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HANSARD

Wednesday, November 13, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2024 Fall Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
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Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
 We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: Before proceeding to the Orders of the Day, the Chair would like to announce changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions were removed from the Order Paper, as the actions requested in the motions were completed in whole or in part: Motion No. 1077, standing in the name of the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, and Motion No. 1081, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party.

In addition, the following motion was removed from the Order Paper, as it is out of date: Motion No. 1062, standing in the name of the Hon. Premier.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

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

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Harris Cox, International Snowmobile Hall of Fame International Groomer of the Year

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Harris Cox, who was honoured by the International Snowmobile Hall of Fame as the International Groomer of the Year.

Harris began grooming cross-country ski trails in 1958 and then snowmobile trails in 1975 by towing old bedsprings. Harris joined the Klondike Snowmobile Association in 1998 and has served as a dedicated director ever since. He currently holds the position of vice-president.

Despite his role with the KSA, his primary passion has always been grooming trails. Each week, he spends about 20 hours grooming the trails. We all know how long Yukon winters last, and for many, the one bright light of the season is getting out on the trails. Harris ensures that this can happen for all of us.

When Harris is not out on the trails, he spends his retirement training new groomer operators, maintaining equipment, and advocating for structured snowmobile trail riding, and he is responsible for keeping the Klondike Snowmobile Association directors apprised of the status of the grooming equipment and trail system. It is a remarkable expenditure of time that he does so willingly and voluntarily.

Winston Churchill said, “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” While there is no doubting the satisfaction that Harris gets from his labours, we need to acknowledge that there are so many lives that have benefited from Harris’s actions.

It is not hyperbole to say that his efforts have impacted the lives of generations of Yukoners. Harris loves his work, but he also enjoys the trails in his leisure time, always staying on the marked paths and setting a strong example for others. He also emphasizes the importance of safe riding practices with fellow trail users.

With well over half a century of dedicated trail grooming and countless contributions to the Yukon, I applaud you, Harris Cox. The distinction of becoming the 2024 International Snowmobile Groomer of the Year is well deserved.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party to pay tribute to Harris Cox, this year’s international trail groomer of the year, as nominated by the International Snowmobile Hall of Fame. The Klondike Snowmobile Association plays an integral role in promoting recreational snowmobile and trail maintenance in the territory, and Harris is their most prolific groomer and has been grooming winter trails for over 60 years, putting in over 400 hours annually as a volunteer to keep the trails open and in good shape. So, that is the equivalent of a part-time job and all without pay, and he does it all out of love for the community. These trails benefit not just snowmobilers but dog walkers, joggers, cross-country skiers, fat-bikers, kick-sledders, commuters, and all manner of recreationalists who use our trails in the winter.

The Yukon winter would be a much longer, darker place without Harris and his immense dedication to trail grooming. So, thank you, Harris, for your decades of dedication and hard work. This award is well deserved, and if I don’t run into you on the trail — me on my bike and you on your snow machine — I will still know that you were there first.

Congratulations.

Applause

In recognition of Nakai Theatre

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, a moment ago when I introduced our guests, I made a mistake. I am pretty sure that Beth Mulloy is one of the founders of Nakai Theatre. I introduced her as a member of the department, so my apologies if I got that wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the 45th anniversary of the Nakai Theatre. Back in 1979, Beth Mulloy and Sheila Langston founded the Nakai Players, a Yukon touring company with a focus on growing and supporting First Nation theatre. Ten years later, they merged with Separate Reality theatre to form the Nakai Theatre Ensemble.

Nakai Theatre was the first professional theatre company north of 60 and it has certainly made an impact. For almost five decades, they have been a theatrical force, presenting,

producing, and developing high-quality plays and performances that represent and resonate with the north.

Nakai's diverse and unique style is pushing boundaries in contemporary Canadian theatre. Their mission is inspiring: "To be an artistic catalyst and convener that helps chart a course for the development and production of theatre that can only be created in the Yukon."

Through their efforts, voices are given to uncommon stories and subjects. Over the years, Nakai's emphasis has concentrated on different aspects of theatre development. Its various passionate and talented creators have inspired and stimulated experimentation, workshopping, and an impressive repertoire of plays and live events.

Nakai has benefited from a succession of visionary artistic directors, including Dawn Davies, Philip Adams, Michael Clark, David Skelton, and Jacob Zimmer.

In 1986, Nakai created the 24 Hour Playwriting Competition, which was the first of its kind in Canada. Many of the Yukon's standout scripts have had their start in those pressure-cooker 24 hours, and to this day, it remains a highlight of the Yukon cultural calendar. The event has evolved to include other disciplines and is now called the "24 Hour Challenge", taking place this past weekend. No doubt, more incredible content will emerge.

In 2009, Nakai introduced the Pivot Festival, an annual gathering of theatre-makers and audiences from the Yukon, across the country, and around the world. Taking place from January 6 to February 1 next year, celebrating the weird and the wonderful, it will again feature the popular Sun Room along with an exciting program of performances, music, and stories that will help us come together as we emerge from our long winter nights. By the way, I loved the Tita Collective this past January. They made me laugh and cry.

Of course, no discussion about Nakai would be complete without a mention of their famous puppet parades. These incredible larger-than-life creations bring joy and delight to all who experience them.

So, a bit of a shout-out for the many passionate Yukoners who have served on the board. Kudos to all of the creators and contributors, and venerable praise to the volumes of volunteers. Mr. Speaker, for 45 years, Nakai Theatre has made the Yukon a richer place to call home.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Nakai Theatre on their 45th anniversary. Founded in 1979 by Sheila Langston and Beth Mulloy, Nakai is a professional theatre company that produces weird and wonderful productions — high-quality, uncommon theatre that helps to develop local artists, writers, and music.

Sheila and Beth were in Old Crow and were trying to think of a name for the yet to be formed company. A Gwich'in woman said, "Neekaii", which means "two". It was the winner, as it was two women and also embraces two cultural communities: aboriginal and non-aboriginal.

There are far too many people to name and recognize from all those years, those who gave their all to provide excellent productions and tours throughout Yukon to enhance our northern Canadian culture. Both First Nation and non-First Nation groups are encouraged and able to share their traditions, stories, and culture.

A few highlights. In 1986, the 24 Hour Playwriting Competition, the first of its kind in Canada, began. To be able to have an original local story written in such a short period was groundbreaking and fun. A few plays have been recognized nationally.

Moving up to 2009, Nakai Theatre started the Pivot Festival, now an annual event. This coming year, January 6 to 24, 2025, brings together theatre folk from across the country and around the world. In 2019, there was a Pivot Story Crawl. Several local bars participated, and each stop featured a performance from one or two local storytellers, an unexpected event happening in, perhaps, your familiar place — creative.

In 2024, a production featuring the Filipina Spice Girls of Comedy — otherworldly sunbathing, fire breathing, and more. I'm not sure what the "more" was, but the first three would have been a full show on their own, I'm sure. It was imaginative. The Sun Room, designed by Wish Factory's Tara Kolla and sponsored by Air North, Yukon's airline, is happening in January and soon available for bookings. One can book the Sun Room for 20- or 50-minute sessions, and you can bring nine friends with you. The aim is to brighten spirits by giving warmth, colour, and brightness to our dark, cold winter days — innovative.

So, congratulations on another milestone. We wish you well as you move into the next years of original, exceptional, and entertaining theatre.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Nakai Theatre on their 45th anniversary.

For Nakai, theatre isn't just something that happens in, well, a theatre. Nakai takes art to the people wherever they are at. I imagine many of us have had the pleasure of seeing their enormous puppets on parade, made from many recycled items. A personal favourite of mine is the jellyfish with its tentacles that spring as it moves.

The reason I say that you have probably seen them is because these puppets are out in the wild and they are all about Whitehorse. They wind through the crowds at the Fireweed Market, they proudly march in the Pride parade, and they joyfully walk, skip, and dance around in parades of the long-term care facilities where they brighten the days of the residents who watch from their windows. Like I said, they take art to the people and they make sure to include everyone.

The Yukon's winters are a cold, dark time, but every February is brightened by Nakai's Pivot Festival. I am not sure exactly why they call it the "Pivot Festival", but it might be because they almost always have to creatively pivot an event due to the cold weather. We are so grateful that they always find a way to make it happen, from the poetry crawls to the

much-beloved Sun Room. These are highlights of the Yukon winter.

I have only mentioned two of their projects, but the list is long, especially given that they have been doing it for a staggering 45 years. I think of how many Yukoners have been touched by their work over these years. For many, their days were made a little brighter. Maybe they saw something in a new light and had their curiosity piqued. Maybe they enjoyed a good, deep belly laugh for the first time in a while or maybe they were given the space to have a good cry.

We are all so lucky to have Nakai here in the Yukon, making art that can only be made here in the Yukon. So, congratulations to Nakai. Thank you for an amazing 45 years, and we are so excited to see what's next to come.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the 2023 *Our Clean Future* annual report.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling correspondence from the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce supporting the *Business Corporations Act*.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House congratulates Russell Blackjack on his election as chief and Calvin Charlie on his election as deputy chief of the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation as well as councillors Edward Skookum, George Skookum, Leonard Charlie, Nelson Jobin, Cody Cashin, and Chanel Johnnie.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Community Services to actually meet with the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs instead of continuing to refuse their request for a meeting.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide adequate funding to ensure that every volunteer firefighter in the Yukon has personal protective equipment and turnout gear that is in good condition.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to take action to support the needs of Yukon fire halls, including ensuring that the new SHOT rescue truck is purchased in the current fiscal year.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to the Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Municipality funding and support

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, on October 30, the *Yukon News* ran a story about the bleak fiscal situation that the new City of Whitehorse council and mayor face.

Based on the comments from the city manager, the news said — and I will quote: “City staff say external funding sources are dwindling, and senior financial advisors within the city say Whitehorse can’t afford to drop down on reserves any more than it already has.”

Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that this is the situation that faces almost all of our rural municipalities as well. The Yukon government keeps downloading new regulatory burdens onto the municipalities, which drives up their costs. Meanwhile, federal infrastructure dollars have been steadily drying up and the Liberal government in the Yukon has been underfunding municipalities.

Does the Minister of Community Services understand the dire financial situation that Yukon municipalities are facing?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I have been speaking with municipalities since I took over the role from my good colleague the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I have heard and spoken with municipal councils across the territory. We now have a whole new number of councillors and mayors across the territory. I have spoken to many of them. I hope to have deeper conversations about their agendas and what they would like to accomplish during this next four-year mandate. I look forward to those conversations and hearing from municipalities what they would like to accomplish and what their situations as they see them are.

I have heard of the financial hurdles that some of the municipalities are having and we have agreed to look at the comprehensive municipal grant. That work is ongoing.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, the Minister of Community Services did a joint news release with the Association of Yukon Communities about collaboration on the review of the comprehensive municipal grant. They announced the creation of a CMG enhancement task force that was made up of representatives of both AYC and the Yukon government. The task force was supposed to complete its work by September 30 and submit recommendations for enhancements to the CMG. This date was important because it would allow changes to be made in time for the next budget cycle.

