



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 219

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35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, November 14, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2024 Fall Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Thursday, November 14, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**Withdrawal of motions**

**Speaker:** Before proceeding to Orders of the Day, the Chair would like to announce a change made to the Order Paper. The following motion has been removed from the Order Paper, as the action requested in the motion was completed in whole or in part: Motion No. 1034, 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:** Introduction of visitors.  
*Visitors introduced*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of Yukon Geoscience Forum and Trade Show**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, for the geology geeks out there, 52 equals tellurium on the periodic table.

I rise today to tribute the 52<sup>nd</sup> annual Yukon Geoscience Forum and Trade Show. The event will take place starting this Sunday, November 17 through Wednesday, November 20 at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre. We will hear from leaders in the Yukon's exploration and mining industries and will receive the latest geoscience updates from our experts at the Yukon Geological Survey.

Mining has always been a critical part of the Yukon's economy. The territory offers incredible potential for mineral exploration and development. The Yukon is a valuable partner in the world's transition to a clean energy economy. The territory is in an excellent position to provide the critical minerals necessary for this transition. Natural Resources Canada's survey of mineral exploration companies projects spending of \$147 million in the Yukon this year. We have recently seen investments from major players such as Rio Tinto, Teck, Mitsubishi Materials, Agnico Eagle, and Newmont along with many other smaller companies.

A shout-out to the Government of Canada, which just committed \$40 million in support of critical mineral infrastructure. These funds will support connecting the Yukon to the North American power grid. Grid connect would also deliver energy infrastructure to priority regions in BC for critical minerals.

A strong, sustainable, and responsible mining industry is essential for the Yukon. You'll see this on display at the Geoscience Forum next week. Attendees will cover subjects on technical matters, community concerns, and corporate social responsibility. Leaders from industry, business, and governments will share insights into the season's success and challenges. We will hear about new discoveries and upcoming opportunities. I encourage Yukoners to participate in the forum.

This Saturday, November 16, there will be a family day event at the Canada Games Centre featuring activities and displays for kids and adults alike.

On Tuesday afternoon, the public is welcome to attend talks and take in posters and core displays — you know, rocks. The schedule of events can be found on the Yukon Chamber of Mines website.

I would like to acknowledge the chamber's important role advocating for Yukon mining. The chamber's commitment to public education on the importance of social and environmental responsibility of mining and particularly the sector's role in advancing a green economy aligns well with our interest in responsible resource development and support for critical minerals.

A big thank you to the chamber for organizing the Geoscience Forum — the theme for this year is "Partnerships for Progress: Advancing Sustainable Mineral Extraction" — and a shout-out as well to the Yukon Geological Survey for helping to organize this important annual event.

Mr. Speaker, I always look forward to the folks I meet and the conversations I have at the geoscience forums.

*Applause*

**Mr. Hassard:** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 52<sup>nd</sup> annual Geoscience Forum, which starts this weekend here in Whitehorse.

With over 600 delegates and exhibitors gathering at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre from November 16 to 20, there is something for everyone this year, including free events for the public, family day, and the geoscience public open house. Check the website for more details.

In preparing this tribute, I had to look back at the state of industry in the Yukon, in particular in the early 1970s when the inaugural conference was held. Placer mining was the mainstay of the economy, and a handful of hardrock mines were operating throughout the territory. Whitehorse had a population of around 11,000, and with no highway to Skagway, the White Pass train rolled into Whitehorse to drop passengers off at the foot of Main Street before carrying on to Marwell to load and unload freight. A stop at the Utah transfer station on the Alaska Highway loaded the train with ore from mines around the territory before journeying to tidewater. Today's ghost towns of Clinton Creek and Elsa had populations of 381 and 298 respectively, both of which were mining towns from that era.

Delegates at the first conference were greeted with copper prices of 47 cents a pound and silver at \$1.68 per ounce, but those with gold properties would have been excited with the

43-percent increase in the price from the previous year, as it rose to \$63.84 per ounce. That's USD, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, today, copper and silver are substantially higher in price, and gold was trading this morning at over \$2,500 USD an ounce.

Today's forum is more than just a technical conference. Delegates come to listen to the latest updates from the Yukon Geological Survey, get a sense of what is happening on the ground with various projects, and network and catch up with others across the industry. They will also take time to move through the trade show and visit with many service and supply companies, and Monday's banquet and awards will honour many significant accomplishments from the past year.

Geoscience is an important contributor to the local economy, as the hotel and hospitality sectors get a very nice boost at a slower time of year.

Thank you to everyone involved in making this conference the success it is, especially the board, staff, and contractors from the Yukon Chamber of Mines. I'll end with a quote from the Yukon Chamber of Mines president, Lorelee Johnstone, about this year's event: "Ensuring that exploration and mineral development in the Yukon is undertaken responsibly and that the significant benefits and opportunities mining provides Yukoners are better understood is key to what we do every day here at the Yukon Chamber of Mines."

So, thank you, and I know that my Yukon Party colleagues and I look forward to catching up with many people over the coming days as people gather here in Whitehorse for this very important event.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the hard work done by so many folks to organize and prepare for the annual Geoscience Forum and Trade Show. We have heard from my colleagues about the past, the present, and the future, and I want to thank them for their words.

Even though it all appears seamless, events like these just don't happen by themselves. Behind the scenes are the hard-working staff and volunteers of many different organizations who work toward the common goal of coming together to learn, share, and celebrate. People involved in all aspects of the mining community — from exploration geologists to expeditors, pilots to miners, equipment operators and junior mining companies and all shades in between — can come from very different places.

After having worked in very small exploration camps to fully operational mines, I know that they share a few common traits. They are a pretty patient bunch, from waiting for planes or helicopters on socked-in days to doing in-the-field equipment repair, from minor to major problem-solving, these folks know how to shake it off and I bet that most of the folks in the gallery play a pretty mean game of crib.

They all love what they do, and it's not just a job; it's a lifestyle choice. The successes of others are celebrated, from discoveries to advancements in the industry. It will be hard to find a more appreciative audience. These forums' formal and

informal gatherings are our chance to get together and tell stories, and folks in these industries have some of the wildest stories to share.

The Yukon Geoscience Forum and Trade Show are an opportunity for really busy people to get together to learn, discuss, plan, and celebrate. We wish them all an interesting, engaging, and great time.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of World Diabetes Day**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize World Diabetes Day, a day dedicated to increasing awareness of the significant and growing impact of diabetes. In 2022, approximately seven percent of our population was living with diabetes in the Yukon, a number that has been steadily increasing over the past 10 years. Across Canada, 3.7 million people are living with this condition and roughly 200,000 new cases are diagnosed annually. These figures highlight the urgent need for continued focus on diabetes education, prevention, and support.

Diabetes is a condition that requires ongoing care, support, and education. Our government is committed to providing the resources that Yukoners need to take control of their health and manage diabetes in a positive way. Yukoners living with diabetes and other chronic conditions are supported with programs and services right here in the territory. Our Chronic Conditions Support Program is designed to help Yukoners better understand and manage chronic health conditions, including diabetes. The Chronic Conditions Support Program has registered nurses, registered nurse educators, a full-time dietician, contract pharmacists, and clinical exercise specialists.

The Chronic Conditions Support Program offers various programs that empower Yukoners to live well by enhancing their knowledge, skills, and ability to manage their health. Those interested in participating can register and find out more by emailing [ccsp@yukon.ca](mailto:ccsp@yukon.ca).

Events scheduled for this winter include sessions on continuous glucose monitors and insulin pumps, managing carbohydrates for better blood sugar control, and pre-diabetes programs. In addition, our home health monitoring service is available to all Yukoners with chronic conditions, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. This service offers participants an easy-to-use tablet with health monitoring equipment that they can use from the comfort of their homes. Equipment provided may include a blood pressure machine, weigh scale, blood oxygen sensor, or thermometer.

As we observe World Diabetes Day, let us also recognize the dedication of our health care providers who play an essential role in supporting Yukoners in managing diabetes. Their expertise and commitment are instrumental in empowering Yukoners to lead their best lives. I also want to recognize the advocates from the T1D Support Network and their dedication to working with partners, their advocacy, and their perseverance to complete the Yukon's T1D strategy.

I encourage all Yukoners to take advantage of the available resources, stay connected with health care providers, and

remain informed about effective diabetes management strategies. Today, there is the inaugural type 1 diabetes fair at the Old Fire Hall from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. It is an interactive and educational opportunity for anyone who wants to know more.

