are the general public. I think there are lots of folks who have thoughts about the proposed relocation of the proposed École Whitehorse Elementary School to the Takhini education lot for a lot of different reasons. I think about the traffic, which may sound insignificant to some here, and I've invited them to come and see the traffic with me in the morning to see what I'm talking about, and I look forward to the day that someone takes me up on that and wants to come hang out on the corner of Range Road at 8:15 in the morning.

I have heard how the government has said: Well, we don't have to worry about the traffic, because you're going to have to go up University Drive to get to the school. Well — wonder of wonders — you still have to be on Range Road to get to University Drive in both directions, so that's going to be an interesting thing about how it's not going to add to the traffic. We can talk about the sheer number of students at École Whitehorse Elementary School right now and then the sheer number of educational supports that are required to the tune of probably — I don't know — in the realm of 600 to 700 people.

I have to say that the neighbourhood feels a little busy as it is, so the idea of the school going there is daunting.

It's so interesting, because it is not often that the Yukon Party and the NDP align on things, but we are in this really interesting time where sometimes we do, and this is one, because it just doesn't make sense. I appreciate that the minister just came out said: Well, we looked at this, and we looked at that. But that was never shared publicly. That was never part of the public conversation. That wasn't part of a public meeting. That wasn't a part of — these are the areas we have looked at, and this why we are moving on from them.

It's interesting because I would wonder — when we talk about Grey Mountain Elementary and the temporary school 50 years ago, it's still the same school that it was 50 years ago that was supposed to be temporary. It's fascinating to me.

From my perspective, when we talk about a formal process to consider alternative locations, it is about opening up the possibilities. It's about opening up possibilities. Do you know where a great place for a high school would be? Across from the Canada Games Centre and across from the Mount McIntyre recreation area where you would have access to ski trails or bike trails in the summertime or you would have access to courts and you would have access to swimming pools and you would have access to running tracks. High schools just don't have that easy access right now.

If we wanted to talk about other locations, we could talk about going up the hill farther. We could talk about going up actually into the mover of this motion's own neighbourhood to look at a school location.

The point is that when an announcement was made, it was double-down, double-down, double-down. There hasn't been any opportunity to have further conversation or ask further questions or find out why, because there has never been a public process with this. Not once has there been a public process where the government has sat down and laid out all the reasons why they chose that area.

It took weeks before the minister changed the website where it said that the Takhini Neighbourhood Association approved the location, but that is not what happened. We went to a meeting and were told: Here are the three locations on this one spot; which one do you like best of the three?

Again, it's like being offered hotdogs with mustard or hotdogs with relish, but what you really wanted was a hamburger with ketchup that was never on offer, so you have to pick the thing you don't like but that you like the least of all the things you don't like. There has never been a broader conversation about where this school should go.

There has never been an open conversation or dialogue with the community about where they see the next education plot, and there is no taking away from this government that they built a beautiful school in Whistle Bend. They built a beautiful school with CSSC Mercier. I will challenge that the Commission scolaire wanted the school to be bigger, but it was the minister of the day who chose to make it smaller. We are seeing that effect now.

When we talk about the planning of schools and the future of schools, the community probably has a lot of really great ideas, but when we don't invite the community in to have that conversation and we don't listen to feedback or we don't invite feedback or we're not open to feedback, then we are not hearing alternative suggestions or ideas.

I don't think it will surprise anyone when I say that the NDP will be supporting this motion, because there has never been a time when my community has been fully engaged in the conversation of whether or not an elementary school of this size makes sense for the neighbourhood. There has never been that conversation — never once. I felt terrible for the person who was leading the meeting, but a meeting with 16 people at Normandy Living on, like, a Wednesday night — there was snow on the ground, so whether it was earlier this year or late last year — doesn't constitute community consultation. Certainly, it wasn't sold that way.

So, instead of making — this isn't a new neighbourhood. This isn't like Whistle Bend where we automatically need schools there. It's not like that at all. I challenge the government: Let's have a formal process. Let's have a broad public conversation. Let's open it up. Let's figure out what makes sense. Let's figure out what makes sense for a community school downtown. Let's figure out what makes sense for where École Whitehorse Elementary should go, if it's not downtown. Let's have that conversation.

What is the future of Takhini Elementary School? What is the future of Grey Mountain elementary school? What happens to Wood Street school? All of these schools are at the end of their days, so let's have those broader public conversations. Let's hear from people.

Again, it should be no surprise that the NDP will be supporting this motion. We look forward to a formal process. We look forward to an engagement with community. We look forward to more information being shared publicly about other possible locations as opposed to: It's just going here no matter what; pick one of these three spots on this part of land that you're not really interested in developing for a school — and maybe with a formal engagement, maybe with that full dialogue with the public, maybe having that conversation with the community, maybe my neighbourhood will change their mind.

Wouldn't it be great to have the neighbourhood in support as opposed to in opposition? Invite them along — that hasn't been the case. There has been no invitation. It is kind of similar to actually when they put in the Connective second-stage housing. There was no community conversation about that, either — none at all.