Has the minister received those recommendations? Will he make changes to the CMG based on those recommendations in time for the municipalities’ next budgets?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for the question because it allows me the opportunity to talk about all the investments that we have made in our municipalities over the last eight years. They have been historic and unprecedented, and that's coming with the support of the federal government. I really want to lay down a marker for that, but not only that, we made a decision as a government to actually support the infrastructure investment that was coming. I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition — he's thrifty, he does not like spending on the civil service, he wants to cut the civil service, and we know where he stood with that infrastructure money and he didn't want to invest it, but we made the decision to invest in our communities because all communities matter and we made those investments.

I also, when I took over the role as Community Services minister, met with municipalities. We had this task force set up. The task force has now given me the recommendations. I have spoken to the department about it, and the next stage, of course, is going to Management Board and getting into the budget discussions. Of course, we are going to do that. We met our deadlines; we're going to go to Management Board, but I'm not going to presume what this Cabinet is going to decide at the Management Board table. You wouldn't do that; I'm not going to do that. We're going to have a discussion and we know where municipalities stand.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, last year, the Association of Yukon Communities completed its own report on the CMG, which was shared with all Members of the Legislative Assembly. That report included a number of short- and long-term changes that were needed to address the inadequacy of the CMG in its current form.

Will the short-term changes that the AYC reports from July 2023 be made in time for the next municipal budget?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I hear the member knocking; I have given the answer that I have already given.

I will say, though, that we have invested heavily in our municipalities; we're going to continue to do that. They're in a better situation today than they ever were. We actually have a consumer price index escalator built into the comprehensive municipal grant, which is something that our government decided to do to make sure that the municipalities could keep up during a time of inflation. We have actually seen that, but I have heard from municipalities that it's not enough and that the CMG needs to be tweaked.

We had a task force that we put in place. The task force has now given its recommendations. I have those and I am now going to bring them to my Cabinet colleagues and we'll have a discussion. It has made the budget discussions and we will see where it lands.

Question re: City of Whitehorse drinking water

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague has just pointed out, municipal governments, including the City of Whitehorse, are facing serious fiscal pressures. To quote from the city manager in the *Yukon News*: "... there's no more

money in reserves to draw down upon to meet our financial pressures."

Well, Mr. Speaker, it was just over a year ago that the Minister of Community Services wrote a combative and ill-informed letter to the city about their finances. In regard to the need for a new water treatment plant, the minister told the city in that letter that they had plenty of money and that he wasn't willing to provide any YG funding for that critical infrastructure project.

So, I would like to ask the minister today if he still stands by his letter of October 10 last year. Will he continue to refuse to support the City of Whitehorse in advancing a new drinking water plant for our capital city?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, the contrast is clear. We as a government decided to invest in communities across the territory. I could go through it: mixed-use housing in Old Crow; 34 duplex constructions in Dawson City; road upgrades in Selkirk First Nation; early childhood development centre in Pelly; public works, fire halls, and an EMS building in Carmacks — I could go on. We are investing in our communities across the territory and have been doing so for eight years — unprecedented.

The Leader of the Official Opposition said publicly that he would not take that money. He would not invest because it was too much and he didn't want to do it. He has also said that he wants to cut the civil service. We sit in a different place here. We are investing in our communities; we are making sure that our communities are whole. We built escalators and consumer price indexes into our formulas. I have struck a task force. We have recommendations back to make sure that our municipalities have the money they need. I am going to continue that work.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the record will show that the minister completely ignored the question about the city's drinking water plant. But the minister made it very clear in his letter last year that he wasn't willing to provide funding for this project. He said — and I quote: "I am heartened to learn the city has roughly \$70 million in reserve funds for just such an emergency."

He went on, Mr. Speaker, saying that he would expect our largest municipality to be able to use its funding mechanisms to complete these kinds of municipal responsibilities. So, this puts the City of Whitehorse in a difficult position. They have an absolutely critical infrastructure need in their drinking water and they have a minister that, based on an incorrect understanding of their financial situation, is refusing to provide any support.

So, how much does the minister estimate that the city will need to increase taxes in order to pay for this critical piece of infrastructure?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, Mr. Speaker, here we have the Leader of the Official Opposition, who was unwilling to invest in rural Yukon — in municipalities — at all. We have an opposition party who failed to build an escalator into the comprehensive municipal grant when they were in power. We have an Official Opposition who is opposing every effort we have to put new schools and infrastructure for our children in

place. We have an Official Opposition over there who is threatening to cut the civil service. We have an Official Opposition over there who is putting a lot of misleading information into the public domain.

Mr. Speaker, I will say for the record that our government supports our municipalities. We are looking at the comprehensive municipal grant to make sure that it meets the needs of Yukon municipalities. We are investing in all of our communities — historic investment that they have never seen before — to make sure that they are whole. We are making sure that, even in Whitehorse, we have helped when they were faced with a crisis with the recycling recently. We stepped in to make sure that they were covered so that they had money to backstop their efforts.

We are going to continue to support our municipalities. That is what this government is all about, and we're going to continue that good work.

Mr. Dixon: Yet again, the minister has patently ignored the question that I have asked, which is so important to so many citizens in this city. So, I will ask again very simply: How much money will the Yukon government provide to help the City of Whitehorse in constructing a new drinking water plant?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I really do — I can hear the sort of — he apparently knows what the municipalities want. The Leader of the Official Opposition is stepping in and telling me, for the municipality of Whitehorse, what they want. I'm going to listen to the newly elected council and mayor, Mr. Speaker. I have said that right away. They are a duly elected government with the responsibilities as such, and I look forward to hearing what they have to say on what their priorities are and what they need. I haven't heard that yet; I have met with the mayor; I'm going to continue to meet with the mayor and council and find out what that is.

However, Mr. Speaker, in Whitehorse, we have built a 45-unit Ryder Apartments replacement; we have done the Alaska Highway safety improvements; we have the battery storage project going ahead; we have invested heavily in the airport. We are doing a gymnastics and climbing facility, a mental wellness unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital, planning for the replacement of the École Whitehorse Elementary School — which they oppose — public transit upgrades, Range Point Road lot developments, sport and recreation facility upgrades, Whistle Bend Place courtyard redesign, Whistle Bend residential development, and Whistle Bend Elementary School.

Mr. Speaker, these are the investments — the historic investments that we are making in the City of Whitehorse. I could go on across every single municipality in the territory. The opposition would not have done it; we took the decision to do it. I'm proud of that work.

Question re: Educational assistant and teacher-on-call training

Ms. White: Yesterday, I asked the Minister of Education about her government's commitment to provide a one-year training plan program for educational assistants and teachers on call by 2024 in collaboration and consultation with

the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, and Autism Yukon. The minister said that they can't move any further on this commitment due to their inability to bargain with the Yukon Association of Education Professionals. This government has had almost two years to get this training plan program implemented. The excuse that this training plan program is delayed due to bargaining doesn't hold water, because this government has had plenty of time to complete this commitment before now.

Using their failure to negotiate a fair deal with teachers as an excuse to ignore the CASA commitment is misleading, so can the minister explain the real reason behind the delay to the training plan program?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to talk about these commitments that we made in the agreement with the New Democratic Party. There are actually two training plans. One is for educational assistants, and the other is for teachers on call. They are slightly different — some common elements for sure. These actions include providing the development of a one-year training plan for educational assistants and teachers on call.

This is important work to ensure that educators and learners alike are supported in a good way. The role of educational assistants is very important in supporting learners in the educational journey. Conversations certainly, as I stated yesterday, are ongoing with Autism Yukon, the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, and the Yukon Association of Education Professionals to gather expert feedback and input into the development of the educational assistant and the TOC training plans. These conversations will continue. They are continuing.

After debate yesterday, I checked back with the department, and we are on track to have this completed by the end of 2024.

Ms. White: Yesterday in the media, the minister said that work had to stop because of the breakdown in the negotiations for a new collective agreement. Again, this government forced the union into conciliation. The goal of conciliation is to get parties back to the table and either party can offer to go back to the table at any point, so really, the ball is in the government's court.

The Minister of the Public Service Commission has alluded that they have another offer ready to bring to the table, which raises the question as to why they have yet to sit back down with teachers. If the Liberals truly cared about meeting the needs of Yukon students and education professionals, they would be back at the table with teachers. Teachers, parents, and students all need this government to step up and work with the teachers' union, not next month or next spring or next year — they need it right now.

So, when is this government going to get back to the bargaining table with teachers?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The bargaining teams from both the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Association of Education Professionals have made extraordinary, significant progress

this summer in reaching an agreement on all non-monetary matters.

With respect to matters of monetary issues, neither the Government of Yukon nor the Yukon Association of Education Professionals has presented a final offer at this time. Both parties mutually agreed that further bargaining would not be productive due to the significant gap on these monetary issues. On October 9, the Yukon Association of Education Professionals formally requested conciliation.

The Yukon Association of Education Professionals formally requested conciliation by writing to the chair of the education labour unions board. The goal of conciliation, as everybody in this Legislative Assembly ought to know, is to help both parties find a final negotiated agreement, and we are definitely looking forward to that process moving forward.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the minister told the media yesterday that she could not discuss the educational assistant and teacher-on-call training programs with the teachers union because they had to finish the collective bargaining first.

This is slightly incorrect. What she should have said was that her government would not discuss that training. In fact, this training is not part of the collective bargaining, and it has never been on the table.

We understand that the government continues to consult with the YAEP on a variety of other projects throughout collective bargaining. There is no reason that conversations around this training cannot happen now. There is no reason whatsoever that the department cannot be moving forward on its promise to deliver training, because it is an entirely separate issue.

I have held up my commitments, so when will the government hold up theirs? Will the minister commit to implementing these TOC and EA training plan programs by the end of this fiscal year as agreed to in the 2023 confidence and supply agreement?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise again. I did say at the end of my comments in the first question that we are on track to have the training plans in place by the end of this year.

Just to reflect on YAEP consultation, effective and efficient consultation really improves the relationship between the Yukon Association of Education Professionals and the Department of Education. Consultation is a process for seeking and providing information, exchanging views, and discussing issues to address and resolve issues in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Consultation is based on open commitment by both parties.

I am certainly committed to continuing to have the conversations. There are definite considerations when there is collective bargaining happening, and we respect the process that is underway.

Again, after debate yesterday, I revisited this with my department and I have shared today that we are on track to have those two training plans in place by the end of the fiscal year.

Question re: Federal infrastructure funding

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, the primary fund that the federal government has used to support Yukon municipal and community infrastructure projects has been the Investing in Canada infrastructure program, known as ICIP. The Minister of Community Services has told us that ICIP is fully subscribed and that the deadline for final applications to ICIP by the Government of Yukon is March 31 of next year.

So, while the federal government has announced some new funds, none are as broad or as large as ICIP was. Can the minister tell us if he has advocated for a successor to ICIP? If so, when can Yukon communities expect the new federal infrastructure program to be available to them?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, yes, I have joined many of my colleagues in the community municipal affairs portfolio to advocate for more federal infrastructure dollars because, across the country, we have seen a hunger for more infrastructure spending on the part of the federal government.