Thank you to everyone who works to educate and improve services for Yukoners' health and wellness. Together, by promoting awareness, providing education, and fostering community support, we continue to make a difference toward a healthier and more informed Yukon.

*Applause*

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize World Diabetes Day, commemorated on November 14 each year, and World Diabetes Month.

We have come a long way in the territory in how we support children with diabetes, and so much work is ongoing. I wanted to spend today outlining some of that work, which is being taken on by a small board of fierce individuals who provide support and advocacy for Yukoners with type 1 diabetes.

The Yukon T1D Support Network has made huge gains for Yukoners living with the disease, especially children who need extra care and attention to ensure that they are monitoring their diabetes throughout the day when they are in school. They have helped to make huge strides toward diabetes management in children with securing the coverage of continuous glucose monitors.

I also wanted to take a moment to recognize the legacy of Rebecca Pollard, a young nurse who was living with T1D and who worked as a T1D board member. The Rebecca Pollard \$5,000 nursing grant is offered through the Yukon T1D Support Network to help a Yukon student pursuing studies in nursing. They also offer the Rebecca Pollard T1D grant, providing funding for students living with T1D.

Camp Becca is an annual educational camp for youth aged 15 to 30 who have T1D, providing a supportive place to learn, share, support one another, and have fun.

We would like to thank all of the generous sponsors and donors who help keep all of these initiatives going. The Yukon T1D Support Network is currently working to purchase three HbA1c machines for Whitehorse clinics, which indicate how well blood sugar has been managed for previous weeks. This will replace the need for blood draws for this information, both a considerable advancement for those with T1D and a helpful way to ease the current load at the hospital lab. The funds are in place for this technology thanks to the generous support of the Whitehorse Lions Club and the Copperbelt Classic Society. Currently, the board is awaiting government approval to get these units into clinics.

We look forward to seeing this work progress in the near future. So, please join the Yukon T1D Support Network for their inaugural Type 1 Diabetes Fair this evening at the Old Fire Hall to learn more about diabetes from those who live it.

In closing, I would like to provide our sincere congratulations to directors of the Yukon T1D Support

Network who partnered with the Yukon Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research to advance an application for type 1 diabetes research funding through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Only two weeks ago, the application was approved for funding in the amount of \$125,000 for research on type 1 diabetes in the Yukon. So, congratulations to all those involved.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus in recognition of Diabetes Awareness Month and World Diabetes Day. The theme this year is "Breaking barriers and bridging gaps: uniting to strengthen diabetes well-being".

The Yukon has come a long way in the recognition and support for those living with diabetes, and it is all thanks to the hard work of the Yukon T1D Support Network. This dynamic and hard-working volunteer organization provides peer support, education, and advocacy for Yukoners diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Through their advocacy efforts, any type 1 diabetic, regardless of their age, has access to their choice of technology to help better manage their glucose levels. The Yukon is breaking barriers for the rest of the country and we look forward to the day when others follow suit.

Breaking barriers and bridging gaps are also about raising awareness about type 2 diabetes. Many people with type 2 diabetes continue to face stigma and discrimination, and they are often blamed and shamed and left to deal with comments surrounding what they are eating and why they are eating it, whether they are exercising enough, and the list of judgments goes on. Putting the blame on any individual with diabetes and telling them that their disease is their problem only perpetuates the cycle of stigma because it ignores all of the other aspects that affect disease management. Managing diabetes is like juggling and keeping six balls in the air while riding a unicycle blindfolded. Bridging gaps about diabetes awareness can change the narrative, because the more people who understand what diabetes is, the more support there will be. Diabetes is as complex a disease as any other.

People living with diabetes have to factor their condition in almost every decision they make when it comes to basic survival because, if they don't, they could end up with serious complications.

So, let's continue to work together in raising awareness, spreading knowledge, and creating lasting change for all those living with diabetes.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 23(2) of the *Housing Corporation Act*, I have the honour of tabling the Yukon Housing Corporation annual report for 2023-24.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a legislative return regarding the scope of work for the Takhini traffic review.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a 2024 letter from the Association of Yukon Communities to the Minister of Finance.

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

Are there any reports of committees?  
Petitions.

## PETITIONS

### Petition No. 26 — response

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond to Petition No. 26, which requests an increase to the wholesale discount on liquor products from 17 percent to 25 percent for all Yukon licensees. I read these concerns as real issues facing the sector; however, the petition proposes one oversimplified solution to a complex economic problem. It is a problem that is experienced differently by different food and beverage businesses, not all of which sell liquor.

Government supports the industry. They should be effective and they should meet the needs of the industry. This also must be balanced with the needs of the broader public who benefit from the profit remittance through the programs and services of the Yukon government. The Government of Yukon provides a suite of programs for businesses worth noting, most notably, the Yukon Economic Development department initiatives that contribute to the retention and attraction of workers and also support business to provide employee benefits without extra costs but also the Department of Tourism and Culture, which delivers various programs and services to draw visitors to the territory.

Also, the Yukon Liquor Corporation licensees receive \$1.1 million in savings every year since the price structure was changed in 2021 with their input. To clarify, licensees effectively receive a discount of 17 percent on retail prices for products of medium and large producers but an 18-percent discount on retail prices for products from small producers. All of our local producers fall within the small producer category.

The corporation provides efficiencies for licensees such as only two full-price updates each year and equal shipping costs across the territory. The intent of the 2021 price structure change was to set licensees up for recovery after the pandemic, which is why it was developed with extensive engagement with a licensee working group. This approach was evaluated just last year. For the evaluation, all licensees were contacted in the spring of 2023 and invited to participate in the survey. Respondents were divided on whether the 2021 price structure changes were helpful — 53 percent saying yes and 47 percent saying no. In the survey, licensees indicated that the most worrisome economic factors were price inflation on goods followed by staffing shortages and interest rates.

This petition compares us to British Columbia. Provinces and territories have entirely different pricing structures and taxation regimes, including liquor taxes and a 10-percent PST on liquor in British Columbia. It is clear that changes in the pricing structure do not represent a one-size-fits-all solution to

the food and beverage industry challenges. We are aware that costs are rising in the industry. Costs are rising for the Yukon Liquor Corporation as well, but the corporation has not increased its cost-of-service fee for licensees since it was implemented in 2019. Also, the change proposed would be difficult to reconcile at a time when we are facing an increased understanding of the health and safety harms associated with alcohol.

I do want to thank those who took the time to sign the petition and for articulating these issues that they are facing.

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

THAT this House congratulates Violet Gatensby on becoming a Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund artist ambassador in support of reconciliation.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce an amendment to Bill No. 43, *Act to amend the Business Corporations Act (2024)*, that would delay its coming into force for at least 12 calendar months after the regulations are completed.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Victoria Gold Eagle Gold mine heap leach failure

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this week's update on the situation at Eagle Gold. It has been three weeks since we have been permitted to provide an update to Yukoners here in the Legislative Assembly. Had the opposition parties allowed last week's statement to move forward, the public would have heard about new groundwater interception systems, remediation efforts, and winterizing work that the receiver is advancing. Had they allowed the statement the week before last, they would have heard about the excellent work of contractors like Pelly Construction whose team was instrumental in completing construction on the safety berm.

This week, as we near the end of the legislative session, I would like to remind this Assembly and the public of some fundamental facts related to the work taking place at Victoria Gold's Eagle Gold mine site since the June 24 heap leach facility failure.

First, it's important to note that this work is being managed by a court-appointed receiver, PricewaterhouseCoopers, rather than by the Yukon government. The Yukon government continues to serve as the primary territorial regulator for the mine site.

We continue to do so with input from the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun's technical team. It is the receiver

overseeing the completion of activities that will address and remedy the environmental, structural, and health and safety effects arising from the failure. We expect that further directions could be issued by the Yukon government to Victoria Gold in the future as the receiver continues to oversee the remediation efforts undertaken by workers on-site.

Regarding the receiver, on November 1, 2024, they released an update on the Victoria Gold Corp. receivership. This report is posted on their website and ours. The receiver notes that there are evaluations underway to determine the stability of the heap leach facility, which are being done by two prominent engineering firms. Their findings will determine if additional stabilization work is advised to potentially regrade the heap and dewater it.

Work continues to drill a series of wells behind the recently completed safety berm in order to intercept contaminated groundwater. This work can be safely done thanks to the completion of the safety berm, which protects workers from the risk of another slide. Approximately 150 employees and contractors remain on-site performing care and maintenance, winterization activities, and emergency work that is needed. I want to acknowledge and thank the work of these individuals at the front line of this environmental protection response.