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

**Ms. White:** It is true — I hear the minister — letting the school know and letting the university know is not a conversation with the community, and that is the big difference.

So, maybe that is the problem. When I talk about community, I talk about the people; I talk about the neighbours, and I talk about my neighbours, but it didn't happen with the second-stage housing at Corrections, and it certainly hasn't happened with the school.

I welcome this motion, and I welcome this opportunity, and I look forward to voting in favour of it.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak again to this and respond to the comments from my colleagues. I should begin by thanking the MLA for Takhini-Kopper King for her comments. I very much agreed with much of what she just said and appreciate some of the observations that she had made that I had missed in my initial speaking to this motion.

The Minister of Education chastised the opposition for not providing a tangible solution to this problem. Well, Mr. Speaker, this motion is precisely that. It is a tangible solution to the predicament that we find ourselves in where the minister and her government have unilaterally chosen the location for a school without any consultation at all. Instead, what we have suggested is that there be an open and formal process by which Yukoners can participate in that process, because when that announcement was made back in I believe it was summer of 2022 by the minister of highways and the Minister of Education that the Takhini location had been chosen, it came as a great shock to everyone, and my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King outlined that as well. I hadn't been aware that the Third Party hadn't been made aware of that

location in advance either. I didn't realize that, on top of this being a bad decision, it was also a violation of the confidence and supply agreement, but that is a matter for a different time.

One of the things that I didn't mention in my introductory comments was that the minister had previously hung her hat on the idea that this location was necessary because it was the only one that could allow for a speedy municipal process — that it was already zoned appropriately. It was an educational reserve, and therefore it was appropriately zoned.

However, it was just a few weeks ago that we learned from the City of Whitehorse that this was not true. In fact, the location as it sits right now requires a considerable amount of municipal process before any construction can begin. It requires rezoning, it requires a change to the OCP, and it requires a master planning exercise, which is another municipal process.

So, there are conservative estimates from those familiar with the municipal process that put that process alone at beyond two years. So, we know that there is nothing imperative about this work to begin designing a school that would be hindered by stopping, taking a pause on this, and going back and talking to Yukoners about which location would be appropriate.

I think that this is very much a tangible solution that we are proposing today. It is something we think government ought to do. They really ought to have done it first, anyway. They should have talked to Yukoners before making this large decision. They should have spoken to those school communities. They should have spoken to the neighbourhoods, and they should have spoken to those who are directly affected by this decision before they made it and announced it through a press conference.

But, Mr. Speaker, I won't belabour the point, because I think it's important to bring this matter to a vote. So, I certainly commend this motion to the House and look forward to the passage of this motion and the government's launch of a formal process to consider alternative locations for the replacement of École Whitehorse Elementary School.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

#### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

#### Bells

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

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Disagree.

**Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**MLA Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yeas, 7 nays.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion No. 1098 agreed to*

## BILLS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT BILLS

### Bill No. 308: Act to Amend the Elections Act — Third Reading — adjourned debate

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 308, standing in the name of Ms. White; adjourned debate, the Hon. Mr. Pillai.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that debate be now adjourned.

*Motion to adjourn debate on third reading of Bill No. 308 agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

### Appointment of Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

**Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 5(3), I appoint the Member for Takhini-Kopper King as Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole.

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Would members like to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

**Acting Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Is there any further general debate?

#### Department of Tourism and Culture — continued

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would like to welcome back Deputy Minister VanDerMeer and Assistant Deputy Minister Olynyk from Strategic Initiatives.

Yesterday when we were getting toward the end of debate, my colleague from Porter Creek North had asked a question about television ads. The department let me know that we are not planning on doing any conventional broadcast TV ads this year. We are doing sort of online ads but not through TV. We are doing video-based ads on digital platforms — YouTube, Meta, et cetera.

One of the reasons is that we get a couple of things out of it. Number one, we get more targeted distribution, so we know where that stuff is going, and it's less expensive than the conventional TV ads. Our budget for the coming season is \$400,000 for that ad buy. I think that generally speaking we do winter and shoulder marketing from mid-September to about mid-December, and then they start to switch over to summer messaging somewhere after that, maybe after the holiday break and going through to about mid-April.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I also would like to welcome the officials back today.

The 125<sup>th</sup> Yukon birthday happened in 2023. Now, I know this was under Tourism, and it was eventually decided to strike a special medal to award 250 Yukoners for their contribution to the Yukon. I believe 150 of those were assigned to First Nations.

Can the minister please explain more about this process and the reason it took so long to roll out these medals?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** When I first heard the ad, I flipped into my book to the “metal” section and I found the discussion about the “It’s a little bit metal” ad — so, in the wrong place altogether.