The members opposite, taking a lot of their cues from the Conservative Party, would know that the Conservative Party is not in favour of more infrastructure spending, and the Government of Canada has now changed its tack. So, we are still advocating for more infrastructure dollars. We know how important it is for our municipalities; I have heard that loud and clear. We will continue to work with the federal government to get as much money for the territory as we possibly can to pay for the infrastructure projects that have been identified by municipalities as priorities.

Mr. Istchenko: The federal infrastructure programs, like ICIP, have traditionally been based on a 75/25 model where the federal government contributes 75 percent of the cost and the remaining 25 percent has been contributed by the Yukon government.

We know that this Liberal government is facing a much more difficult financial situation recently, so will the minister assure the communities that the Yukon government will continue to support them by providing the 25 percent required by federal infrastructure programs, or will the Yukon municipalities be required to make up that 25 percent going forward?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member opposite got the memo from the party. All over media right now is a bunch of misinformation about deficits in our government. The Leader of the Official Opposition was not willing to invest in communities using infrastructure dollars that the federal government put on the table. He has spoken about cutting the civil service. He has spoken about his hard line on investment in Yukoners.

We took a different approach. We have invested across the territory in historic amounts of money funnelled into our municipalities to make sure that they are better positioned to deal with the changing environment and their needs. “All Communities Matter” — that was the slogan, and that’s what we’ve done. We will continue to do that.

I don’t know if he was listening to the answers that I gave the Official Opposition leader just two minutes ago. I have said

that the task force has met and come up with new proposals for the comprehensive municipal grant, and we are looking at that.

Question re: Whistle Bend traffic

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, last week, I asked the Minister of Community Services about ideas that my constituents have raised with me to address traffic in Whistle Bend. One of those was the idea of expanding Mountain View Drive, which many see as a choke point for getting out of Whistle Bend. The minister said that he would only consider this if it was proposed by the City of Whitehorse; however, the city has already identified this in their official community plan. Item 11.16 of the OCP states that the city will work with the Yukon government to prioritize traffic along the Whitehorse north transportation corridor, which includes Mountain View Drive.

Will the minister work with the city on this priority that has been identified and begin work to alleviate traffic in Whistle Bend?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, it's really unfortunate. We had a ministerial statement on Whistle Bend, and we could have had a really robust discussion about this issue before the House, before the people, the public, and they turned it down. They opposed it, and basically, both opposition parties rejected that discussion. So, unfortunately, we didn't have a much more robust discussion about Whistle Bend or traffic or whatever the members opposite wanted to bring up that day. Now they have had a change of heart — okay.

I am actually going to work — of course, I have said I will work with the City of Whitehorse, the new council, and the mayor. I want to hear what their priorities are and, of course, I will work with them. That's what I've done for the last three years, and I will continue to do that.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, traffic in and out of Whistle Bend is one of the issues of greatest concern to my constituents. Last week, the minister told me that he would not take suggestions from me or my constituents and that he wanted to hear from the City of Whitehorse; however, as I pointed out, the City of Whitehorse included this as a priority in their official community plan. Since the OCP that the minister himself signed commits that the Yukon government will work with the city to address this issue, will the minister please tell my constituents what steps he will take to address their concerns?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, listen, I understand the member opposite's constituents' concerns with traffic. I hear it up in my riding as well. There is a lot of traffic in the city right now. It's in Whistle Bend; it's in Riverdale; it's in Granger, Logan, Arkell, Copper Ridge. The reason, Mr. Speaker, that there is so much traffic is that the territory is doing really well. The economy is booming; we have had a 30-percent increase in our population during our time in office. It is really — there is a lot of business, a lot of things happening in this city and in this territory. I really do think that it has a lot to do with the approach that this government has taken to building our communities, to investing in our citizens, and making sure that the territory has some of the best social programs in the country

— and people are recognizing that, and they are voting with their feet, and they are coming.

So, I will actually meet and take my direction on municipal roads from the municipality, and I want to hear what they have to say. As minister, I'm not going to tell them what to do; I'm going to listen to them, and I will help as I can to make their priorities a reality. That's what we have done for the last eight years, and we're going to continue to do that.

Question re: Watson Lake continuing care services

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, over the past several years, the Minister of Health and Social Services has flip-flopped about long-term care in Watson Lake so many times that my constituents have lost track.

In November 2022, the government announced that two beds in the Watson Lake hospital would be used for long-term care and open in early 2023. Then the minister announced that they were no longer moving ahead with this because, according to her, the community didn't want them.

Then in April of this year, the minister said that they were back on track and the plan was going ahead. Now it has been two full years since the promise was first made, so I would like to ask the minister this: When will these two beds for continuing care in Watson Lake be ready?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be able to speak about health issues that are of concern to Yukoners. Yukoners and, in fact, Canadians have consistently talked about health care as one of their primary concerns, and they care about access and about improvements to health care, as does our government.

The Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation are committed to supporting the choice to age within the community of Watson Lake and, in fact, all communities where possible. We appreciate that the residents of Watson Lake are bringing forward feedback and concerns about the availability and supports and services in the community. In response to these concerns and aging in community, a Watson Lake steering committee has been established to oversee collaborative work between Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation to improve supports for aging in place. The steering committee will provide support and guidance to the working group, which is comprised of Health and Social Services and Yukon Hospital Corporation staff, who are working in partnership with the Liard First Nation, the Daylu Dena Council, and the Signpost Seniors society.

I look forward to more information about this and their first meeting. The two rooms designated for long-term care in Watson Lake are now being used.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the minister was clear in April that this plan was going ahead. The plan included the renovation of rooms to allow for two beds to be created for long-term care, and it included the hiring of nurses and other staff to service these beds.

So, can the minister tell us if all the necessary staff have been hired, and if not, when can my community expect that to happen?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the first meeting of the working group, which is an important aspect of community care in Watson Lake, it was scheduled in September 2024 to outline a work plan that will be brought to the steering committee for approval and guidance.

The two rooms designated for long-term care at the Watson Lake Community Hospital are finished and set up for extended stays. One of the rooms is primarily being used for rotating long-term admissions on a scheduled basis, and the other is accessible for short-term respites, although both can be used for long-term care when needed. Usage rates of the rooms will provide valuable data on the community's needs and will support evidence-informed recommendations by the working group while supporting aging in place and helping people who might otherwise need to move to Whitehorse so that they can remain in Watson Lake.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, on April 24 of this year, CBC Yukon reported that the minister was now looking forward to the two long-term care beds in the hospital becoming a reality. According to that article, the minister told reporters that — quote: "... her office is planning a scheduled visit to Watson Lake to speak with residents about the long-term care needs, and what the government will do about them."

Following that promise, I understand that the minister has had a Zoom call with town councillors, but to date, she has never had a public meeting with residents to hear from them about long-term care. When does the minister plan to keep that promise?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Hospital Corporation supports patients who require an alternative level of care, such as long-term care, respite care, or palliative care — and that these patients can be accommodated in Watson Lake. These patients may be cared for in the hospital environment or, for an extended period of time, in the two rooms allocated or in the hospital if necessary.

The Yukon home care program in Watson Lake provides services for individuals in Watson Lake through one permanent registered nurse and home care support supervisor, and they provide care coordination, nursing, and home support work supervision — and one permanent full-time home support worker, one AOC home support worker, and one Whitehorse-based home care occupational and physical therapist who visit the community two to three times per year. These are important services for individuals to be able to stay in Watson Lake.

A transfer payment agreement with the Watson Lake Signpost Seniors organization has increased \$53,000 from the previous year, now totalling \$114,000 for 2024-25. We look forward to continuing to support Watson Lake residents in their community.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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), the Chair appoints the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin to act as Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Acting Chair (Mr. Hassard): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 43, entitled *Act to amend the Business Corporations Act (2024)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 43: Act to amend the Business Corporations Act (2024) — continued

Acting Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 43, *Act to amend the Business Corporations Act (2024)*.

Is there any further general debate? The Member for Whitehorse West has 7 minutes and 58 seconds remaining.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Chair; I appreciate that.

This afternoon, I have Phil MacDonald and Fred Pretorius with me to assist with any questions relating to the bill, and I think we'll just get at it, so I will cede the floor.

Mr. Dixon: When we left off, we were discussing the concerns that were raised by the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce. Earlier today, the minister tabled a letter from the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce. Unfortunately, none of us have had a chance to see that yet, so can the minister explain to us what happened with regard to the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce? Was there a meeting? Were their concerns addressed, and is that what is contained in the letter that we haven't seen yet?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, there was a meeting with the members of the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce. We explained again what we hope to accomplish with the bill. It was a productive meeting. They acknowledged that there had been some churn within their organization, and following that meeting, they had a couple of questions.

The officials with the Community Services department answered those questions to the satisfaction of the Yukon First

Nation Chamber of Commerce and they then sent correspondence to us saying that, given the answers they had received and the meetings we have had, they were fully in support of the legislation.

Mr. Dixon: Of course, I would point out that it would have been helpful if that meeting had occurred prior to the tabling of this bill. If that letter had been obtained by the government from the First Nation Chamber of Commerce before the tabling of his bill, we wouldn't have had the delay that we have had.

I will turn now to some more substantive questions that I had. I am aware of a letter that we sent on October 10 from the Yukon government to stakeholders affected by this bill. That includes the legal community and the business corporations community. In that letter, it suggests that the plan is that, if enacted, the new requirements would come into force on June 1 of next year.

Can the minister confirm that this is the case?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The act will come into force six months after it is proclaimed. So, if it were to pass, it would come in around June. That's to prepare for the implementation of the legislation. That six-month period was given so that anybody who needed to could prepare for that, and then there is actually a four-month period following that is done for the actual implementation of the register and to get going. So, there is actually a 10-month period for anybody affected by this piece of legislation to get their ducks in a row before the act is actually in force in full.

Mr. Dixon: The feedback that I have heard from the legal community is that this amount of time for implementation is insufficient and that it will be extremely onerous for the legal community to respond to the requirements of this bill and its subsequent requirements in the time that the minister has suggested.

Has the minister considered conducting any consultation with the legal community about the implementation of this bill?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The lawyers whom we have heard from on this issue, when we explained that it was actually a 10-month implementation time, said that it was perfectly acceptable to them. We have answered any questions that we got from the legal community. The feedback that we got is that 10 months is a fully acceptable time for implementation.

Mr. Dixon: So, the minister said that the lawyers whom they have heard from — I am wondering if they can tell us which firms they heard from. Did they do a "what we heard" document? Is there some sort of correspondence that we can see to verify that what we have heard is inaccurate and what the government has heard is accurate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Acting Chair, as I said in our discussions when last we met, the consultations were actually conducted by the federal government, which established the framework. We here at Community Services have been assisting with any questions we may have heard. Over the course of having sent our letters out, we have heard from very few legal firms, most of them coming from the corporations that the lawyers represent, asking questions. We have prepared that information back to them. All that we have heard have been

— once they understand that there is actually a 10-month period, including a grace period, they have all said that is fine.