Work is also underway on other groundwater interception systems. That includes sumps and wells to capture contaminated groundwater that has moved toward Haggart Creek. This work is expected to be completed later this month. Once these groundwater interception systems are finished, this will complete the measures required in the one outstanding inspectors' direction from the series issued by our inspectors in the immediate aftermath of the failure. This will be a significant milestone in the response to the heap leach failure, but it will be far from the end of the remediation work at the site.

I look forward to hearing the questions and comments from members opposite.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond to this ministerial statement today. I would like to take time to thank the dozens of public servants, employees, and contractors who have worked or are continuing to work on the response to the heap leach failure at the Eagle mine site. Your work is extremely important and very much appreciated.

I also want to note that the minister has once again used some of his time to scold the opposition for not allowing ministerial statements to proceed. He indicates that this is somehow the only communication tool that the government has to inform Yukoners about what is happening. Our House sits for 60 days in most calendar years. Perhaps the minister can tell us how his government communicates with Yukoners on the other 305 days. Here's a hint: They use press releases, advertising, social media, and press conferences. Those tools are also available to them when the House is sitting, but the fact is that the Liberal government has chosen to use ministerial statements to grandstand and re-announce already publicly available information so many times that both the Yukon Party and the Yukon New Democratic Party had to change the Standing Orders in order to provide checks and balances. Now

all the government needs to do is convince one other caucus that their statement is worthwhile and it can go ahead, as is happening today.

When it comes to the situation at Eagle Gold, the frustration for us is that during House time, I have asked dozens of questions about the project that the minister has failed to answer, with no indication of when he will answer them. We have asked about the environmental concerns and why urgent timelines for directives issued to the company before they were forced into receivership suddenly fell by the wayside once the receiver was in place. We have asked about employees owed money for things like vacation pay and severance pay and why the receivership order filed by the Yukon government indicated that it would not be paid. We have asked why the Justice minister believes that the company still operated after her government forced them into receivership in an Ontario court room. We have asked why the Finance minister thought that the company was still publicly traded weeks after trading halted and the stock was delisted. We asked whether all of the recommendations within the 2022 report entitled *Eagle Gold Heap Leach Facility and Cyanide Management Review*, written by Piteau Associates Engineering Ltd., were implemented and, if not, to provide which recommendations were not implemented and why.

I am also wondering if the Premier or minister has responded to the serious letter sent in October by the former board and senior staff of Victoria Gold.

As I have said, there are dozens of unanswered questions that the minister can find in Hansard that I have asked about this project. Many of them were asked during ministerial statement responses. So, perhaps rather than grandstanding in his response today, the minister can attempt to answer some of those questions.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, while the minister is focused on the petty politics of whether he gets to use up valuable debate time in this House with a ministerial statement or is asked to send a press release instead, I have been focused on supporting the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the people of Mayo. I feel bad for the minister that he thinks he is being silenced while having so many in his employ whose sole job it is to let Yukoners know what the state of the Eagle gold mine is. It almost feels like this statement is more about his moral high ground and his need to dress down the opposition in the House than it is about the issue of the mine site at all.

So, if you have ever heard the expression "This meeting could have been an e-mail", then you will understand why the opposition frequently chooses not to hear and respond to these statements. Nothing the minister said here today is new information. What is new and what the minister failed to mention is the spike in mercury levels being found in Haggart Creek.

We are grateful for the work of the teams from both Yukon government and Na-Cho Nyäk Dun that are working on water quality and fish monitoring. The minister is well aware of the risks of mercury to fish and wildlife, yet it didn't seem newsworthy to him today.

So, Yukoners may be in honest disbelief that he has yet to provide an update on the state of water treatment at the mine today, and perhaps that is because his government permitted the mine to operate without that water treatment facility that was required in its water licence initially. So, perhaps the minister is trying to avoid responsibility for the mercury and the cyanide in that very water.

I appreciate the minister asking for questions, but why bother with questions when this government never bothers to answer them anyway? They simply read a second prepared statement, often more petty than the first, despite what is said or asked by the opposition.

I would, however, like to let Yukoners know about a great event happening tonight called “Voices from the Wind River”. Event attendees will be able to hear directly from the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun leadership about the need for a public inquiry into the Eagle Mine disaster and about their land and water initiatives. The event will be held at the Yukon Arts Centre and doors open at 5:00 p.m. Last I checked, there were still tickets available and I hope that folks listening will consider attending.

I will remind the minister that he has yet to state whether or not he will call a public inquiry into the mine’s failure, and perhaps tonight’s event will help to make up his mind.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I find all modes of communication important, including this House. I respect this House and I think of it as an important way in which we inform Yukoners about many things going on, including the event tonight that was just talked about. So, I don’t think it’s about just giving press releases; I think it’s about doing both.

I want to say that the Official Opposition asked for this House to come back early to debate Victoria Gold and then three times have said no to ministerial statements — four minutes.

I have answered about how employees are being supported through the wage earner protection program. I have answered many of the questions and I will answer a few more today. I appreciate getting the questions. We understand that Yukoners continue to want answers about what led to the heap leach failure and the need for clarity is shared by all of us. In fact, we have an independent review board that is underway right now.

I object to the way that the members opposite referred to these updates in the past. I don’t believe that providing the Legislative Assembly with information about the government’s response to an environmental catastrophe is “grandstanding”, as the NDP Leader has put it, or a waste of time, as the Yukon Party Leader has chosen to characterize these updates previously. However, the fact remains that they have seen, at least this week, to allow for the public to hear this information. I fundamentally believe that this is the right thing to do for everyone who respects our democratic institutions and I thank them for allowing this ministerial statement today.

Back to the update. Work continues to address the environmental, structural, and health and safety effects arising from the failure. Contaminated groundwater must be intercepted and safely stored and treated so that it doesn’t spread to the surrounding environment. The recent completion

of a third water storage pond will help to ensure that there is enough storage on-site.

Work is progressing on a new water treatment plant. This work is expected to be completed in the coming week or weeks. By the way, all directions are still in place and I reported on them today.

With each new set of water monitoring results, we have clear evidence that contaminated groundwater is moving toward Haggart Creek. This is not surprising, as the heap leach failure released about 280,000 or 300,000 cubic metres of cyanide solution into Dublin Gulch.

The contaminants found to date in Haggart Creek which exceed water-quality objectives do not currently pose a heightened risk to the health of residents or individuals using the land and water downstream of the mine. We have now received our first test result that shows that methylmercury was detected in Haggart Creek. It is still below the safe guidelines. It is a detect — I am flagging it. This is from samples taken on October 18. Lab results take approximately three to four weeks to process, so this is the most recent information that we have at this time.

An additional sampling for methylmercury will be undertaken so that we can better understand what this means for fish, wildlife, and the environment. Health experts continue to remind Yukoners to avoid eating fish harvested in the immediate area of the mine and, as always, Yukoners should avoid drinking untreated water from any source.

Health officials are in regular communication with staff from the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and we are currently updating our website with the most recent information. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and immediately update Yukoners if the risk level changes.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to the Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Resource Gateway project

**Mr. Hassard:** So, for many folks in the mining industry, the announcement that was made back in the early days of the Liberal governments in both Yukon and Ottawa of the original Resource Gateway funding was a welcome one. There was a promise of \$360 million to improve road access to mineral-rich areas here in the Yukon.

However, since then, the fact that so few projects have advanced and so little money has actually been spent has been a huge letdown.

When will the next gateway project finally see shovels in the ground, and can the minister explain how it will support the growth of the mining industry here in the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite. Of course, there have been discussions that have always taken place with the impacted First Nation. Those discussions continue. The Carmacks bypass project was completed on budget and early actually, so we certainly thank the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and Pelly Construction for that project.



We are certainly aware that there are a lot of resources that are available still until 2031 or 2032. That extension was negotiated between the Yukon government and the federal government so that those funds can be accessed. I don't disagree that these considered discussions that are taking place with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, with the Ross River Dena Council, and with the Liard First Nation are taking time, and we will continue those conversations.

**Mr. Hassard:** In a news release from 2021, the Yukon government announced a funding agreement with Canada for the Yukon Resource Gateway project, and the release states — and I quote: “The contribution follows the successful completion of six project agreements to date with Yukon First Nations for components under the Yukon Resource Gateway Program. Each of the project agreements identifies training, employment and business opportunities for First Nations citizens and businesses to ensure communities benefit from these infrastructure upgrades.”