The medals were the lead of the Executive Council Office, so I will give some information that I know of here today, but I would encourage questions in that direction as well. I know that there was work done by artist Violet Gatensby for the artwork of the medal, and I know that it takes some time to commission them. I heard Violet talking about the process and talking about working with the mint to get them done and how to create them, and I think that there was a lot of very detailed discussion that went back and forth, and I just think that those things took a little bit of time. I don't have a fulsome answer for the member opposite, but I can — anyway, it is the Executive Council Office that had them.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** When I looked under the tagline, it was listed under Tourism, so this is why I have these questions, and perhaps we overlapped with ECO, but most don't even know because the recipients were rolled out at 25 names each

week. It seems to be that it was a disservice to these Yukoners who received this special award, and I was just wondering what the rationale behind the process was. Is there somewhere that we can see a website or a page where all the names are listed?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will ask the department to check in for me whether there is a public-facing listing of it. Of course, we definitely want to acknowledge these Yukoners; I think that is the whole point. I will look to see if there is a way in which — how that information is being disseminated and share it back with the members opposite once I find out.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Now, this is another series of questions that I have, and I know that they are going to overlap with Highways and Public Works, and I know that the minister is going to tell me so.

However, I think that this directly impacts the impression our visitors have when they are in the Yukon, and if I see it, I'm sure other people do as well. The state of our highway signs is just atrocious. The mileage — they are just in a sad state of repair. I have seen fallen signs, crooked signs, and graffitied signs to the point that I can't read them. I do have a number of photos for the minister should he want me to share them. I can also provide you with where they are.

Will the minister commit to working with Highways and Public Works to ensure that these highway signs are fixed and replaced before next summer?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** There is a government signs committee and Tourism does sit on it. Of course, there are some signs that are very tourism-specific or heritage-specific, and we had a little bit of a question around this yesterday about the welcome-to-the-Yukon signs. They really were not in good nick; they were starting to fall apart. We agree that it's important that signage is done well. I appreciate the member's offer to share photos or tagged photos so that we can know where they are. I am happy to pass those across.

I know that when we developed our *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* — I think it was in 2019 — there was a piece within it that was talking about infrastructure, and signage was one of the pieces underneath it and so we talked about it.

I would characterize it as an ongoing issue because — signs. I will say that I attend many community meetings — I was at one last night — and signage is a pretty common agenda item in the local advisory council meetings that I attend.

So, anyway, I appreciate the offer. I'm happy to take it and I'm happy make sure that we're getting that information into the signs working group, and I thank the member for those suggestions.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I think, going back, it just shows that we have some pride in our landscape.

Still on signs, there were several flashing signs on the highway warning drivers about forest fires well into the fall and months after the fires. Many who are not familiar with our territory — I would be alarmed and discouraged from visiting communities, and this was specifically noticed on the north Klondike Highway. So, I was talking to some operators and they felt it was negatively affecting their communities along the north Klondike Highway and the Silver Trail. So, they were

definitely a deterrent. I was told: Why couldn't they be changed or removed when the fires were complete?

So, again, will the minister commit to working with the Department of Highways and Public Works to suggest that they put relevant information on the signs at appropriate times in the season?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, the answer is yes. In fact, I'm going to give an example of how it worked this year, because we had heard the same issues and this is how the process started to work. I always think it is important that we work with other government agencies, including, in this case, Highways and Public Works. We identified that there is a whole way that we need to sort of address emergencies that are happening across the territory and how we inform visitors and tour operators and emergency services about how that interaction is going to work — so that we are informing as well as we can but not alarming. We need to give fair information all of the time.

Just on this very example that the Member for Porter Creek North has raised, we had been in Dawson talking with the industry folks there, and they pointed out this issue about the signs. When the deputy minister did reach in and talked to Highways and Public Works and to the EMS sort of folks, one of the challenges was that there continued to be some smoke alert. Because that smoke alert was still there, then the folks who were working on things sort of identified that there was still this emergency, so the signs were left, but the signs were misleading and not helpful. We talked about that and talked about how to: (1) improve communication internally; (2) work to get these things sorted out when we could identify them; (3) work to have a channel for folks — in this case, from Dawson City but from wherever they are from, whoever the industry folks are — to feed into us when they identify these problems so that we could get on them more quickly; and (4) make sure that we were providing up-to-date information through our visitor information centres and our new digital kiosks, which are seeing a lot of use — just using all of the channels that we can to try to get information out. We talked about other things as well, but really, this is about fairly informing visitors — and Yukoners for that matter — about what the situation is so that people know what they are facing — or are certainly not being misinformed about what is in front of them.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I thank the minister for that response and working with the Department of Highways and Public Works.

The Yukon Quest is changing its route due to a decision made by the current board. We have again heard concerns from businesses that will be negatively affected by the route change. Some of these businesses have supported the race for many years and depend on it through the winter. Can the minister confirm whether they are still receiving the same funding from the government even though they have changed and shortened the route? Was the government consulted or did they have any input into this decision?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I think that last year we increased our funding to the Yukon Quest and we have agreed to maintain that increase over the next couple of years, so we have not



diminished any funding. If anything — at least recently, it had gone up. I think the purpose of that funding is really because we think that the Quest has a very important role in showcasing the north, our winter, and our history here.