We haven't got a "what we heard" document, but as I said, it was the federal government who conducted the consultations, not us.

Mr. Dixon: Was the feedback that the minister heard from law firms in Whitehorse or in the Yukon — was that feedback that was submitted to him after the tabling of the bill or before the tabling of the bill?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, any questions we got from the legal community came out after the October 10 letter was sent out, but we did contact the president of the Canadian Bar Association in March of 2020 — and that was the Yukon branch of the Canadian Bar Association — and a director with the Chartered Professional Accountants of Yukon to inform them of the national consultation. We heard absolutely nothing back following that outreach from CS on the national consultations to feed them into them.

Mr. Dixon: I won't belabour the point, but I would note that the concerns I have heard directly in the past several weeks from lawyers in the territory have been around concerns about the implementation of this and the burdensome red tape this will create for business corporations. That burden comes with very little gain on the other side.

I will note that. If the minister has heard otherwise, I look forward to being corrected, but that was the feedback that I had heard directly. Again, I would make the point simply that it would have been wiser for the minister to reach out to the legal community before the tabling of the bill so that he had that information and feedback prior to the bill's tabling.

I will leave it there. I know that we would like to move on. I am done with my questions, and I look forward to advancing this bill.

Acting Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 43, entitled *Act to amend the Business Corporations Act (2024)*?

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

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 43, entitled *Act to amend the Business Corporations Act (2024)*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title of Bill No. 43 read and agreed to

Acting Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 43, entitled *Act to amend the Business Corporations Act (2024)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Acting Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 11 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I move that the Chair report Bill No. 43, entitled *Act to amend the Business Corporations Act (2024)*, without amendment.

Acting Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse West that the Chair report Bill No. 43, entitled *Act to amend the Business Corporations Act (2024)*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Acting Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Acting Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Department of Education — *continued*

Acting Chair: Is there any further general debate?

The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has six minutes and six seconds remaining.

Ms. White: Mr. Acting Chair, the last time we were up in discussion or debate around the Department of Education budget was on October 30. What I was ending my questioning that day with was around traffic on Range Road. We have heard lots from the Department of Education and from the minister about the relocation of École Whitehorse Elementary School to Takhini, including that a traffic study would be undertaken now as opposed to before the decision was made, so I would like to get some more information about that traffic study and what will be included in it. Has it been tendered? Has it been awarded? When will it be done?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Acting Chair, I would like to welcome back our officials to the Legislative Assembly today. We have Deputy Minister Mary Cameron and Andrea McIntyre, director of finance for the Department of Education. Thank you so much for being here.

Thanks for the question. The traffic study is part of the contract for Kobayashi and Zedda, and they have within their team experts who are working on this part of the project. I recently sent the scope of work to the Takhini Neighbourhood Association and I will go over that today just as information for the House, and I will table this as well tomorrow.

A traffic impact study, or TIA, is a detailed analysis conducted to understand how traffic behaves in a particular area — in this instance, Range Road near Takhini. When a new

development is planned or when there are concerns about congestion or safety, the goal is to evaluate current traffic conditions, predict future traffic patterns, and identify potential issues before they become problems. The methodology will be data collection. The first step involves gathering information about current traffic conditions in the Range Road area. This can include traffic volumes — how many cars, bikes, and pedestrians are using the road at different times of the day, rush hour versus off-peak times — and collision history — if there are any common areas or causes of collisions. Data is typically collected using traffic counters — electronic devices placed on the roads to count vehicles — and manual observation — people watching traffic patterns at different times.

Second is analysis of existing conditions. The study looks at how the intersections in the Range Road study area are currently functioning. This means identifying if there are any issues such as traffic congestion and traffic delay during peak traffic times, locations where collisions have been recorded.

Third is predicting future conditions. The study then tries to predict how traffic will change in the future considering new developments like: the proposed school and other known residential projects impacting Rhine Way and Normandy Road that might increase the number of vehicles and buses on the road; population growth in the area; potential road improvements or changes such as new roads or traffic signals, particularly at the intersection of Two Mile Hill and Range Road; potential traffic impacts from crosstown trips involving the Whistle Bend neighbourhood as well; potential impacts due to increased enrolment at Yukon University; and assessment of traffic and intersection operations using computer simulation software. The traffic engineer will assess how traffic operates at the intersections under the different scenarios: existing conditions, future conditions with more people driving; future conditions with more people taking the school bus, Whitehorse Transit, biking, walking, et cetera. These models help to estimate the impact of the planned development and population growth on the study intersections based on the findings of the traffic analysis. Improvement conditions are recommended at the study intersections and tested in the software.

Assessment of walking, cycling, and transit networks — so, assessing the accommodation of alternate transportation modes, including sidewalks, assessing existing and proposed new sidewalks and/or multi-use paths based on walking routes.

Cycling — assess existing and proposed new bike lanes on Range Road and/or multi-use paths based on bike routes.

Whitehorse Transit — assess existing bus routes and stops and proposed new routes and stops based on demand.

Then we get to the recommendations. Based on the findings, the study reviews the impacts of the proposed traffic on the study area intersections and provides suggestions to improve traffic conditions. These might include: road improvements or upgrades like adding turn lanes; new traffic control measures such as traffic signals and roundabouts; adjusting parking policies and improving public transportation options; and safety measures like better street lighting or pedestrian crossings.

Then we get to the outcomes. Planning for future growth — the study predicts how traffic will change over time, helping to plan for future needs, whether that's intersection improvements, implementing traffic signals, or other infrastructure improvements.

Improved traffic flow — the study helps to identify ways to reduce congestion, making travel quicker and smoother for all road users.

Improved alternate transportation — the study helps to identify opportunities to improve the network for people walking, biking, or taking transit.

Safety enhancements — it pinpoints areas where conditions are frequent and recommends safety measures such as better signals, improved intersections, or traffic calming features.

Community impact — the study helps to understand how traffic changes might affect local neighbourhoods, businesses, and overall quality of life. For example, a new development could create a lot more traffic, so planners might recommend mitigating measures like improved public transit or other measures.

I will table this in a legislative return tomorrow in the House business.

Ms. White: I appreciate that it will be tabled tomorrow, but it would have been helpful to have had that document in my hand just now.

I do have questions about that. There were comments about the concern about intersections. As an example, Two Mile Hill and Range Road have an intersection with a traffic light that fairly regularly has accidents, and that is because people often are impatient because, by the time you wait for the eighth or ninth light to change as you are trying to either cross or turn left onto Two Mile Hill, it becomes problematic.

I have mentioned the increase in traffic since Whistle Bend has built up, which is great news for Whistle Bend and less good for Range Road.

The minister talked about intersections. She talked about congestion or delays — all things that are really apparent on Range Road. It was interesting to me in previous conversations — whether it was debate here in the budget or whether it was during Question Period — when the minister said not to worry because there was going to be access off of University Drive. It's interesting because, in order to access University Drive, you actually have to either turn left or right from Range Road.

I was hoping the minister could help me understand how having the school entrance off of University Drive would help the congestion on Range Road.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have just a couple of comments about some of the preamble to the actual question. Certainly, one of the intersections that I mentioned in reviewing this information about the scope of work for the traffic study — the Two Mile and Range Road intersection will be one of the areas looked at heavily within the study.

Just going back to choosing the future site for École Whitehorse Elementary, under the analysis — I think that we have gone through it a few times. Of course, one of the detailed analyses around minimizing new traffic impact reduces access

points, providing queuing space and reduces the need for potential new municipal traffic control, but that is something that we would work on with the City of Whitehorse.

In the option that was chosen, it is again the northwest corner of the Takhini reserve. The proposed plan allows for the existing Takhini Elementary School to remain in place, preserving its current structure; additionally, one of the existing softball fields will be retained, and a new multi-sport field would be planned in the middle of the site to ensure that the traffic flow and the bus loop and parking lot are proposed to be situated in the northwest corner of the site with access to University Drive.

As we move through and the contractors work through the traffic study, that will be certainly articulated well, I think, in the final report and in the analysis and then the recommendations and, of course, then the outcomes, which are ultimately where our main focus is — and, of course, making recommendations for managing mitigation changes in the traffic flow.

Ms. White: Mr. Acting Chair, in talking about new traffic impact, can the minister tell me how many school buses currently go to École Whitehorse Elementary School for pickup and drop-off in the morning and in the afternoon?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will go through some new current information that we thought would be helpful for this debate. This is based on as of November 6, 2024. We currently have the total enrolment for École Whitehorse Elementary School at 453. The total number of students registered for bus is 356. So, the percentage of students currently using school buses is 78.6.

We went through where the locations are. We have 41 students who come from Riverdale, we have 18 who come from Hillcrest, we have 54 coming from Takhini, 97 from Copper Ridge, 51 from Whistle Bend, 36 from Porter Creek, 15 from McCrae, three from downtown, 17 from Hidden Valley, six from Crestview, and 17 from outside of Whitehorse. I can provide this in a return as well just so that folks have it in hand. Again, this will be part of the traffic study, because we want to determine the impact, of course, and how busing is a very big factor here.

If the area distribution remains the same at the new school, only around 10 percent of students will be bused up the Two Mile Hill. I think that's really important. Certainly, we will continue to complete the data and analytics through our unit to provide the more full demographic picture of the downtown school-aged children, as we know that demographics change, but we are tracking this very closely so that we know what we're dealing with.

As we move through this traffic study, we will be able to have a better sense. Right now, we have approximately 12 school buses that transport the students, so I think that's very important information as well. As we move through this study and get to the recommendations, mitigations, and community impact, all of this will be shared and be really important factual information that folks in the Takhini Neighbourhood Association and other Yukoners will be interested to hear about.

Ms. White: I agree. I would say that, beyond just the neighbourhood association, the entire Takhini community would have been interested in this information, but we never had an opportunity to hear from the minister about it until after the announcement was made.

I do appreciate that the minister suspects that it would only be 10 percent of students bused up Two Mile Hill, but I can tell you from my experience of Range Road that the traffic up Two Mile Hill isn't so much the concern at 8:00 in the morning; it's the traffic down the hill that's the concern and then turning on or off of Range Road — although I appreciate it.

So, knowing that there are 453 students currently — as of November 6, 2024 — at École Whitehorse Elementary School, how many support staff — so, how many teachers, how many — like, what is the adult population to support 453 students?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As we go through debate, we're going to try to track that number, because that is not something that I have today right at my fingertips. If we aren't able to get that, I will return that information to the House.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that from the minister and look forward to receiving that number.

Again — so, 12 school buses — 12 school buses. So, I know for sure that there are two school buses, maybe three school buses that I see regularly going through Takhini, so I appreciate that 54 students would be able to walk to school.

I am trying to understand how 12 school buses turning left onto University Drive and coming out and either turning right or left onto Range Road — keeping in mind, of course, that in order to get to Range Road, you would have to turn left or right depending on — if you are coming up Mountain View, you turn left; if you are coming from Copper Ridge, I guess you turn right — mostly being the fact that there are two intersections.