The overall value is listed at \$359 million. So far, the only shovels that have actually been in the ground have been for the Carmacks bypass, as the minister mentioned. The five-year capital plan includes \$140 million through 2029; however, at this rate, many wonder if the money will ever get spent.

Is the minister confident that the entire envelope will be spent before the project agreement expires in 2031?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite. As the member opposite did indicate, there are still seven construction seasons to access these funds.

With respect to the current projects that are being negotiated, a project agreement for the Silver Trail component was signed with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun in February 2021. The Silver Trail component includes the rehabilitation of the Mayo Road bridge as well as road reconstruction and spot repairs from kilometre 0 all the way to kilometre 110 between Stewart Crossing and Keno City.

Officials from the Department of Highways and Public Works are working with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun through a committee and are meeting monthly to collaboratively develop an implementation plan. So, we are hopeful that plan will proceed.

With respect to the Robert Campbell Highway, officials from the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Department of Highways and Public Works have been working with the Ross River Dena Council to determine the next steps of the Robert Campbell Highway project over the summer months. Currently, a four-kilometre section of this project is designed and permitted. The aim is to tender this piece of work for construction to start next year. The department is advancing to tender the clearing of this four-kilometre section of highway, with the work to be completed before the spring of 2025.

**Mr. Hassard:** But, Mr. Speaker, we have only seen one project get completed so far. So, forgive me if industry and Yukoners have concerns with the minister getting this done.

Over the course of the last several years, the Yukon government has seemed to be dragging their feet on getting these projects and this money out the door. We have also seen the parameters of the Gateway funding change over the years.

Can the minister tell us if the government is considering further changes to the parameters of this funding, or will support for the development of our mineral resources continue to be a primary focus?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, yes, these discussions are continuing, as I indicated — with the Ross River Dena Council, with the Liard First Nation, with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and a successful project with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. In the interim, the infrastructure build that we have had, which includes supporting mining, are projects like the Nisutlin Bay bridge — which the Official Opposition could not get done — as well, unprecedented \$250-million infrastructure build at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, including the parallel runway, the main runway reconstruction, the apron reconstruction, and LED lighting there, which helps industry in general, as well as the unprecedented investment of the national trade corridors fund from Carmacks all the way to Dawson — \$190 million over the course of seven or eight years, which is also investing in mineral exploration and providing greater support on the roads so that load limits can be reduced in the critical spring and fall times.

So, yes, there are discussions ongoing, but we have certainly supported the mineral industry.

#### **Question re: Mining assessment process**

**Mr. Kent:** In March 2017, the former Premier, who is now the Finance minister, made a promise to the Yukon mining industry that he would put in place a collaborative framework to deal with timelines and reassessments for mining projects. This is another example of this Liberal government making a big promise to the industry and then not delivering. Here we are almost eight years later with no progress on that front.

So, when can the Yukon mining industry expect to see a collaborative framework in place with respect to timelines and reassessments?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I think we — it's really — if you want to talk about relationships and timelines and building a collaborative framework, I think that some of the key pieces of where we are right now — first, I would say: Let's harken back to eight years ago. I know that the Official Opposition would clearly say that they did not want to see any modernization of legislation. They, of course, tried to put an amendment through that caused a tremendous amount of consternation — a legal battle by First Nation governments — and then we came to this House collectively — members who were here in the first mandate — and we collectively unanimously supported going back and trying to work through amendments. That work was unanimously supported by First Nation governments.

It has taken a period of time to work through. It's from building bridges and back and then, of course, working with the sector and doing it all in a very respectful way. Now we're seeing that the language is being drafted. We're waiting to see what that will look like and an opportunity to get that work done. And yes, it has taken time, but it was done in the right way — but it was done in the right way. When you don't do it

in the right way, you absolutely destroy relationships, and that affects investment, that affects moving projects through, and that affects the speed of the roads to resources projects.

So, we are going to continue to do the right things, and we're going to continue to make sure that there is stability in the sector.

**Mr. Kent:** Well, I read the news release this morning, and it didn't mention anything about an eight- to 10-year time horizon to develop this collaborative framework when that promise was made in 2017 by the former Premier.

We know that the Yukon government has proposed YESAA amendments to Canada for their consideration. According to the ECO briefing note from the spring on this topic, it deals with exemptions with existing projects so that they don't require reassessments. This, of course, could fulfill one part of the collaborative framework but not the issue of timelines.

Can the Premier tell us if legislated timelines for YESAA assessments were included in the proposed amendments sent to Ottawa, and if not, why not?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** You're absolutely correct; there wasn't an eight-year timeline in 2017. Also, in 2017, we didn't even understand the damage that was done between relationships here in the Yukon. So, it has taken a period of time to walk through. You know, the members opposite can speak off-mic, but this is the truth — members know — opposite — this is the truth that we have walked into over the last eight years — absolutely what was happening. We knew what the investment sector felt across the country. We knew that we had to build respectful relationships, and that's what we were committed to doing.

We knew that there was no interest in moving on legislation. We knew that First Nations were waiting to see the work of legislation begin. We knew that because there was a commitment made through the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. There was a contract from this House actually signed off by a Conservative leader at the time, and then we made sure we were committed to fulfilling it, because it was never done before.

All of those things do affect relationships and the work on timelines, so again, we had this discussion in supplementary debate earlier, and the member opposite asked me specifically about the work that was being done. It was to ensure that there were ways to look at efficiencies both with YESAB and with the Water Board. You know that we have been working closely with the Water Board to try to make sure that they have the right resources to support them every way they can, and we are going to continue to do that work.

I clearly stated that I did not have the report, but when I would, I would bring it to the Yukon public.

**Mr. Kent:** It's very interesting that the Premier seems to get a little testy when we talk about his trail of broken promises.

We know that YESAB timelines from their rules for placer and quartz projects continue to be missed and are often missed very badly. Over the next few years, hundreds of water licences for placer miners will need to be renewed. As it stands now, that process is taking as long as two years for some projects. Is this something that concerns the Yukon government? If so,

what plans are in place to deal with this large influx of applications so that they can be assessed and licensed in a timely fashion?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** On the number of licences that are coming through to the Water Board, I have sat with the Water Board staff and their executive, and we have discussed this and asked them to prepare for the number that are coming through. I have talked to leaders in the placer mining industry as well, and they have asked us to make sure that the message is put through. When it comes to YESAB, we are also going to see a bulk of new applications or renewals over the next 36 months, and we brought that to the federal government.

As the question opened, it was me being testy. Where I get frustrated is that, for all of us in the House, I will be very clear: it is because when you perpetuate these narratives and we don't look at the root of what these relationships need to look like and we brush it over, it does no service to the mineral industry; it does no service to mining; all it does is perpetuate a narrative for political gain.

It does not help miners; it does not help explorers, and that's why it upsets me, because I believe in this industry, and we need this industry to thrive in the Yukon.

#### **Question re: Financial support for fertility treatment and surrogacy-related expenses**

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, it will come as no surprise to members of this House that Yukoners have been exceedingly frustrated with this government's molasses-speed rollout of the \$8,000 fertility tax credit committed to in the January 2023 confidence and supply agreement.

What makes this even more frustrating for Yukoners is that the Yukon Liberals have been promising this tax credit going back as far as their 2011 election platform. They promised it again in their 2016 election platform and yet again in 2021.

This government has been in power for eight years and has had endless opportunities to make this happen for Yukoners, but they continue to drag their feet. It appears that they didn't even seriously start looking into this until the Yukon NDP forced their hand with the 2023 CASA. Yukoners deserve better, and after eight years of broken promises, it is time for the Yukon Liberals to come through.

So, when will this government finally come through with a fertility tax credit for Yukoners?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting question from the Leader of the Third Party, who knows full well that we have been at the table discussing the concept of how to best provide support for Yukoners who are dealing with fertility issues. There were, I would say, certainly more than one, but I would characterize them as extensive conversations with the Yukon New Democratic Party with respect to what approach should be taken.

There was an opportunity for investigation of some options. There was a cross-jurisdictional scan that was done across Canada to determine what programs were available and how they operated and how one might operate here in the territory. There were conversations with the New Democratic Party and with interested parties about how this might proceed

and about whether a program or a tax credit would be the best opportunity. We have landed on a tax credit.

I am also quite sure that the member opposite knows that these conversations are coming to fruition very nearly and that there will be a requirement for a legislative change that has not been introduced this fall but will be introduced in the spring and will benefit Yukoners.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I didn't realize that we could talk about our meetings publicly, but I will happily do so now.