We're concerned for the Quest, because if the Quest has last minute changes or cancellations, that really does impact a lot of our tourism operators here, because there are a lot of bookings that are made around the Quest, and if it suddenly all changes, that's tough; that's hard. So, we do want to work with them.

What we're trying to support is that they find how to make the race sustainable and long term and supported. We met their — they had a new executive director last year I think, and he's a really dynamic person, and we had a great meeting with him. I haven't personally sat down with him again recently, but I know the department is continuing to support.

Was it just this year I think when they didn't have the freeze-up as they needed, and they couldn't get down to Shipyards Park for the start because they couldn't get crossing of the Yukon River. That really had a hard hit on them, because where they set up down the Takhini Road was really not — you know, you weren't at the start line where the dogs were, and it was not the same thing. So, people were trying to make the best of it, but it just wasn't what it normally is for us. I'm sure folks will remember down on Front Street and Main and stuff like that, but it has been at Shipyards for some time now.

Anyway, those are some of the things that we're doing with the Quest.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Now, the rural visitor reception centres have always closed at the end of September. Dawson City in particular closed its border access to Alaska on September 15. As the tourism numbers are significantly reduced come September, I'm wondering how the decision was made. To me, it didn't make financial sense to keep staff and to operate these centres well into October.

Can the minister explain the rationale with this decision?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, a few things — overall, we have been looking to extend our shoulder seasons from a tourism perspective. That means trying to do things a little earlier in the spring and things a little later in the fall, but as we worked to encourage businesses to do that, they turned back to us and encouraged us: Well, if you are going to try to do that, can you extend your services a bit so that you can support the industry from stretching its season somewhat? We had worked over the past year with Canada Border Services and the US Customs and Border Protection to try to get the border crossing at Top of the World — Little Gold/Poker Creek — opened earlier in the season and closing later in the fall, which we got and which I really appreciate.

One of the things that industry asked us to do was to pilot a look at extending our visitor information centres. We had tried it in 2023 at the Carcross Visitor Information Centre, which is a pretty busy information centre because of the cruise ship activity, so this year, we tried to extend it across most of our visitor information centres. What we're looking to do is, later — we don't quite have all of the data back in — but we're

going to analyze it to see how effective it was, what we had for visitation numbers, and what people were saying about it.

We want to take a look at it to understand whether it has been effective, but we piloted it across VICs — visitor information centres — this year.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I found it very interesting that, when I went on the website, we have two border centres at Watson Lake and Beaver Creek, and their staff was given notice to stay open until October 14. Then we have the visitor reception at Dawson where the borders close, the ferry is pulled out, most businesses are boarded up, and Top of the World is — you know, it's a dead-end highway and very sketchy driving in October. I certainly wouldn't encourage a newbie to be driving in October, yet they were told to stay open until October 31.

Can the minister explain why the decision was made on these time extensions at various visitor reception centres?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, this is a pilot, so the idea was to check it out to see what we got. What we actually found so far — Dawson was one of the several places where it actually got used quite a bit. Maybe the reason is because of Air North and the additional scheduled flights that it has, scheduled flights. There were some business meetings that were happening up in Dawson, and the visitor information centre got used.

Anyway, that's the whole point: It was at the request of industry to extend it and see how this went.

We put in the request to our staff to see if they would like to go longer and keep the centres open. We looked at what we thought the numbers might be for visitors and tried to see that there would be staffing appropriate to that. Again, this is us responding to industry asking us to try this out. And we have given it a try, and we will see how it turns out, but I think there may be some instances where this works, and there might be others where it doesn't, and we will have to navigate that. Luckily, at our visitor information centres, we collect a lot of data about who is coming in when and who is asking for what, and that will give us a sense of how well they are used.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I thank the minister for that. I look forward to seeing the stats, particularly for that month of October for this pilot project. I think it will be of interest.

I know tourism operators continue to have a difficult time recruiting staff, and usually it is due to housing. Last year, we went over a list of people who were given grants by the government to have housing built in their businesses.

Could the minister give us an update on those grants? Have they totally been used? Is there going to be another round of grants coming up in this next year?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Let me just start off by saying that I know there are some ongoing challenges with housing and labour, but it has been a really good year for tourism. I just want to remind us that I have been very excited to see the numbers coming in and how well it's going broadly. That doesn't mean that we don't have challenges; we definitely do. Labour is one of them and housing for labour is one of them.

We had some good examples. So — I'm not supposed to call it — it's "The Village off King" — but it was pretty successful. I got a tour of it this year. I met with the Klondike

Visitors Association and we had a long conversation about how it was being used and what was happening. Again, because of its purpose-built nature, it really did not become just like a party central, which had been one of the challenges in the past. So, that was pretty successful.