So, when the minister talked about municipal traffic control, there are two intersections. We have the Two Mile Hill and Range Road, and then we have Mountain View and Range Road. Neither have advance turning signals to turn left or right from Range Road. If you are lucky enough to be in the right spot, you can get an advance left-hand turn signal for Range Road when you are coming down Two Mile Hill, but you don't get the same to turn in other directions, and there are no advance turn signals on Mountain View and Range Road.

That doesn't even start about University Drive. So, if you had 12 school buses and conservatively, let's say, even 50 cars, because there are 50 teachers — I think there are probably more than 50 teachers — turning left or right onto University Drive depending on where they are coming from, that is not a controlled intersection right now actually at all. It has some new stuff that the City of Whitehorse just put in, which will be interesting, because they will probably have to take it out in order to accommodate the next traffic.

What kind of work has to be done with the municipal government when we talk about municipal traffic control? How does the territorial government work with the municipality to talk about things like intersections or additional traffic control measures?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I know that all of the preamble to the question will be looked at within the traffic study. Those are really important areas that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King has pointed out. We are certainly aware of those pressure points, and we will be seeking to work to mitigate them.

In terms of working with the City of Whitehorse, that is part of the work. Once the traffic study is complete, then we will work directly with the City of Whitehorse on the results of that report. I suspect that, within the next few months, we will have all of that information and the work —

We are moving toward having that work done with the City of Whitehorse as well before we bring all of the information back to the Takhini Neighbourhood Association and to other residents of the City of Whitehorse and the school community at large. That work is underway, and I don't disagree at all with what the MLA for Takhini-Kopper King has laid out today. Those are all areas that we are looking at.

Right now, in terms of the staff — I mean, I could get — and again, we are going to break down more of this as well in terms of where folks live. This is all part of the patterns of traffic. We will be able to determine some of those impacts as well. The current staff — we have four custodial, one First Nation teacher, 12 EAs, 36 teachers, and 2.5 admin. It is 56.5 FTEs — that is the total.

Ms. White: I had a pretty good guess there at 50, so I appreciate the 6.5 that I missed.

The minister just referenced a few months. I did ask initially when the traffic study was expected to be completed. Does the minister have a timeline for when that traffic study will be complete?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The initial work is scheduled to be completed by the end of November, and then, as I had stated earlier in my comments, we will then be working with the City of Whitehorse on the analysis of all of that work that is being done. Then we will be in a position to share the findings. My hope is that it will be in the early new year so that we can keep the project moving forward and informing the residents of the Takhini neighbourhood, the school community, and others.

I just wanted to make note, on the École Whitehorse Elementary buses that already go to other schools, that we would look at new routes with the new locations as well. That will be part of the planning for the school. That is also another great opportunity to mitigate some of the issues that may come up during this study and as we continue to analyze the demographics for the school as they change and evolve up to the actual opening of the new École Whitehorse Elementary.

Ms. White: All of this brings me back to another topic of conversation, which is the engagement with the greater community about the location or the relocation of École Whitehorse Elementary School. I appreciate that the Liberal government was saddled with a high school that wasn't big enough. F.H. Collins school is not big enough.

It was built, oddly enough, by the chair's government of the day. I like to refer to it as the "new new F.H. Collins", because the initial new F.H. Collins was beautiful. It would be like Whistle Bend beautiful or CS Mercier beautiful. It was an incredible design. It would have been big enough. It would have

been an incredible thing. Interestingly enough, I can hear the previous Minister of Education off-mic talking about the cost of it, but unfortunately, when contractors had brought forward solutions on how to cut that cost, they didn't get anywhere, so that was too bad.

We know that F.H. Collins is too small. We know that. It's too small for a high school. The minister knows this. We have talked about how full it is, but something that has been floated that I've heard multiple times in the community from people far smarter than myself is that F.H. Collins, because it was based on an elementary school, could be a great option for École Whitehorse Elementary. That has been something that has been discussed within the community, and I wanted to know if that is something that the minister has ever heard spoken about or if they have ever considered it.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I think I have certainly heard folks talk about this idea. You know, the F.H. Collins school was not built to meet the needs of Yukon's growth, and I think that is definitely a huge issue as we plan out for other capital — and, you know, just simply moving children over to a high school that is — maybe it was based on an elementary school plan, but it's built for high school-aged children. It's built for them at that age. So, it is counter to everything that we know about building purpose-built infrastructure.

Schools need to be designed with the specific needs of their students in mind. You know, we have had a lot of debate in this House about inclusivity, diversity, all of the inclusion that needs to be part of an elementary school.

We have a lot of pressures in that area, so purpose-built infrastructure is our approach to building new school infrastructure. It is unfortunate that this is what we have to deal with as far as F.H. Collins Secondary, but it was designed also — and I just have to mention this aspect of it. We are moving toward adding in modulars in the next year. We have two modular classrooms that will be placed at F.H. Collins Secondary. F.H. Collins Secondary was also designed to accommodate a school expansion in the future. However, the school is currently at 99-percent capacity and expansion may be required in the future. Those are all decisions that we will have to make for the capital planning as we go forward, because we do also have a land reserve in Porter Creek by the secondary school there.

Those are our thoughts on simply moving children around and moving them over to a school that was maybe too small for the number of students, but it is a high school. The other part of that is — the reason why we are not able to build on the École Whitehorse Elementary current location is because there is not enough room there. If we were to demolish and build a school, those students would need to go somewhere, as would the high school students. They would need to go somewhere as well.

Those are all considerations. I stand by our approach in terms of our functional planning. We have put a lot of time and effort into building a functional plan that helps us to make the right decisions for the specific children whom we are working to accommodate. Purpose-built infrastructure is our way forward. It is a very big part of evidence-based decision-making

— that what is best for children in an elementary setting is what we would be continuing to support.

Ms. White: Can the minister let me know if they have had anyone walk through F.H. Collins school to see what kind of changes would need to be completed to make it appropriate for an elementary school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will go into a little bit about the school maintenance. We ensure that all of our schools meet the needs of the school community and work to do upgrades and work within the capital planning as well.

In terms of our current capital planning, our government works with our five-year capital plan, which includes school replacements and renovation projects to ensure that all buildings are safe and suitable for years to come. Currently, we are building a new school in Burwash Landing and we are continuing to work to replace École Whitehorse Elementary School. It is very important that we work toward moving children from École Whitehorse Elementary School into a new school. That planning is well underway. It is, again, part of our five-year capital plan, and that is how we plan for capital infrastructure. I am very proud that we were able to build the CSSC Mercier and to build and complete Whistle Bend Elementary School, that we are working to build a new school in Burwash Landing, and that we are planning for this construction that would be purpose-built.

In terms of the specific assessment that the member is asking for, that is not something that we are currently exploring. We are working within the projects that we have approved and we are working with our functional plan. We are working with the project advisory committee and working through the necessary steps to move this project forward.

Ms. White: In the spring of 2023, the government held a Whitehorse schools capital planning engagement. I'm wondering if the minister views that engagement as part of the evidence-based decision-making that her government took to relocate École Whitehorse Elementary School to the Takhini land reserve. The reason why I ask this is that I attended a meeting in Takhini actually, and one of the things that folks were very clear about is that they didn't believe that the consultation specifically around school replacement was giving either permission, consent, or direction for the relocation of the École Whitehorse Elementary School to the Takhini land reserve.

Can the minister help me to understand how her government says that the consultation was done on that relocation and how we got to where we are? I'm still struggling. We go back to 2022 when the announcement was made. It really came out of nowhere. The minister did say that it is evidence-based decision-making, so I'm just trying to find out what evidence they used to decide that École Whitehorse Elementary School was going to be relocated to Takhini.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I will just maybe talk a little bit about École Whitehorse Elementary. It is the top school for replacement. It's the oldest school in the Yukon. We knew that this was the highest priority to be replaced. The current facility is absolutely not able to meet the current or future programming

and community needs, including access to space, innovation, inclusion, and experiential learning.

As I pointed out last week, when we went through the school site options, we relied heavily, of course, on our public service to do the analysis on the various sites that were potentially available and/or to at least have a look at them for a site for the replacement. Ultimately, the Takhini Educational Land Reserve was the largest parcel of land that is able to accommodate the type of school that we want to build and would provide the access to greenspace and all the other desired features for modern learning. We went forward with a site analysis and then worked with the community to look at the options that were presented to us at that stage. We certainly have worked with the project advisory committee.

I had meetings, of course, with the school council, First Nations, the First Nation School Board, and since the establishment of the project advisory committee, there have been numerous meetings. The advisory committee continues to have the following organizations or governments represented: the school council, of course, the Whitehorse Elementary School administration, the City of Whitehorse, the Government of Yukon, Ta'an Kwäch'än' Council, and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. The Takhini Neighbourhood Association joined a bit later in November 2023. That committee remains in place, and we will continue to work with them.

Just going back to the Whitehorse school replacements long-term capital planning, it is important that we ensure that our schools meet the demands of the growing population and provide the modern learning environments for students to learn and grow for years to come. The Government of Yukon recognizes the fundamental role that schools in healthy, thriving communities provide. The results of the 2023 school facilities engagement are informing the development of an updated Whitehorse replacement plan and a work plan for small and medium renovations for Whitehorse schools.

We continue, of course, as I have said, to work closely with our school boards. We have two other authorities — the First Nation School Board and the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon — on their vision for education and capital needs. As part of school facilities engagement, we also had conversations, of course, with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än' Council.

We continue to invest in our schools. We did engage, of course, in the spring 2023 on an open public survey. We conducted open houses to hear from the public and school communities to better understand their user experience with their school facilities and how to better meet the K to 12 programming. In addition to the survey and open houses, the department hosted focus groups for educators, learning stewards, and students. The purpose of the engagement was to build a relationship with the school communities and inform Yukoners about the school capital planning and development process. All of this will certainly be taken into consideration as we plan also for a new downtown school in the future.

We collected stakeholder feedback on their ideas and considerations for a 21st century learning environment. The department reached out to many educational partners,

organizations, and community groups who have ideas and experiences to share to inform them of the engagement and how to participate. We had approximately 1,000 Yukoners participate in the engagement, and a “what we heard” report was published in November 2023, which is available on yukon.ca. The department published the engagement and shared the report with the First Nation education council and the Gadzoosdaa advisory committee, recognizing that students from communities may attend schools in Whitehorse.

I can continue to go through all of the organizations who were involved in that. We will continue to work on this project with the project advisory committee and to inform the community as more information is available.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer, but I don't need her to go through the things that I can find on the document online — it's fine.

I am interested, though, about a November 8 article in the *Yukon News* — and I am just going to quote the initial paragraphs. It says — quote: “Education Minister ... has confirmed the governing Yukon Liberal Party will ignore the will of the Yukon legislature by refusing to hold a public engagement to consult on alternative locations for a school relocation project.”

The minister “... made the confirmation to reporters on Nov. 7.”

Can the minister help me understand how — as an example, if we look at the makeup right now of the House, there isn't a clear majority, and I would suggest that, by the Yukon Party and the NDP voting together on this motion, we actually represent more Yukoners than the government does alone based on the fact of just, like, sheer numbers.