In vitro fertilization costs in Canada range from \$10,000 to \$20,000 per cycle, and often people require three or more cycles to be successful. Four provinces currently provide financial assistance for in vitro fertilization. Under the Liberals, the Yukon continues to fall behind.

But there is a positive to be had here. Since the government still hasn't ruled out fertility benefits, it's only fair that when they do, they reflect the current reality. They promised to match the tax credit for Manitoba. Well, now Manitoba has recognized that \$8,000 just isn't enough and has increased its tax credit to \$16,000. This gives the Yukon Liberals an opportunity to do better by Yukoners and follow suit.

Based on the Yukon NDP's recent request, will this government commit to a \$16,000 tax credit for Yukoners seeking fertility care?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would do well to recognize what is actually written in the CASA, which is up to \$8,000 based on the Manitoba program. We have taken into account the request made by the member opposite. That matter is going before Management Board and Cabinet for the purposes of making a determination and some calculations to see how we can best benefit Yukoners in this process.

What I note as well is that, unlike any jurisdiction in the country, Yukon has determined that medical travel for fertility services and medical treatment involving fertility has now been approved and is available to Yukoners — an additional benefit to them and their opportunities to seek medical treatment that has to be had outside of the territory.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing to say the least. It seems that the Liberals are interested to do as little as possible unless they are forced to do otherwise.

One in six Canadian families experience medically diagnosed infertility. This is a high number and does not even include the many 2SLGBTQ+ families or single parents who need to access fertility treatment in order to start or grow their families. Many Yukoners are impacted by the high cost of fertility treatment. We have heard from Yukoners that they are considering moving out of the territory in order to start families. We know of families that have already had to make that incredibly tough choice.

Yukoners should not have to leave their home to start families, Yukoners should not have to go into debt to access the fertility support they need, and Yukoners should not have to wait years to start their families in hopes that this government will finally fulfill their promise, but that is the situation right now.

Can this minister explain to these Yukoners why they won't commit to a \$16,000 tax credit for fertility purposes?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that this conversation and these questions began with a reference to the confidence and supply agreement. The member opposite would do well to read the confidence and supply agreement that says it is \$8,000 based on the Manitoba program.

There is no medical travel available to individuals in Manitoba. There are other options that are available here to individuals in the territory with the new program that has been introduced and the new program that will be coming to benefit Yukoners — to their advantage, like many jurisdictions across the country, and better than most.

#### **Question re: Mining industry infrastructure**

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, over the past several years, the Yukon's mining industry has raised a number of concerns about the infrastructure that it relies on. One of those pieces of infrastructure is the port of Skagway.

In the 2023 fall supplementary budget, the Premier announced that the Yukon was investing as much as \$44 million into that project. The supplementary budget included a specific line item for the port and it was the flagship announcement in that fall budget. However, since then, things seemed to have changed. The government quietly removed the line item from the budget and, in the Spring Sitting, the Minister of Highways and Public Works removed any mention of it from the five-year capital plan.

Can the minister provide us with an update on this project? Is the government still committed to it, and how much money is in the five-year capital plan for it?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, our team at Economic Development continues to have consistent and constant dialogue with the borough of Skagway. In our previous fall budget, we identified dollars that could be allocated toward the project. It then went out to tender. The tender was cancelled by the borough of Skagway, which was in control of the tender. At that point, we went back to negotiate the agreement between the territory and the borough. That is ongoing — briefed in the last number of weeks, where we have submitted another agreement that would give us an opportunity to be part of the procurement process.

So, again, still committed — looking at what costing will be in the future. I will let Yukoners know that with Hecla's project in Keno, they are shipping concentrate through Skagway, not using the previous infrastructure. It is not optimal, but there has been concentrate moving. As new investment comes to the Yukon, we continue to look at needs, and there is a needs assessment as well and work that has been done by other future mining companies.

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, another important aspect of infrastructure that the mining industry relies on is the power grid. Access to power is a critical aspect of any mining project, and in some cases, it can be a make-or-break issue. Recently, the government announced an over \$40 million study that will be conducted on the possibility of connecting to the BC grid.

Can the government provide us with an update on this project? Are they committed to bringing the proposed power line up the Alaska Highway, or will they consider other routes like the Robert Campbell to potentially benefit projects in that region? When does the minister think the soonest the proposed grid could begin construction?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the question on this topic. I think that it is important that we talk about those pieces of infrastructure. The Minister of Highways and Public Works earlier today touched on some of the key infrastructure. If we are really identifying all the infrastructure that is required for a strong mining ecosystem, there are a number of pieces, whether it is the road improvements from Stewart to Dawson, whether it is the paving of the Dawson runway and the millions of dollars that were put in infrastructure there, or whether it is having an international airport.

Members opposite will know from sitting and talking to investors and mining companies that one thing they haven't touched on, which I will just bring to the House — one of the most important pieces of infrastructure is the redundancy in fibre. With the automation of mining in the future, most companies that are coming in that are large mid-tiers or majors are going to come and talk to you about the fact that they want redundancy, because over time —

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

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Sure, Starlink; yes, that is the answer from across the way. No; other than Starlink — we do need to have redundancy and bandwidth that is consistent other than just Starlink.

I would say that these are all important components. It is early stage on the funding. I know that the Yukon Development Corporation is working with Canada. It is important to make sure that we sit down with all potential stakeholders and then start to investigate potential routes.

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, we understand that the potential of connecting the grid to BC's is many years away. In the meantime, we know that the mining industry remains concerned about access to power, and the fact remains that Yukon faces a massive gap in our dependable generation capacity. If a mining project were to connect to our grid today, is the minister confident that we have enough generation capacity to meet that demand? If not, what investments is the government making in dependable, year-round capacity to ensure that there will be in the future?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, when we talk with the major mining companies and ask them about what their vision is for the future, it is not diesel. Let me just let the Yukon Party understand that. The point is that, for those companies, if what they see is that we are producing energy through fossil fuels, they are not interested in investing here in the Yukon.

That's why this whole push toward renewables, which we have been so focused on, is also important for the future of critical minerals.

That's why the grid-connect project is such a good project — it's so important — because it will allow us to continue to work with Yukon First Nations to bring online more renewable

energy projects, and we'll have that certainty that, if it's overbuilt, you can sell the power. So, there are all sorts of reasons why the grid connect is important and why it's important that we continue to invest in renewables, but it's not the right solution from a mining perspective.

When we talk to these mining companies — Mitsubishi Materials and Rio Tinto — they are not interested in seeing us build more diesel plants to produce energy; they want us investing in renewables.

#### Question re: Mining industry support

**Mr. Dixon:** One of the most persistent criticisms of this Premier has been that he is quick to tell different groups of Yukoners what they want to hear, but his message changes depending on the audience. A perfect example of this was the speech he delivered this summer to the CYFN General Assembly. Here's a quote from that speech: "The mining sector has had its fair share of bad actors, unfair practices, and the inherent desire — driven by the greed of corporate executives and shareholders — to cut corners, shirk responsibilities, and break the law..."

On Monday, the Premier will speak to the mining industry about the future of the sector. Does he intend to remind the industry about their inherent desire to break the law, or will he have a different message for a different audience, as he has become known for?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, what we have seen here over the last week is a rewrite of history. What the member opposite would know if the member opposite attended the CYFN General Assembly was that I walked into a room with a CBC camera pointed directly at me and absolutely everything I said that day was captured, and I knew that when I sat down.

What I will tell you is that I spoke that day about the challenges of the mining sector, but what the member opposite leaves out is the first two to three paragraphs of the speech when I talked about the necessity of this industry, the good things that this industry does, the contributions, and how much it's an employer in the rural areas, but probably again, it perpetuates a particular narrative and it makes good political sense to chop and paste the way he wants, and that's what he's speaking about. If he really wants to have an honest conversation, he could tell exactly what I said that day, and it's the balance that's required with this industry, and that's what we have to tell Yukoners, because those are the facts and the truth.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, in the speech that the Premier is talking about, he built on his theme of corporate greed that he thinks is rampant in the mining industry. With regard to Victoria Gold, he described it as — and I quote: "... shareholders cutting and running the moment that profits are in question."

Later that summer, he told the media that he wanted to look the board in the eye and have a stern talk with them. The only problem is that we have since learned that not only did senior management and the board not cut and run at all, they actually offered the Premier an in-person meeting with the chair of the board, but the Premier declined that meeting. As the Premier

has become known for, he was quick to talk tough in the media but not so quick to follow through.