I know that the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon — by the way, they have their AGM tomorrow night at 7:00 p.m. at the Gold Rush I think, and I encourage us all to get there — did a shared accommodation piece. We still have our community tourism destination development fund and we welcome intakes under that. This is one of the eligible types of projects. The feedback that we have had on the projects where we have had some funding in them is that they have been successful. I am pretty sure that it is going to be a pretty mixed bag out there in terms of housing given all of the pressure that there is about the ability to house. I still anticipate hearing lots of concerns about the issue, and labour continues to be an issue broadly — not just about housing but labour, period, because we have such low unemployment here.

Anyway, that is the overall — it has been successful and is still going.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Some members of the TIA Yukon were on the Premier's India/Japan trip to promote Yukon as a destination for tourism employment. I was wondering if the minister had any statistics or updates on potential employees from these two countries who might come to work in our tourism industry in Yukon. Was there any mention of that?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I was on that trip to Japan and so was the deputy minister. Most of our efforts were around looking to build the market for Japanese tourism to come to the Yukon. I think that it has been successful. Certainly, it has been increasing in the last year or so with Japanese visitors. I think there is definitely still room to grow. Maybe what I ought to do is give a shout-out to our staff who work in east Asia, because I think they are doing a great job.

We know as well that there are more workers coming, and we just know that kind of anecdotally because we get requests for support around drivers' licences being applied for and so suddenly we get a bit of an insight into it. But really, it was the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon, TIAY, that did the work about recruiting for labour to come.

I think that it's natural for it to happen, because when your visitation numbers go up, more often our local operators want to have someone who is familiar with the country of origin for the travellers so that they can have that relationship with the place better.

So, I would have to talk with TIAY, though, to know how successful they believe it was — their trip to Japan.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I thank the minister. That was good information. This next question — I know that the staff gave us a great briefing on it, but I just want to get it on the record — is about the Red Feather Saloon complex and the former courthouse on Front Street in Dawson that have both been acquired by the Government of Yukon from Parks Canada. I would like to ask: Why was this done? Has the O&M been taken into consideration with the acquisition of these two historic sites?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I think the main question was: Why did the Yukon government take over the Red Feather Saloon, or what was our rationale around taking over the Red Feather Saloon and the courthouse? I need to be careful not to confuse it with the other older courthouse — the one on Front Street.

I think it was basically because these were significant historic buildings and we thought there might be opportunity. I think that was the main reason. Parks Canada was giving them up.

I got a tour of the OTAB — the Old Territorial Administration Building — this summer with the deputy minister to take a look at it. I know that, under Parks, I think they had been investing in retrofitting the building, getting rid of the asbestos. I think that had happened.

I still think that there is more improvement needed before that is finalized. There are still decisions to be made. I think that Tourism and Culture is not necessarily going to be the tenant. It will be Highways and Public Works that has the responsibility of and for the buildings. They come into our broad asset.

I think that we're evaluating right now what can be used. The Red Feather Saloon may get used more quickly — it has occupancy right now. Around the corner is the liquor store and the territorial agent. I think that they moved in there and are using it, but I haven't been in it yet, so I don't know. Also, Madam Acting Chair, I can report back that the department checked on the visitor information centre for Dawson and the extension into October, and we had 800 visitors over the month of October or in that extension.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thank you, minister, for that response. The Forty Mile historic site was damaged in 2023 during the spring breakup. Can the minister tell us how much was spent this year on repairs to the site? What is the project scope, schedule, and budget for the project to completely rehabilitate the site?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, there is an ongoing budget for Forty Mile in most of the — like, it's about \$105,000, \$110,000, but most of that is a transfer to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in — 90 percent of that is a transfer to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. This year, what we did was that we contracted to an architectural firm to develop a conservation plan and to sort of help us navigate post-flood conservation work at the site. Basically, what they will do is that they will come up with a bunch of options, and then we'll be in conversation with the TH and try to see which recommendations we should follow. Like, no matter what, I think that we know that there are some hard choices in front of us, because you can put it all back, but you know that you're still going to have risk, and you're never going to get everything back, because half of the buildings were gone and the other half were moved or — I don't know — it was pretty devastating.

Yes, I'll stop there, and if there are more questions, I'm happy to answer them.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** No, I don't have any more on the Forty Mile. I just hope that there is sufficient funding that can help the Tr'ondëk.

The Yukon government is developing a rest area strategy to provide a consistent high level of service for travellers. Can the minister let us know when this strategy is expected to be completed, and when is the implementation expected to start?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** By the way, the department let me know that there has been some work — we contracted a Dawson company to lift and stabilize workcamp buildings at the Forty Mile, so there was a little bit of work. I will say that louder. Regarding Forty Mile, we contracted a Dawson company to lift and stabilize workcamp buildings on-site. So, there was a bit of work done to try to prep.

Then on the rest area strategy, I have just put the request in. HPW has the lead on the rest area strategy. I don't have anything in my notes that tells me timelines, so I have just put in the request for that information from HPW. If I get it back, I will get up on my feet and let folks know.