Can the minister help me to understand her stance on why there won't be a public engagement and why the decision has been made not to actually go out to Yukoners and have those conversations about where they would like to see either a new elementary school or a new high school? We heard about how bad F.H. Collins is, but we didn't hear the solution on how to solve that. I'm just curious — in referencing that November 8 article — based on the debate that we had in this Assembly, the minister's stance that there is a refusal to have that public engagement.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I certainly very much respect this Legislative Assembly. I was very honoured to be voted in by Mountain View to represent them in the Legislative Assembly eight years ago and, of course, I respect the House.

You know, I go back to — you know, some of the comments that I made during some of the debate and I did go over extensively, you know, where and why and how we got to this stage and that we are currently in planning for a new elementary school for the current students and the future students of École Whitehorse Elementary.

It is a responsibility as a minister to do this work and to ultimately make the decisions about this advancement of this important project. You know, I won't go through all of the debate that happened that day. Our members of our Liberal caucus voted no for all of the reasons that I had laid out that day in terms of the need to advance infrastructure — school

infrastructure — in the territory, including here in Whitehorse. I went over, you know, what and how we considered other locations. Again, our government is committed — continues to be 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.

I have heard the concerns. Let me be clear that we recognize that Yukoners have questions about the new location for École Whitehorse Elementary and we heard those loud and clear. We are meeting with all of those partners and stakeholders to share information and help mitigate those concerns.

It is with deep responsibility as Minister of Education that we continue to move forward on building the important infrastructure that we need. I also heard the Leader of the New Democratic Party today say that I didn't give any solutions to F.H. Collins. I did say that the location — the school was built to expand, so that is an option as we plan for future infrastructure in the City of Whitehorse. I also stated that one of the tools that we use in mitigating enrolment pressures is the use of modulars. We do have two that are scheduled to be located at F.H. Collins. That will happen in the next fiscal year. We are working through procurement now, I believe, on those new modulars.

I just want to re-emphasize the honour that I have to represent Yukoners. I also have two mandate letters — one that I received from the former Premier and one that I received from the current Premier — to work toward a replacement of a Whitehorse-based elementary school. École Whitehorse Elementary is at the top of that list. The Takhini Educational Land Reserve serves as a centrally located space for the school. We know, of course, that there will be areas with traffic that we will be working toward mitigating — and, of course, protecting greenspace and all of the other important aspects of that project. Maybe I will just stop there.

Ms. White: I am delighted to say that I was first elected in 2011 and I have been representing the riding of Takhini-Kopper King ever since. It is really interesting actually to just look at the election results from 2021. I actually hadn't really looked at it that way, but I am delighted to say that I am the person in the Assembly with the highest percentage of the vote at 63.3 percent. That is pretty fun. It's interesting to note that it far outweighs the Liberal government. Congratulations to the Yukon Party — quite a few of them crossed over 50 percent.

I am happy to represent the riding and I have been since 2011. I do feel that privilege.

I am going to move on. I think my stance about the École Whitehorse Elementary School being relocated to Takhini is pretty clear at this point; 45 minutes is probably plenty of time.

Can the minister tell me how many superintendents are currently on staff for the Department of Education?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We currently have two FTE positions for the Department of Education, and we also have auxiliaries on call who can come in and help when there are pressures. We also have two executive directors — one with the

First Nation School Board and one with the CSFY — who are equivalents to the superintendents.

Ms. White: How many superintendents does the Department of Education — ideally, what is that number of superintendents?

My understanding with superintendents is that the territory was divided up and there were different superintendents who represented different areas. Can the minister help me understand?

If they currently have two FTEs and they have two folks whom they call “auxiliaries on call” and she mentioned the two executive directors from both the First Nation School Board and the commission scolaire — but how many superintendents does the Department of Education want to have on staff?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We had three superintendents — full-time FTEs — and when we established the First Nation School Board, we reduced that to two FTEs for the Department of Education.

Ms. White: Just for confirmation, the superintendents are fully staffed right now for the Department of Education. They anticipate that they only need two full-time equivalents for that role.

Hon. Ms. McLean: We currently have one of the FTEs filled with a permanent staff and one that is being covered by an auxiliary on call, and we are working to fill the permanent position. That hiring process is underway.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I am just aware of my time, although I have lots of questions about superintendents and the roles that they have to play.

Can the minister let me know if conciliation dates have been set for the negotiation around the Yukon Association of Education Professionals and YG?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I do not have on hand today the specific dates that the member is looking for, but I can say that on October 17, 2024, the Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board communicated to the Public Service Commission that they intend to recommend the establishment of a conciliation board. The Public Service Commission was then required to nominate a person to be a member of the conciliation board by October 25, 2024. This was completed within the time frame. I would be happy to bring back or defer the question specifically to the Minister of the Public Service Commission.

Ms. White: I appreciate that from the minister. I actually just recently reached out to the Yukon Association of Education Professionals to ask about conciliation dates, so I was both pleased and a bit surprised to hear that now they have been set in December. The reason why I'm bringing that up right now is that today in Question Period, I was told by the minister that there couldn't be work done on the training program plans for both the TOCs and EAs during negotiations. Then the minister also said, both during Question Period and in a follow-up to me, that those training plan programs would be completed by the end of the calendar year.

I am struggling to understand how something that's supposed to be developed in consultation with a partner is going to happen when the minister said that there is going to be no engagement from the Department of Education with that

partner about the training program plans during negotiations, knowing that conciliation dates have now been set in December.

Can the minister help me understand how those training program plans are going to be completed by the end of the calendar year if there is not a willingness from the department to work with the Yukon Association of Education Professionals during bargaining?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I stated today, we are on track now after going back to the department and digging in a bit more in terms of the EA training plan and the TOC training plan. They are two different things. There are some similarities.

I just want to state that, prior to collective bargaining, we certainly had gone a long way down this road, and we are confident that we will be able to deliver and have this in place — an updated EA training plan and an updated TOC training plan — and have it completed by the end of 2024.

I am just confirming, as the member has stated today — just hearing from the Public Service Commissioner that they are expected to meet the first week in December within the conciliation process.

Ms. White: I am looking for clarification. So, if the conciliation meetings are the first week in December and this commitment is for the training plan for EAs and TOCs to be developed in collaboration with their partners, including the Yukon Association of Education Professionals — I am just pointing out that we are six weeks away from the end of the calendar year. The first week of December kind of brings us to three weeks. So how, if the Department of Education isn't willing to work with their partners during this collective bargaining time on something that isn't a bargaining agreement, is the department so confident that they are going to get those training plans completed?

The reason I am asking this question is because I am really urging the department to reach out now to get this rolling, because I want to see this done, obviously. There are a lot of reasons I want to see this done.

I would just like the minister to help me understand how — we are six weeks away from the end of the calendar year, the end of 2024 — if conciliation is the first week in December, that doesn't mean that there is going to be a new collective agreement in that first week, so that brings us to less than three weeks until the end of the year, and one of those weeks is Christmas and New Year's. Can the minister help me understand how — with this timeline, with the Department of Education not working with the YAEP during this process — they are going to get these plans completed?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, the framework for these two training plans are essentially complete and will be shared with partners, and there are still areas where we can work with the Association of Education Professionals, and we are doing that.

Again, there is work that has been done on this prior to collective bargaining, and we feel that it will be on track to be completed by the end of 2024.

Ms. White: I thought that I just had one question left, and I really don't. I know that there is going to a break, and at the break, I am going to hand it over, but again, I am going to

ask the minister: How can the training plans essentially be completed if they are supposed to consult on those training plans and their partners feel like they haven't? How can you hand an essentially completed — not my words — document to your partners that you are supposed to have consulted on the development of them — how does this work?

Why wouldn't the department want to share those now so that they could get feedback leading up to the end of the calendar year? I don't mean to sound thick, but I am trying to understand the minister's position here.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thanks for the questions today. Prior to coming into the debate today, we had discussed a written document that will really work through some of the detail that we will be providing to the member and Leader of the New Democratic Party later this week or early next week that will lay out the process and how we got here, what the next steps are, and how we see us tracking to have an updated EA and TOC training plan completed by the end of 2024.

Ms. White: Although I appreciate at some point seeing some document, but if the partners who were supposed to be consulted tell me that they are not consulted, I don't understand. I don't understand what I am supposed to say in response to that. I am going to leave it; I am going to walk away. I was going to try to ask one more question. I am going to ask one more question. I have so many more questions than just the one I am going to ask.

I am going to ask specifically about professional development training funds. The Northwest Territories provides its teachers with nine times more professional development funding, at a rate of 3.5 percent of gross wages. Meanwhile, the Yukon Association of Education Professionals members' professional development is currently funded at a rate of approximately 0.4 percent of gross wages.

The reason why this is a big deal is that PD days are viewed as the ability for educators to get that professional development, that training. The real concern is that, when you don't have any money to spend on it, it's really hard to get it.

Can the minister tell me if the government is willing to commit to funding PD training to a level that is adequate for teachers' needs? Again, just looking comparatively between us and our nearest territory, Yukon funds it at approximately 0.4 percent of gross wages and the Northwest Territories is 3.5 percent of gross wages. There is a bit of a separation there. What I'm looking for is if the minister is committed or even interested in adequately funding PD for educators in the territory.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The Department of Education certainly values and supports ongoing, continuous professional learning opportunities for educators. Our department actively plans and provides in-servicing and professional development opportunities to all Yukon educators, with the goal of improving student outcomes by supporting professional growth.

Educators are provided with training and professional development sessions each school year, which include: mandatory training on Department of Education policies; along with professional development on Yukon First Nation history,

culture, and beliefs; also, numeracy, literacy, Ready-to-Learn, sexual health curriculum, universal design for learning, and more. We also allocate \$475,000 annually to the Yukon Association of Education Professionals for their professional development activities to support professional growth, curriculum implementation, and other key priorities.

Throughout the school year, we collaborate with various partners to offer comprehensive professional development for educational staff. This includes training in areas like Ready-to-Learn Schools, the safer schools action plan, mental health and wellness, sexual health, and literacy and numeracy. During the August welcome week — the first since before the COVID-19 pandemic — Yukon Education provided in-service sessions for educators about the history of Indigenous peoples, literacy and numeracy sessions, support for teaching about the Holocaust, and essential training in student protection policy and sexual orientation and gender-identity inclusion practices.

That was a very successful “welcome back” week, and we were happy to be able to do that again. I note that the CSFY and the Department of Education participated in the overall Department of Education-led welcome week, and then the First Nation School Board hosted their education camp, which was their equivalent to welcome week for the 11 schools that they operate.

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

Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

Acting Chair: I will ask at this time if any other member wishes to volunteer for the Chair.

Member for Takhini-Kopper King rises

Acting Chair (Ms. White): The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Mr. Kent: Madam Acting Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to ask some questions here this afternoon as we continue with the Education debate. I thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for sharing time with me here this afternoon and welcome the officials back to the Assembly to provide support to the minister.

I just want to start by providing a little bit of context around the F.H. Collins school. I know that there has been lots of talk earlier today in Question Period and in the media about it, but with the 750-student population, that was the recommendation of the building advisory committee at the time. The building advisory committee and the Department of Education — and this predates my time of being re-elected to this House in 2011

— set the population at 750 students. That was what the original design was based on for 750 students, and that’s what the new design was based on.