Will the Premier be delivering his message about the corporate greed of the industry next week, or will he cut and run?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It must be difficult to get up and ask questions, Mr. Speaker, when you know that you are making the facts up. It must be very difficult, because I can tell you that we reached out to Victoria Gold and I did want to sit with the board. The night that the situation happened, I went through all the board bylaws and looked at the commitments they had made to the community, to corporate social responsibility, and to the environment. When we did ask to meet with the board, what we were told is that the board was not going to be available — two people from the board would be available, but the rest of them would not be available. That is what was communicated to us. So, again, it is a rewrite of history.

My comments, whether it be sitting with First Nation governments or sitting with the mining sector, are that we, of course, have to look back at some of the challenges. If you say that we didn't have challenges, then you're not seeing all of the millions of dollars that we're spending right now on remediation. Do we think that we can do things right in the future? Absolutely, we can. Do we have to come together and be respectful of that? Sure. But if you want to use your time to rewrite history to make me look bad — sure. I know that makes great political value for you, but it's not accurate, what you're saying today.

I have watched for the last two weeks. We have continued to walk into the House and debate things that are not even real. Come to the table and debate some real things. I think that's good use of our time.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, I know it's uncomfortable for the Premier when we quote him directly from speeches that he has given on the record and share the public transcripts.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from many folks who have been in the industry in the Yukon for years. To a person, no one can ever remember a Premier of any stripe delivering such negative and blistering comments about the Yukon's largest private sector industry. The Premier stated very clearly that he thinks that the desire is to cut corners, shirk responsibilities, and break the law. In his words, those are inherent to the industry.

I would like to give the Premier a chance to clarify: Does he really believe that the desire to — quote: "... cut corners, shirk responsibilities, and break the law" is inherent to the industry?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Again, it's great political value to —

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

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** No, but again, it's not factual. You are getting a little bit worked up off-mic and that's fine, but the truth is that I'm going to the facts.

For a person who has never actually worked in the industry and sits here and changes the words that were said —

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

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Maybe no Premier has ever said it, but maybe a Premier has to have a real conversation at this point in time in a modern context about where the industry is going.

You can pretend that we should move forward; you can pretend that we should modernize, but the rest of the world will keep going by. Investors watch what we say. Investors watch what we do. Mining companies will make decisions.

But, again, if you wanted archaic, you can look at the view of the member opposite, and if you are going to do things in a respectful way, if you are going to make sure you respect treaty, if you are going to have a modern process here in the Yukon and actually be able to sustain this industry into the future, we have to have truthful conversations.

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

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

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

**Speaker:** We will proceed to Orders of the Day.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 74, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move that Bill No. 45, entitled *Electoral District Boundaries Act*, be now read a second time.

### Unanimous consent re second reading of Bill No. 45, *Electoral District Boundaries Act*

**Speaker:** The Premier, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 74, has requested the unanimous consent of the House to move that Bill No. 45, entitled *Electoral District Boundaries Act*, be now read a second time.

Is there unanimous consent?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Some Hon. Members:** Disagreed.

**Speaker:** Unanimous consent has not been granted.

**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 Leader of the Third Party as Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole.

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

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

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Acting Chair:** Order. 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 No. 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

**Department of Justice — *continued***

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

**Mr. Cathers:** Madam Acting Chair, I would first of all like to thank the officials for rushing down here. I know that they were anticipating being here a little later this afternoon, and I thank them for coming here to assist the minister.

I do want to resume just on the issue of rising property crime as well as drugs and organized crime. Now, as the minister knows, we had pushed for increased resources for the RCMP, including passing a motion here in this House last fall. I would just ask at this point if the minister could confirm that they are working with the RCMP on a further increase for the upcoming fiscal year.

The other question I would just ask as related to the RCMP is if the minister could provide an update on what is happening with regard to — I understand that the commanding officer of the RCMP in Yukon is retiring. Could the minister let us know: Has a replacement been chosen, and if not, what is the hiring process for the new commanding officer, and what are the expected timelines associated with that?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Madam Acting Chair, I would like to take the opportunity to welcome with me today Mark Radke, the Deputy Minister of Justice, and Luda Ayzenberg, who is the director of Finance for the Department of Justice. Thank you both for being here today.

In order to respond to these questions — first of all, I have not received an official confirmation of the chief superintendent's retirement. Apparently, the member opposite is aware of things that have not yet come to me. Of course, we have discussed this, about it upcoming with respect to his anticipated retirement, and I look forward to speaking to him in person in the very near future about that.

We certainly have had conversations at the officials level about a process going forward to determine a replacement for the superintendent and how the Department of Justice might be involved in that process. I can also indicate that the RCMP have submitted a budget ask for 2025-26 going forward, and it has

been included with respect — assessment and recommendations with the Department of Justice request going to the Department of Finance for the mains for 2025-26.

**Mr. Cathers:** Madam Acting Chair, I appreciate the response, and I look forward to more information when the minister is able to share it.

I want to move on to the issue of when child support is owed and the maintenance enforcement program that is in place. We have heard a concern that came to one of my colleagues from a constituent who related to someone who was in a situation where an ex-husband had been ordered to make child support payments but had not been doing so, despite court orders. The question I have regarding this is: With regard to that program, does the department monitor the success of compliance with court-ordered child support payments, and do they keep any statistics on it? Is there any recourse for someone, other than attempting to get another court order, if someone is not following through with a payment, and what would that look like?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Madam Acting Chair, thank you for the question. Of course, the Department of Justice operates the maintenance enforcement office. We, of course, keep statistics with respect to orders that are registered with the maintenance enforcement office. There is no obligation to do so, although, of course, many, many individuals do register with the maintenance enforcement office for the purposes of assistance with respect to payment of child support orders. The maintenance enforcement office has a number of tools available to it for the purposes of enforcing those orders. The sole goal of that office is to, in fact, enforce those orders. We can impact an individual's — they can, through the process of enforcing that order, impact vehicle registration, so an individual who goes to renew a vehicle registration having outstanding arrears is not permitted to do so, in some cases.

When non-payment of enforcement orders is an issue, we have an opportunity to have reciprocal orders with other jurisdictions in the territory — sorry — in the country — across the country. There is an opportunity to use an enforcement tool with a garnishee order for an individual's employment income to be garnished and paid directly to maintenance enforcement, which then provides it to the recipient of the maintenance enforcement order. There are also a number of other tools that can be used through that process.

We certainly hope that individuals will comply with those orders — if I could just have one moment.

We provide — complete and keep statistics with respect to the orders that are proceeded through there, but I don't have a list of what those statistics might be. I can indicate that the main budget item for fiscal 2024-25 for the maintenance enforcement office — I am just going to check the number here — for the operation of the maintenance enforcement office is slightly over \$860,000. There are components for maintenance enforcement specifically — primarily personnel and some other expenses. There are also child support guidelines expenditures, primarily personnel and some other expenses as well.

Hopefully, that is of assistance.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the information provided, and if the minister is able to share statistics later by way of a letter, that would be appreciated by my colleague and her constituent. I know that there continue to be concerns about that issue, that perhaps my colleague will follow up by a letter with the minister directly.

I want to move on to the topic of Victoria Gold. I know that, in terms of the response to the collapse this summer, it is primarily being led by other departments, but it was the Minister of Justice whose name was on the government press release issued on August 14 this year. The press release is entitled: “Statement from Minister of Justice and Attorney General on the Government of Yukon’s application for a receiver to be appointed over the assets of Victoria Gold Corporation.” In it, the minister outlines the government’s reasons for doing that.

There has been a fair bit of criticism by some within the mining sector as well as those with a financial background about government moving so quickly to enter receivership. There has been a fair bit of surprise at the assertions made by ministers, including the Minister of Justice, that they didn’t intend it to be the end of the company when, of course, what ended up happening is that, once the government put Victoria Gold into receivership, the entire board resigned — as well as management — and effectively the company ceased to exist.

Following the press release on August 14 — I am quoting from a CBC article on August 16 entitled “Yukon government says it didn’t intend to shut down Victoria Gold”.

In it, it says, “‘This is not the end of the company from our point of view...’ justice minister says.”

“The Yukon’s justice minister says it was not the government’s intention to shut down Victoria Gold when it put the mining company into receivership earlier this week.”