I will read this and then get back up. I will let the member ask questions.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I don't think that there is a tourism session that I don't get to talk about the rest stops along the highway, because, of course, it again affects our visitors. I realize that it is Highways and Public Works, but last year, three of these on the north Klondike Highway — of course, you know that I am most familiar with that highway — the conglomerate point at kilometre 297.8 Yukon Crossing, which is a very popular stop, 395.2, and, of course, the Stewart River viewpoint at kilometre 551 — I am just wondering if there are plans to create new rest areas to offset the loss of three on a fairly extensive highway that have these viewpoints but no services at them. So, they will, say, stop and take a picture, and people are stopping and leaving garbage is all I can see when I have visited these sites.

Can the minister comment on that?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We all have the same note — I thank all my colleagues for sharing the same note, and I will try not to repeat myself.

I think that this is the purpose of the strategy, to try to look at these rest areas to try to understand where we need more and where we need less, to try to right-size it. By the way, I will very cheekily say that one time there were a couple of consultants who were up from Vancouver somewhere, and we were driving to Dawson, and they asked me if there was any place that they could pee between Whitehorse and Dawson and I said, "Everywhere." That was just to freak them out a bit.

I don't know the specific answer about those specific questions, but what I will say is that I appreciate the perspective, and what I will do is flag this conversation into HPW so that they can take this as suggestions.

I have heard the members opposite give other points that they wish to raise. I thank them for that, and I think that is great feedback, and it will be part of it. What we've been searching through the note that we have in front of us is to see if there is a timeline in front of us, and I just can't find it right now. So, I will work to look at it.

What they are trying to do is to make sure that there are enough rest stops. Of course, they want the ones that look lovely and are well-kept and are iconic of our beautiful scenery

here and at the same time are spaced out so that they service the needs of travellers and Yukoners alike.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Yes, I think it's an important part of our infrastructure all year long but especially in summer when we have our visitors, because there are some real eyesores.

I was looking again through the website, and I saw there was an employee engagement survey that was done in 2021. I was wondering if the minister can tell us if there has been an update or a new survey done and if one is coming shortly.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Yes, I believe that, across all the public service, the employee engagement survey was being redone this year, this past summer.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** If we could have that shared with the Assembly when the survey is done, that would be appreciated.

I would like to thank the minister and the staff for their attendance today, and I will pass it over to the Third Party.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I thank the member opposite for her questions. I'm just checking, but I think that the — if the employee engagement results are not up online, they will be shortly. So, anyway, this is a regular thing that we do. I know that each department is receiving those or has just received those results recently.

**MLA Tredger:** Thank you to the officials for being here and to the minister for answering questions. I am happy to be debating this today.

I want to start by asking a couple of questions about lines in the supplementary budget. It shows that there is an additional \$218,000 to the art operating fund. We are happy to see that, because we have heard from arts organizations about the need for that fund to increase to fund new projects.

Can the minister confirm if this money is planned to flow to additional organizations or if it is an increase to the existing recipients?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** There are a lot of different funds, so I hope that I get this right. My colleagues will tell me if I get something a little bit wrong. As always, can I just check with a thumbs up that my colleague from Whitehorse Centre can hear me well — thank you. By the way, we are all cheering you on here, so I just want to say that.

This year, because the dollars came in late, what we have done is to increase our existing transfer payment agreements by about 10 percent, so the ones that are already in here, we have topped them up. There is an opportunity under the arts fund — there was a call, an intake, in September and another one in December that will get the additional money that we have right now. Starting next year, what will happen is that — \$140,000 will go in to increase the arts operating fund. Of course, there are many people who reapply under the arts operating fund, but it always will allow for new applicants as well. So, that's what will be happening as of the fiscal year 2025-26, so it will be a total of just under \$360,000 for next year in the arts operating fund.

**MLA Tredger:** Thank you to the minister for that. I had a question I wanted to ask about the permanent art collection. I'm wondering what percentage of the art collection is typically on display at any time. I ask about that because I just think that it's this incredible library I guess of art — or "collection" I

guess is the word — that is just such a wonderful thing that the Yukon has, and I want to make sure that Yukoners are accessing it, because you know, art is meant to be enjoyed and appreciated. So, I'm wondering what percentage of the permanent art collection is on display at any time and if there are any plans to increase that.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Currently — and by the way, if anyone wishes to catch it, we still have the exhibition up at the Grotto at the Yukon Arts Centre for the new acquisitions to Yukon's permanent art collection. Our collection is around 550 pieces now, so at any point in time, we have — I don't know — 20 percent of that up on display. It might vary from time to time. We have sort of typically about 30 locations where the art is on display, including here at the Jim Smith Building and around the territory.