I have also heard comments that the new design came from an elementary school or a middle school. That’s not correct. It is a grade 10, 11, and 12 school in southwest Edmonton named Mother Margaret Mary Catholic High School. So, those are just a couple of things I felt it was important to provide some context around when it comes to F.H. Collins. As the minister has said, there is room to expand F.H. Collins if, as we have seen, the population increases in the city from when this initial decision was made back, as I said, pre-2011 to where we are now. The school is now at 99 percent — or over 90 percent — capacity and needs to be dealt with, but the building advisory committee and the department at the time were working with the best information that they had with respect to projected enrolment.

The former school, of course, was a lot larger, because at the time, it was the only high school in the City of Whitehorse. There was no Porter Creek high school or St. Francis of Assisi Catholic high school. It was the only high school, and that’s where all of us kids from junior high ended up going to high school, and a few folks from outside the City of Whitehorse as well came in to attend school there back in the 1980s when I was there, continuing on until the 1990s.

I thank the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, who asked a number of questions about the École Whitehorse Elementary School replacement that I was going to ask, but I still do have some outstanding questions. I am just wondering if the minister can tell us how much has been spent on the planning of the school to date. This includes, obviously, the consultant contract that is employed right now and any other contracts or money expended on the project to date.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Acting Chair, the number that I am going to provide is the number that we have today, but we know that there are more expenditures that are outstanding and will be actuals that will come through period 6.

The total to date is \$300,106. We are currently in a contract with Kobayashi and Zedda Architects for the construction management for \$2.7 million.

Mr. Kent: I will just draw the minister’s attention to two different five-year capital plans — one in March of 2022 and the second one in March of 2024.

In 2022, it was just known as “elementary school replacement Whitehorse”. The schedule would have had the school completed in 2025-26 at a total cost of \$45.2 million to \$56.5 million. Then we fast-forward to 2024, and the entire five-year capital plan is populated with École Whitehorse Elementary School replacement right out to 2028-29, with a half-million to \$1-million expenditure in that year.

Are we expecting the school to be open then for the 2029-30 school year? Is that when we’re expecting it to be done, or is it expected to be done earlier? Then, in this year’s budget — 2024-25 — there is \$2 million to \$3 million allocated to this school replacement project. The minister has mentioned that \$300,000 has been spent so far. I’m not sure if that is all in this fiscal or previous fiscals as well, but are we expecting to expend

that entire amount of \$2 million to \$3 million in this fiscal year, and is the school now scheduled to open sometime in the 2029-30 school year?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Right now — and this is the way, of course, our five-year capital works, that we have that ability to adjust and to adjust the time frame, and we're not quite there yet in the planning process to give an exact date of when the students will be in the new school.

I think, though, the great thing is that the elementary school replacement project, which was then — if you fast-forward — identified as École Whitehorse Elementary School, is in the five-year capital plan and we will continue to adjust the dates, as we did with Whistle Bend Elementary School. When we were building that school, we adjusted as the project progressed. As we get closer in the planning, we will be able to give more certainty around when we will see students in the school.

Mr. Kent: Just a quick follow-up then. Of the \$2 million to \$3 million that is budgeted for this current fiscal year, I note that there is no reduction of that amount in the supplementary estimates that we are talking about here today. There is no adjustment down of that amount. So, can the minister explain: Is the department, the government, expecting to expend \$2 million to \$3 million in this current fiscal year on this project?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The number that I gave — just over \$300,000 — is the cost to date on the project. We have not adjusted for this year. As we have described throughout the various debates throughout this session, there is a tremendous amount of work that is happening. The contract that we have with Kobayashi and Zedda Architects is over a two-year period that started last year. The project is certainly ramping up in terms of planning and getting to even working toward some of those early design features. That is some of the exciting work that the project advisory committee is doing now around planning design and other aspects. Of course, I went over extensively today the traffic study and the scope of work within that. There are experts on the Kobayashi and Zedda team who are working on that now.

So, we have not made an adjustment to that budget. We are expecting that, as expenses come in, we will be able to provide more around period 6. Once we get to period 6, we will know more about the expenditures that we are going to incur this year.

Mr. Kent: When I look back at the main estimates for this year when it comes to this particular project, the École Whitehorse Elementary School replacement, it looks like an estimated \$228,000 has been spent in total over the previous two fiscal years — \$28,000 in 2022-23, and the estimate for 2023-24 was \$200,000 — and then \$2.5 million in this current fiscal year. The minister has on a number of occasions said that we are entering phase 2 of the project. I have just a couple of quick questions.

There are a number of different activities planned as part of phase 2, according to the document that was released in October of this year that talks about next steps. I am just curious if the minister can tell us what work was part of phase 1 of this

that cost \$228,000, I am assuming. How many different phases are anticipated as part of this project?

The announcement was made in 2022 and it took almost two years to get from phase 1 to phase 2, with very little money expended over that time. When the initial announcement was made, the location choice was also included in there, so that wouldn't have been part of the phase 1 work. I am just curious: What exactly was phase 1 comprised of? Is there any idea how long phase 2 will take? How many more phases are there after that?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We are focused right now on phase 2. There was an extensive amount of work that went into phase 1, so I will bring the information back. It is not in our current notes, as we are focusing now on phase 2. I will make sure that we bring that information back. I certainly had a lot of opportunity, but I don't want to go through a list that may not be complete about the work that happened already in phase 1 — we're in phase 2 — and the phases to come afterward.

I'll make sure that we bring that information back. I don't want to not have a complete list during this debate today.

Giving the numbers that I had spoken about moments ago, in 2022-23, the actuals were — it was \$28,118, and for 2023-24, the actuals were \$271,988. We're waiting on the current work that — and actuals for — we'll have a better sense of that when we get the P6 numbers. Again, there is an extensive amount of work that is happening right now on this phase 2 that we had spoken about, which will include the traffic study analysis of major intersections around Takhini and analysis — let me see — the site analysis and test fit assessment to determine the — more information around that.

Yes, so I will bring back that information, because I think that it's important to be complete, and I will include the other phases that are yet to come.

Mr. Kent: In the document that Education provided with respect to the choosing of the location on the educational reserve, it does outline, as I mentioned, next steps with phase 2. There are eight different bullet points here, but one that kind of jumped off the page at me — and I'm a bit curious and hoping that the minister can explain what exactly will be done here, but it says that, in phase 2, the government will be completing the business case. I'm just wondering if the minister can explain exactly what that will mean and why it's being done in phase 2 rather than at an earlier stage.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, there are a number of details within all of the aspects of each phase. I already committed to bring back that information, and I can dig down a bit more on some of the aspects within the phase 2 activities, including the business case.

Again, we work within a phased planning process. There are a number of activities within each area. I have already gone over some of them extensively today, on the traffic study, for instance. There will be business aspects of that in terms of some of the mitigations that may be needed in each area. We are also working with our partners at Sport Yukon, and there are certainly aspects of the plan that will include some infrastructure there that will be very specific to this build. There will be aspects of the discussions and the MOU that we are

working on with Softball Yukon. So, those are all areas that will be fleshed out a bit more in terms of this phase. It makes sense to have the business case be inclusive of all of that work that is happening now as we look at building design as well.

Mr. Kent: I will look forward to receiving that information from the minister, because that is sort of the one aspect of this next phase that I have some questions about — what the business case will look like.

It said that phase 2 will be guided by a set of established design standards. The minister's predecessor back a number of years ago initially had considered a generic school design and then moved away from that to these design standards. I am just curious if there is anywhere that we can find those on the government website — what those design standards are. It says in this document that they have formed the foundation for the design and planning of Whistle Bend and the new school being built in Burwash Landing. I am just curious if those are publicly available on the website.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I note that, as we planned through the Whistle Bend Elementary School and as we planned through the Kêts'ádañ Kù school and as we plan forward on the new École Whitehorse Elementary School, we are working with what is called a "functional plan". So, it's not a design of a school, but it contains all of the elements of what we would want in a school — so, all of the considerations that we want to be included — as I talked about, purpose-built schools. Of course, the school in Burwash Landing, Kêts'ádañ Kù, was going to be somewhat different from the Whistle Bend Elementary School, for instance. It is going to be a community-based school; it has different elements. But what we wanted was a set of considerations in a functional plan that the design team would work with. In the Whitehorse Elementary replacement project — again, Kobayashi and Zedda Architects is doing that work and is the firm responsible for designing the school.

I think something notable that has happened recently — in October — we did have the EWES project advisory committee visit — they went out to BC and they looked at schools in Vancouver. I think that this opportunity provided the project team with valuable insights. Participants included representatives from Highways and Public Works, Education, and two of the project advisory committee members. The tours highlighted contemporary educational environments that emphasize innovative design. Again, though, this team is working with the functional plan, and I am not aware if it is available on the website, so that is something that I will follow up on and provide that information back to the member.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that. I will look forward to receiving that information.

The minister mentioned a couple of responses ago that there is an MOU between, I would assume, the Department of Education and Softball Yukon. Obviously, a number of their fields are being impacted by the construction of the school — a number of their very well-used softball fields. I am just curious if the minister can elaborate on the MOU. It sounds to me, from her response, that it is not ready yet. When can we expect that to be ready? Is the minister anticipating any budgetary impacts

to the overall project envelope as a result of that MOU with respect to new facilities that need to be constructed or existing facilities that need to be renovated or rehabilitated?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am advised that the MOU — the Minister of Community Services, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, and I met with the executive director and head of the board on I believe October 18. The members whom we met with tabled elements of what they would want to see in an MOU. Community Services has taken the lead on the development of that MOU. I am told that we have a draft and we are working through the final stages of approval for that. I am expecting that we will have an agreement with Softball Yukon very soon. We have a draft in our hands, so we are now working through the final stages of approval on that.

Mr. Kent: Recognizing that the MOU is in the final draft stages — and obviously isn't complete yet but hopefully will be soon — will the minister commit to getting us the budgetary impacts of that MOU if there are capital changes necessary as a result of the signing of the MOU?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, the MOU is in draft form right now. We are working through the final stages to finalize that. Of course, we will be considering financial implications. As I pointed out earlier in this debate, we are just asking about the business case and the completion of that in this phase. Those are all areas that we will consider. Then, of course, we have all of our process within government to go through approval stages and we will continue to work with Softball Yukon.

I just want to say that the meeting was — we definitely went away with a clear understanding of what the issues and worries were of the association. They are working closely with their membership, as is Sport Yukon. We are also in receipt of a letter from Sport Yukon supporting the project, which I will table. Hopefully, we will have this MOU completed soon and will be able to provide it to the House. If it's beyond the days of the House, we will make sure that members from both opposition parties are in receipt of it.

Mr. Kent: I want to make sure that I heard correctly. Did the minister said that she has a letter from Sport Yukon in her possession that she is going to table? I want to follow up to make sure I heard her correctly.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The Minister of Community Services has that letter and will be tabling it.