Again, so what this raises is the question — I’ll begin with asking whether the minister consulted with any mining industry experts or stock market experts on how likely it was for a company to recover after being put into receivership by government in the manner in which they did that.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. I think that there are a few things that are important to note for Yukoners regarding this situation. First of all, Victoria Gold as a legal entity does, in fact, still exist. What I can also note is that, at the court application that the member referred to in August where the application was made for a receiver to be appointed to protect the environmental concerns that were raised as the government regulator, Victoria Gold was prepared and, in fact, sought an adjournment for the purposes of entering bankruptcy protection. That is a decision of theirs. They were prepared to do that.

It was the board’s decision to resign and, in fact, they did so within a few days of the receiver being appointed, but again, you would need to ask them about that. The Government of Yukon first considered all available options — from the very moment that the heap leach failed in June of 2024 — considered all available options for pursuing a receivership order — before we pursued that order, what options were available.

At the time — we have to remember exactly what was happening at the time — the company, Victoria Gold, was not responding to the situation with the needed urgency given the heap leach failure’s significant impacts to the environment of the territory as well as to the well-being of Yukoners. The government, as the regulator, issued directions to the company to implement an adequate response to the imminent — at that time — and ongoing — at that time — environmental health and safety risks. Victoria Gold failed to comply fully with many of the directions that were issued by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the directions issued pursuant to the appropriate legislation. These directions involved critical actions that were needed at the time to address water storage, groundwater monitoring, water treatment, and the stability of the heap.

As the regulator, our priority was ensuring the protection of Yukoners and the Yukon environment. We were also committed to protecting taxpayers, a responsibility that often seems to be overlooked. The court order appointed the receiver to carry out the work of environmental protection. That process also sought — and was granted by the court — the opportunity for the Government of Yukon to be named on a protected priority basis for all funds that it advances to the receiver. That is an important aspect of this work to protect Yukon taxpayers from those expenses.

I appreciate the question, and hopefully, that information is of assistance.

**Mr. Cathers:** Madam Acting Chair, I don’t think that I heard a response to my specific question about whether the minister and her colleagues, in making that decision, had consulted with industry experts or stock market experts, because the outcome that happened following the government’s decision to put Victoria Gold into receivership was entirely predictable for anyone familiar with the mining industry. It does create a situation that was described by local columnist Keith Halliday in an article dated October 12, 2024 entitled “Yukonomist: Latest episode in the Eagle Gold Mine drama gets spicy”.

He noted in that — and I quote: “Once the receivers have squeezed the remaining juice out of the husk of Victoria Gold Corporation it will be the Yukon government that will be on the hook for spending after that.

“In effect, the Yukon government’s receivership move pushed the previous board and management to the sidelines and stopped their attempts to find new private capital to repair and reopen the mine. Now all this falls squarely into the territorial government’s lap.”

It does create real concerns for people about whether the government’s move will, in fact, place more costs on Yukoners since they effectively killed the mine and attempts that were underway, we understand, to acquire financing to allow them to both do the appropriate remediation and continue operations. Through government stepping in, in the manner in which they did — and again, the minister was the spokesperson for the government on that — they effectively stopped that. Now Yukon taxpayers are going to be stuck with the bill once the resources are gone.

Again, the question that I asked was: Did the minister or her colleagues consult with any mining industry experts or stock market or financial experts prior to making the decision to put Victoria Gold into receivership in mid-August?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that it is important in this conversation — I appreciate the questions in this conversation — that we recognize that we are now Yukoners and Yukon government responding to what was an environmental catastrophe on June 24, 2024. While Victoria Gold was responsible for the heap leach located at Eagle Gold mine, I note that there is an independent panel reviewing the cause of that event and incident. I also note that — I heard it myself actually — the Leader of the Official Opposition characterized the incident on June 24 at Eagle Gold mine as an “accident”. I think that the quote might have even been: an accident, everyone knows that. Certainly, no one knows yet what the cause of that incident on June 24 was. In fact, we have an independent panel looking into what that cause might be and what the ultimate reaction to that information should be, and should we need more information to proceed, how we might ascertain more information with respect to that.

I also note that the member opposite has quoted a particular local columnist. I would say that there is some opinion. It’s an opinion column; that’s fine. It’s all opinion.

But, in fact, I can assure Yukoners that they should respond to and understand this situation based on the court application and the details that were provided there and some of the public information that has come directly from Victoria Gold and other sources.

I also note that the government considered all available options before pursuing the receivership application. Let’s be clear. I appreciate the characterization that the receivership application has somehow caused Victoria Gold to fail or for their board to resign — again, that is up to their board. We sought all available options and advice — the necessary technical expertise from Energy, Mines and Resources and other sources — in considering all available options pursuant to that receivership application. I note again that, at that court application, Victoria Gold made a request to adjourn the matter so that they could file their own bankruptcy protection — something they had clearly been planning. Let’s remind Yukoners that the company was not responding to the situation back in late June 2024 with the urgency that was required and considered appropriate by government to protect Yukoners’ interests.

The corporate leadership at that time did not speak publicly for I think almost a month and they were missing in action. In many instances, the company was not even attempting to perform the necessary environmental protection work that had been directed by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources as the regulator. Victoria Gold was failing to address water storage issues and they were not doing what they were directed to do with respect to environmental health and safety risks.

At no point was the government interested in pursuing the options that we ultimately necessarily did pursue, but we were interested in protecting the environment and we were interested

in protecting Yukoners’ interests with respect to ultimate funds expended there on behalf of them through a receivership.

In order to do so, the application that was made ensured that Yukoners were a priority, and that ultimately was to protect taxpayers. The court-order-appointed receiver gives the Government of Yukon a protected priority basis for all of the funds that it advances to the receiver.

This is clearly not what the member opposite is saying is the case, but I assure you that it is, in fact, what the court order says and it is, in fact, the case. I can read directly from a press release that was issued by Victoria Gold on July 30, 2024 in which they said — quote: “There can be no assurance that the Company will ... have the financial resources necessary to repair damage to equipment and facilities or remediate impacts caused by the incident or restart production.” That, of course, was quite a bit before — several weeks before — the application was made to the court. This was a situation in real time where our government was responsible for protecting the environment, for protecting Yukoners’ interests, and ultimately for responding to the heap leach failure at Victoria Gold’s Eagle mine, and the application process that proceeded was the best course of action at the time and I believe remains to be the best course of action for the purposes of protecting the environment and protecting the investment and interest of funds that will and shall be owed to Yukoners.

**Mr. Cathers:** What I did not hear there was an answer to the question of whether the minister or her colleagues consulted with any experts on the mining sector, any stock market experts, or any financial experts prior to making the decision to seek to put the company into receivership. It was a very simple question. The minister even took time to apparently get briefed by the Government House Leader — the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — and appears to have his talking points as well, but I did not hear an answer to that very simple question: Did the minister or her colleagues consult with any experts on the mining sector, stock market experts, or financial experts before seeking the court order to put Victoria Gold into receivership? Again, as I noted, the result that occurred was entirely predictable for anyone familiar with the industry. So, did they seek that advice or not?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am sorry that the member opposite is not listening. I said on at least two occasions — I have been up two times on this question — that the government considered all available options before pursuing the receivership application. We sought necessary advice with respect to all available options.

**Mr. Cathers:** Again, I asked specifically if experts were consulted related to the mining sector or stock markets or financial experts. There is no indication in the political talking points written in the Cabinet Office there about whether that expert advice was sought. It is a very simple question and it is concerning to me that the Minister of Justice doesn’t know the answer to it. Did they seek the advice of any experts from the mining sector, any stock market experts, or financial experts?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** It didn’t take long for us to deteriorate into name-calling — the approach that the member



opposite often takes. I am sorry, Madam Acting Chair; I have answered that question three times.

We did seek advice. We did seek expertise. We did seek technical expertise with respect to all available options. We did so from the minute this matter occurred on June 24, 2024 until such a time as the matter and decisions were taken. We continue to seek advice — as does the receiver, no doubt — on the actions that are taken every day with respect to responding to this environmental situation.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, it's unfortunate to see the minister take that response. The minister is very quick when she is pressed for more information and has not answered a question to resort to taking shots at the opposition for asking those questions. We are, on behalf of Yukoners, obliged to ask questions, and if we feel that the response has not been adequate or has evaded the question, we will continue to press for those answers. Again, I did not hear an answer to the specific parts of the question.

I am going to move on to another matter, because it doesn't appear that I'm going to get an answer from the minister on that matter today. Unfortunately, as I noted, the outcome of that is that once the resources that are held there under receivership are exhausted, Yukon taxpayers will be left with the bill as a result of this Liberal government's decision.