Then the Member for Whitehorse Centre asked: Is there any desire or intention to try to get more of that collection out there for Yukoners to see? My answer is yes. I will just give a bit of a shout-out to — I know that Deputy Minister VanderMeer has sort of taken this on as an important initiative, but we don't want to do it unilaterally. There is a group called the Friends of the Yukon Permanent Art Collection — FOYPAC — so we are working with them about how to accomplish that in a way that will also try to maintain the legacy of that artwork so that you don't degrade it over time.

We have been looking at not only how we can get our Yukon art up for Yukoners to see but also how to get it up in other places, because we think there are some amazing opportunities for folks from outside of the Yukon to see the amazing art that's from here.

I will just give two quick anecdotes about that. For example, earlier this year, the national art gallery's board of trustees had meetings here in Whitehorse, and they got a look at the permanent collection. There was a lot of discussion about how we could get more of Yukon's art out there in the world. Just this summer, there was this exhibition that opened in Canada House in London, England. It was really great. Several chiefs and the Grand Chief and elders and the Deputy Premier were in attendance for that art opening. It was really pretty powerful stuff.

I think we do want to get our Yukon art out there and connected or able to be seen and experienced by Yukoners.

**MLA Tredger:** Thank you to the minister for that. I am glad to hear that desire. I know in the Yukon NDP office there is typically art from the permanent collection displayed, which I feel is just a real treat and an honour to have that available to us and to the people who come into our office. I would love to see every opportunity like that taken in spaces where people are moving through and are often waiting for appointments or doing things like that. I think that is just a beautiful chance to bring art into the lives of Yukoners and showcase some of the incredible talent that we have here in the territory. I look forward to discovering new locations for the permanent art collection, and I hope that work continues.

I wanted to ask a question about sustainable tourism, because tourism is such an important part of the economy and so many people's lives here in the Yukon, and a large part of it

is around our natural environment, which is truly spectacular. It's important that tourism doesn't accidentally damage the very thing they have come to see.

So, I am wondering what initiatives are in place to promote sustainable and responsible tourism in the Yukon — especially regarding environmental conservation and cultural preservation.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, I would like to just echo the member's earnest recommendations to try to get our artwork connected with more Yukoners. I appreciate those comments and support them.

The question was around how we are focusing on sustainability. I will give a couple of ways in which this is happening. First of all, we have been working pretty closely with the Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association, which I think we gave a tribute to earlier this Sitting. It was a big anniversary — 30<sup>th</sup> or 35<sup>th</sup>. I am trying to remember now, but it was just recently. They produced these respectful guidelines called *Walk with Us — Respectful Travel Guidelines* for visitors to the Yukon. It really talks about how you can treat the land with respect and not harm it. I have always believed in the campsite rule, which means that wherever you go you should leave it in better condition — certainly not worse condition — than how you found it.

Then also, a couple of years back under our tourism development strategy, we identified sustainability as one of the pillars of it and we then made some actions based on that. One of them was to join the United Nations International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories. The acronym for it is INSTO. I don't know of many places in Canada that are doing this. There are others I think — the last time I looked on their website to see where there were places — but the Yukon is making a big move in this. There are a whole bunch of actions, but I will just give some examples of it.

We're offering tourism operators courses on sustainable tourism through a Go Digital program. Those are certified courses. We have been running workshops on sustainable tourism practices where people attend in person or online and we look at sustainable tourism practices. In some of my tours, for example, going around, the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon took the deputy minister and our director on a day-long tour to see various businesses. I was pretty impressed with some of the things that they are doing to try to be lower footprint.

Finally — and I spoke about this earlier — one of the ways that we are using our community tourism destination development fund is to support business practices that are looking to having a lighter footprint and be more sustainable. We are trying to provide support funding, seed funding, or program funding that will help in initiatives to make tourism more sustainable.

**MLA Tredger:** It's exciting to hear about that work happening.

I wanted to ask if there are any specific targets or projections for tourism growth in the coming years. It's such an important part of the Yukon economy and I think it's one where there's a lot of exciting potential for expansion. I am wondering

if the department has any specific goals for that expansion. Of course, that will require plans to support them, so what strategies are in place to support that growth?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We do have several goals, and I'll talk about them.

First of all, one of our main goals since COVID is to get back to where we were, and this year we did that. We were one of the first jurisdictions to do that. That was a very specific target that we had in mind.

Second of all, under our *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*, we did have several goals, although I want to note that COVID kind of interrupts that, so I'm not sure — we'll need to rethink it a bit, but I'll share them.

So, first, in terms of the principles of the goals is that we need to make sure that the tourism economy is thriving. We need to make sure that it is sustainable and that it's not a negative, and that includes that Yukoners support that industry. In other words, we've seen places in the world where tourism grows so fast that it isn't supported by locals. We think that is very important, because otherwise, it becomes a negative for Yukoners.

Generally speaking, I keep getting anecdotes — and I gave one when I gave the opening remarks last week when I talked about tourism — about supporting visitors here and how Yukoners tend to do that in really amazing ways.