Mr. Kent: One of the commitments that we have heard the government make is to make the gym the size of a full high school gym, which would obviously be quite a bit larger than what would normally be put in an elementary school.

I am just wondering if the minister can confirm that it is a commitment that has been made to make the gym in the new École Whitehorse Elementary School the size of a high school gym.

I know that the minister probably won't have the information here today, but I am just wondering how much additional square footage that will add to the building and additional cost it will add to the building to make that commitment — of course, understanding that the minister may have to return with that information.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we met with Sport Yukon I believe on October 22. It was after the Softball Yukon meeting and the meeting with the Takhini Neighbourhood Association.

A number of options and solutions were provided at that meeting. Again, it was well-received, so we are working with them around enhanced infrastructure for this particular school. It is something that we are considering in our functional planning for Whitehorse-based schools so that we are creating recreational infrastructure as we move forward on infrastructure builds for education and perhaps other infrastructure within government.

We are finalizing the agreement with Softball Yukon. We are in receipt of a letter from Sport Yukon that supports the project. We still have some elements that we are working on, and that would be our agreement with Softball Yukon. Once we have those in place, I will be happy to share — as well, the Minister of Community Services.

It was great to meet with both organizations who came forward with great solutions. I note that Softball Yukon has somewhere in the range of maybe just under 2,000 members and Sport Yukon has around 15,000. This is a huge asset and win for both organizations in terms of as we move forward with this project. It's going to be exciting to have a new elementary school that also meets some other needs in the community.

Mr. Kent: Some of the more recent education projects, like the addition to the Robert Service School in Dawson City and the new school in Burwash Landing, received federal funding. Is the minister expecting some federal funding to be provided to assist with the construction of this school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, we did receive federal funding for the addition that was built on Robert Service School. I would have to go back to be sure about the fund that was accessed there, and we are expecting — a partnership is in place with the federal government on Kêts'ádañ Kù. At this point, we do not have federal dollars allocated for the build of the École Whitehorse Elementary.

Mr. Kent: Can the minister explain if there is any reason why there was federal funding provided for the other two education projects, but it doesn't look like there is going to be federal funding provided for this one?

Hon. Ms. McLean: On the Kêts'ádañ Kù, the federal contribution was \$10,875,000. Our government as well as I think the federal government would characterize the work on this particular project as a reconciliation project. We are happy to have the partnership with the federal government around this build and what it is going to bring to Burwash and the Kluane First Nation.

In terms of the build at Robert Service, I would have to go back to get the details, but my recollection is that it was related to a COVID-19 infrastructure fund. I will endeavour to bring more detail back. It was an opportunity that we had when we were working toward this particular project and the need within the community. We certainly also provided funding to the project, so I can bring back a bit more information about that.

Mr. Kent: Thank you, Madam Acting Chair; I appreciate that.

We know from a *Yukon News* article with respect to this project that there are still a number of municipal processes. There is a rezoning, and I believe that there is an amendment required to the official community plan.

When I look back, the Whistle Bend school had to go through the YESAA process. I am just wondering if the minister can comment on how long she anticipates the municipal rezoning and OCP amendment process to take, and just confirm that this school, too, has to go through the YESAA process before it can receive its permits.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, we are aware of the City of Whitehorse requirements regarding the land designation and zoning for this particular option that was chosen within the land reserve. As the project is in the early phases still, prior to initiating this process with the city, we wanted to hear from stakeholders and do the traffic study. The project has recently moved from site analysis to test-fit phase, as we have discussed, to a pre-design phase.

A key part of the first phase of the project was to bring all of the stakeholders together so that options could be presented. The approach enabled each stakeholder to hear each other's views. As a result of the engagement, option 1 — we ultimately chose option 1 and work then continues. We will engage — as the work continues in the pre-design phase, we will also begin discussions with the necessary officials at the City of Whitehorse to discuss the proposed changes, and the project will require YESAB assessment to evaluate potential impacts and provide recommendations. It is too early in the project to engage YESAB at this point, but that is, of course, part of the planning and part of the work that will be done with our primary consultant and contractor.

Mr. Kent: I'm just hoping that the minister then can — since there are, you know, multiple city processes that need to be — to go through as well as a YESAA process, I'm hoping that the minister can confirm that the construction will not be tendered and awarded prior to those processes being done. I ask because we learned a pretty hard lesson with the Nisutlin Bay bridge. The Minister of Highways and Public Works pushed ahead with that project prior to receiving all of the necessary permits, and it ended up costing us about a \$24-million change order on that project. So, there is a lot of concern that we make sure that all of these processes are complete prior to us going through the — or prior to us going to tender and construction. I'm just looking for confirmation from the minister that we can ensure that those municipal processes, and the YESAA process, is done prior to any construction tendering and award, so that we avoid the financial hit that we took on the Nisutlin Bay bridge with that \$24-million change order.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, we will continue to go through the phases of planning the project, which includes obtaining the necessary approvals and/or recommendations that are required for this project. We also will, of course, continue to work within our approval process within government, such as Management Board and Cabinet. Those are all part of the process of advancing a project like this and moving through all of the necessary steps and phases to get there, so we will continue to work within all of those parameters.

Mr. Kent: I did want to jump to a few other topics now and leave the Whitehorse Elementary School issue. The first one I actually wanted to ask about is the new Polaris building at Yukon University. Officials from the university were here yesterday to answer some questions, and this topic did come up. Looking at the 2024 five-year capital plan, it shows \$13 million over two years — 2025-26 and 2026-27. I am just wondering if the minister can confirm that this is the amount that will be forwarded to the university for the construction of this project and if that is the timing as well with 2025-26 and 2026-27.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, as noted in the 2024-25 budget, the five-year capital plan includes \$13 million over two years, starting in 2025-26 for the Polaris building project.

The departments of Highways and Public Works and Education will continue to work collaboratively with the university as they move through their next steps in the development of this important infrastructure for Yukon University.

Mr. Kent: I didn't realize that the Department of Highways and Public Works had a role in this as well. I thought that the university had hired a contract manager, but we can follow up with the minister.

The other question I had with respect to this project — when the officials were here yesterday from the university, they mentioned that there is still a funding gap that exists with this project. I don't have the Hansard with me, but I believe it was close to \$5 million — maybe a little less, maybe a little bit more. I am just wondering if the Yukon government's money will flow prior to this funding gap being closed, or does the funding gap have to be closed prior to any money being forwarded to the university for this project?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we have made this a priority area within our capital budget and continue to work closely with the Yukon University for success. I did hear the witnesses talk about the funding gap yesterday. I am aware of it as well through our officials, for sure.

I did also hear the witness say that they are working through that funding gap to close it and that they would have more to share at a later time and that they were working through that work now.

Mr. Kent: I just wanted to make sure, though, that if there is still a funding gap in 2025-26 when the \$7-million commitment is forwarded to the university — if the funding gap still exists then, will the government be forwarding the money regardless, or will they wait until that funding gap is closed?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We certainly have worked to establish Yukon University and we're very invested in the success of the university. I have always worked within our internal process for allocation of dollars to Yukon University or other partners or those with whom we work. So, we will work within our internal process to make sure that we are doing things in a responsible way and will continue to support Yukon University for success.

Mr. Kent: I just want to now move over to the process that has been established for the construction of a school in the

downtown area of Whitehorse. There was a motion that passed the Legislature that was brought forward by the NDP, I believe, that asked that a school be considered for downtown. I know that the minister has embarked on that process. She has mentioned a couple of potential locations: the old municipal services building on 4th Avenue as well as land on 5th and Rogers that was recently transferred to a private sector consortium to develop housing units.

I guess the question that I have about this is — when I'm looking at — it was April 14, 2022 when the Whitehorse school replacement ranking update was done. Whitehorse Elementary was ranked number 1 for replacement of Whitehorse area schools. Will the downtown school automatically slot into the number 2 position, or will these schools be re-ranked with the same ranking system, I guess, that was done to rank them in the first place, or does the downtown school now automatically become the top priority, bumping ahead of schools like Selkirk, Takhini, and Christ the King?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I went through in a bit of detail today, we have embarked on long-term planning. There are a lot of considerations. We did an engagement and a "what we heard" document. That was done in the spring of 2023. What we gathered in here is important, but it's also important to continue to look at what the growth is. We ended up with a higher enrolment this year. There were many students that we did not expect in our school system.

I know that folks have talked extensively about how we have grown in the last 10 years by 30 percent. A lot of that is within Whitehorse, but we still have capital needs in the communities. We have pressure on our high schools.

I know that the north end of Whitehorse — Whistle Bend — has taken tremendous pressure off that area. There are a lot of considerations as we look at infrastructure. We do think that a downtown school is important, especially as we look at the growth of the downtown and the densification that is happening and will continue as we build out.

Back in 2023, we did the public survey and conducted open houses. We did surveys and we did focus groups and reached out to our partners in Education, learning stewards, and students. The purpose of the engagement was to build relationships with the school community and inform Yukoners about school capital planning and development processes and collect stakeholder feedback on areas in consideration for 21st century learning environments.

The department reached out to many partners, organizations, and community groups who have ideas and experiences to share and informed them of the engagement to participate. We had approximately 1,000 Yukoners participate in this engagement, and a "what we heard" report was published in November 2023. That is available on [yukon.ca](https://www.yukon.ca). The department published the engagement report, and we shared it with our First Nation education council, the Gadzoosdaa advisory committee, and other partners.

Many groups — I won't go through all the names of the groups who participated in this, but overall, participants in the engagement emphasized the importance of connecting with outdoors and outdoor spaces for learning and social time,

including the ability to access surrounding greenspaces or trail networks for active transportation; creating culturally inclusive and accessible spaces, including meeting the needs of neurodivergent students and those living with hearing, visual, or physical disability; creating modern learning environments by applying technology in learning spaces for collaboration in spaces for spiritual, cultural, and mental health; related activities and programming; and fully integrating schools within neighbourhoods based on population and growth projections, with sufficient access to school buses and trails for active commuters.

Going back to some of the work that we do around school growth, I think those are all factors that we consider. Again, we are seeing different trends. We are certainly working more collaboratively with other departments so that we can determine population growth that may come from new professionals who are maybe coming into the territory and being able to communicate that better with each other so that we have a better sense of what our enrolment numbers will be. We have a number of key partners whom we work with — the First Nation School Board being one of them and CSFY as the second authority and, of course, our advisory committees, as I have stated.

We are also working toward a new renewed joint education action plan with Yukon First Nations, and that work is exciting and dynamic and forward-thinking and a consideration for us as we are planning. So, we have a lot of considerations as we determine next steps and areas where we need to invest in infrastructure. Again, I am very proud of the work that we have done to build the new infrastructure that we now have students actually learning in.

I will be excited to see the Burwash Kêts'ádañ Kù school open.

Again, we will continue working with school communities throughout the Yukon to ensure that we are considering rural needs as well.

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

Acting Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mountain View 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. 43, entitled *Act to amend the Business Corporations Act (2024)*, and directed me to report it without amendment.

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

Speaker: You have heard the report 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.

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Our Clean Future: 2023 Annual Report (Clarke, N.)