But in terms of a physical target or a numbers target, we sort of said to ourselves that we wanted to try to double — in 2016, tourism accounted for \$262 million to our economy, and our goal was for it to be \$525 million by 2028. My sense is that we will blow past that goal. Currently this year, we are at \$519 million. Some of that is going to be inflation, so we have to be careful to think of it in the context of how it was made, but I think that we're on track to meeting that target. All of that part of it can be found under the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*.

**MLA Tredger:** I just wanted to follow up on the question about the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. My understanding is that it was intended to be from 2018 to 2028. As the minister noted, the pandemic was a pretty unforeseen and disruptive event in that time. Since we're just about done with 2024, that gives about three years left of the strategy. Is the department getting ready to start a new one? I'm not really sure how long they expect that process to take, so I'm wondering if there is a plan for when a new strategy will be developed and if there has been any thought given to moving that up given that the 10 years the plan covered were a pretty unusual 10 years.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will add a few thoughts about it. First of all, just a big shout-out to the industry because, even though COVID was there, it is kind of amazing to me how well the industry has been doing. What I hear from folks who visit here and what I hear — *The New York Times'* top 10 destinations and things like that. The Yukon keeps punching way above its weight. I think that acknowledgement should go — well, it should go to the department as well, but really, what I want to acknowledge is the industry itself and the work that they have been doing.

So, right now under the tourism development strategy, we still have work that is evolving. So, I think that, even though we start looking to what comes next — is it a refresh? What is it? But that shouldn't stop us from continuing to do the work to deliver on the current strategy.

Second of all, we're in conversation with the Yukon Tourism Advisory Board and the tourism industry associations, like TIAY, about what they think should be next. Part of the conversation that I've heard is how we align with what's happening nationally — so Destination Canada and the work that they're doing and looking to capitalize on work that's happening nationally — because we've seen some great successes when we work with a couple of other jurisdictions and line things up to showcase the Yukon.

We like Destination Canada because they keep using the Yukon in their advertising of amazing things to do and see. It's like we get free advertising through them.

I don't have in front of us that we've landed with: This is what's happening next and when. I do think there will be follow-up that happens in the existing strategy and in what comes next, but I don't have a road map yet.

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

I'm going to end my questions there for today, but I just want to offer my congratulations to both the industry and the department, because I do think that being back at where the industry was pre-pandemic is a pretty remarkable accomplishment given how hard-hit the industry was by the pandemic. I just think that's a really impressive thing to have happened and I know it didn't happen easily. So, a huge congratulations to the industry and the department — and I will finish my questions there for today. Thank you to the officials and to the minister for answering.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the opportunity to sneak in one last question, and I will concede to the minister that this is a bit unfair, so I apologize. If he chooses to tell me that he will get back to me, that is fine. I am wondering if he can explain how he intends to act on the motion that we passed earlier today, and does the department intend to withdraw the YESAB submission, which includes the demolition of the bridge that was the subject of the debate earlier today?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Just going back to our colleague the Member for Whitehorse Centre, I really appreciate their comments and compliments to the department and the industry. Even though it is really exciting to see the recovery of the industry broadly, I should always also acknowledge that there are very specific challenges around labour and around inflation that impact the industry. I don't want to suggest that there isn't important work to do all the time.

Moving on to the Member for Copperbelt North's question regarding the motion today — Motion No. 1086. When the Member for Copperbelt South rose to talk about the comments that were in the YESAB submission, I did reach out right away to the deputy minister and said: That doesn't line up with how this has been presented to me, because I believe that we have not taken a decision.

The deputy minister had already worked to direct to get that description changed. It doesn't mean that we are

withdrawing the submission to YESAB, and my reason quite simply is that we may need to move quicker than we think. If, for example, the bridge goes on us or something significant happens, that may push us to have to get in there to do things. This is really just about prepping. When I met with the department on the subject — how it has been presented to me and in the materials that I was given, there has not been a decision taken, so I didn't think that the language that we put in for the project was correct and that it should be updated.

I thank the members for directing our attention to it — let's say that. I will see if there is any follow-up on that, but that is what happened as we were in the middle of the debate and I heard those comments — the deputy minister was already working on it.

**Acting Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture?

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

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried**

**Acting Chair:** The Member for Porter Creek North has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried, as required.

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Acting Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

**On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures**

**Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$218,000 agreed to**

**On Capital Expenditures**

**Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to**

**Total Expenditures in the amount of \$218,000 agreed to Department of Tourism and Culture agreed to**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Madam Acting Chair, I move that you report progress.

**Acting Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

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

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

**Chair's report**

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

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:25 p.m.*

**The following sessional paper was tabled November 6, 2024:**

35-1-179

*Yukon Heritage Resources Board Annual Report April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024* (Streicker)

**The following document was filed November 6, 2024:**

35-1-279

ISL Engineering and Land Services Ltd. report on Canyon Creek bridge replacement bridge preliminary design (dated March 21, 2024) (Streicker)