Moving on to another matter — and that is the issue of the Shallow Bay zoning process, which was begun in 2014. Following a survey of property owners in the area that had a response rate of I believe approximately 80 percent — and the indication that most would favour reducing minimum lot size for rural residential much as the adjacent zoning area, the Mayo Road zoning area, had done and as had been done in other areas, including the Hot Springs Road area and Ibex Valley, based on surveys.

The government then began a process that was very different in its structure from that of any other zoning committee process that had been done by the Yukon government. It has a number of concerning elements to it, including a serious lack of transparency, a lack of due process, and a lack of representation of property owners impacted by some of the decisions and recommendations made. That then led to — just prior to the last territorial election, the government released proposed zoning, which included a 60-metre no-development buffer on titled property that was profoundly concerning to people impacted by it as well as others living near water. Just to clarify, the 60-metre no-development buffer was from Horse Creek and Shallow Bay. It would have applied not just on Crown land but on titled property. In some cases, for some of my constituents, literally all of their buildings on that property would be impacted. The proposal would have prevented them from rebuilding even if a building was destroyed in fire and would have, according to experts, impacted their ability to even get insurance as well as prevented them from even putting up a fence or putting trails in that area.

Under intense pressure from me as their MLA in opposition to that proposal as well as from residents themselves, the now Premier announced at an election event in April 2021 that they were going to re-look at that issue, and he

completely backtracked on that proposal. What is very concerning is that — I recently wrote to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources seeking an update on it, and the minister indicated that he is looking at that riparian buffer proposal again.

My question regarding that is: Since the riparian buffer would take away existing rights of owners and have a very serious impact on the value of some properties, has the Department of Justice been involved in assessing the risk of litigation, the estimated cost of compensating owners if the government is taken to court for lost property value and lost opportunity, and have they done any assessment on the total cost of lawsuits that are likely to come if indeed they continue forward with this proposal that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources recently advised me that they are considering?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. It is routine that the Department of Justice would be consulted with respect to planning processes. Whether or not that involves assessments at the moment of litigation risk or values of property, I don't have that information.

I understand that Energy, Mines and Resources is up later. They are responsible, as the member has said, for the work being done on this planning process. It is routine that the Natural Resources and Environmental Law Group is consulted through planning processes, and I expect that to have been the case in the consideration of this matter and to continue as the matter moves forward.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would encourage the minister and senior officials to delve into this more, because if the riparian buffer proposal that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, in a recent letter, indicated to me was again being reconsidered — and he referred to it as a key consideration — the impact on the existing rights, including property values of people's homes and land, would be quite serious. Under the proposal — as it went out before at the last election, that proposal would have prevented people from rebuilding a home or other building that was within the new riparian buffer on titled property even if it were lost in fire. It would have impacted the ability, according to experts, for people to get insurance, and it would have a serious and immediate negative impact on the value of those properties, including what for most people is their largest asset — their home and the land associated with it.

It was quite concerning to see this type of proposal coming forward; it is very concerning to see it coming back. Quite frankly, that type of assault on property rights, in my opinion, has no place in a free and democratic society, so it is concerning to see government proposing it in relation to the homes and land of my constituents.

I would encourage the minister to look very closely at this. I would also note that the proposed zoning that the government consulted on prior to the last election — and that the now Premier backtracked on but apparently has undone the backtracking — included removing existing rights under zoning for multiple properties, not just those adjacent to water. It included taking away the ability for an additional residence on agriculture lots; it included removing existing rights under zoning classes for multiple properties, and all of those things

would have had an impact both on lost opportunity as well as on the value of those properties.

I recognize that I'm probably not going to get much more in the way of answers from the minister on this. I got the impression that neither she nor the officials with her had themselves been involved in great detail in this. I will simply leave this here by encouraging them to take a serious look at this and to recognize that what was proposed before is fundamentally unjust and unfair to my constituents who would have lost existing property rights. To hear the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources proposing reviving this proposal is incredibly concerning to me.

Also, I should note that people are concerned about the precedent that type of action in a riparian buffer would set for communities such as Marsh Lake, Tagish, Carcross as well as properties along the Yukon River.

Madam Acting Chair, I will actually move toward wrapping up my comments and passing on the floor to the Third Party, if indeed the Third Party wishes to ask questions — no, it doesn't look like the Third Party does. With that, I will hand it back to the minister if she wishes to make additional comments regarding Shallow Bay and the zoning process, but I will be moving toward concluding my comments here.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you, Madam Acting Chair, and thank you for the description of this important issue to the member opposite. I appreciate the details with which that individual has expressed constituent concerns. I don't have any more information with respect to the work that's being done on that particular issue, but I appreciate the full explanation of the concerns, and I am happy to proceed with any other issues.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the comment by the minister. I would, as I noted before, urge her as well as officials to become fully familiar themselves with what had been proposed for Shallow Bay. As I noted, it is my firm belief that what was proposed before is fundamentally unfair to my constituents whose property would be negatively affected and property value would be negatively affected. I was alarmed to see it proposed in the first place; I am very concerned to see it coming back again.

I would just close with a sincere plea for the minister and senior officials to familiarize themselves with what was proposed and the lack of due process. I would encourage them to prevail on the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources as well as other colleagues to very seriously reconsider their approach and ensure that all of my constituents in the area are treated fairly.

With that, in the interest of moving on to other departments in the relatively short time left in this Fall Sitting, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 — oh, I am one step ahead.

**Acting Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice?

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

**Mr. Cathers:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required.

### **Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried**

**Acting Chair:** The Member for Lake Laberge has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures**

**Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,714,000 agreed to**

**On Capital Expenditures**

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

**Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,714,000 agreed to**

**Department of Justice agreed to**

**Acting Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, 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 20 minutes.

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote No. 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 215, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

**Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — continued**

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

**Mr. Kent:** Welcome to the two deputy ministers who are responsible for different aspects in Energy, Mines and Resources. They are here to provide support for the minister here this afternoon.

When we left off, I think one of the questions — I had asked a few questions in a row, but one of them was with respect to legislation on geothermal energy. I am wondering if the minister can give us an update on that work. I believe it was supposed to have been done — or we may have passed the deadline already. The minister can correct me if I am wrong there.

I am just wondering if the minister can give us a status update on the development of legislation to allow for geothermal.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Just for the record, welcome back to Deputy Minister Lauren Haney and Deputy Minister Paul

Moore and to the folks in the background who are helping get us information to share with the members of the House.

I think I recall talking about this. I will look back to check, but maybe it was about another question. I did look at the questions that the Member for Copperbelt left off with.

With respect to geothermal, we are in the preliminary research phase of legislation and policy development. When we began work on successor legislation — we just earlier passed amendments to the *Forest Resources Act* here in the Assembly — but with respect to new minerals legislation for both placer and quartz, at that point, the First Nations asked that we reset the work on the lands legislation as well. So, we pulled the work that had been so far on that back and reset that.

Then, they also indicated to us that, given that all of these things — geothermal, lands, and placer and quartz or new minerals legislation — are all resource-based legislation, it was taxing on that group, so the request was that we put an emphasis on new minerals legislation and secondarily on lands legislation and that geothermal would just be slowed down to give time for the land groups to absorb all of the work, effort, and change that was coming through.

So, geothermal for now, at the request of working with other governments, is to extend the timeline. I don't have an update on expectations at this moment, but that's the current status.

**Mr. Kent:** I am just wondering if the minister could remind us if that commitment to develop that legislation was part of the *Our Clean Future* document and then what the initial timeline was to be met. Obviously, there have been some extenuating circumstances that the minister has talked about today — with First Nations and the order of how this legislation is to be done — but I'm just curious if that legislation was set out in the 2020 *Our Clean Future* document and what the timeline was for it.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Yes, so under the original 2020 document — *Our Clean Future* — we had a couple of actions; they are listed as E11 and also E12. So, E11 is: "Develop legislation by 2023 to regulate geothermal energy development in Yukon." That is the responsibility of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Then the next one, E12, is: "Research the potential to use geothermal energy for heating and electricity, with a focus along Yukon fault systems, by 2025."

Now, I know that, on that secondary one, we have had work done around — the Yukon Geological Survey has been doing some of that work. With respect to E11, clearly, we're not making that timeline. It doesn't — I'll check in with the department. I think that we still see the potential of geothermal energy.

There is one program where we had supported a geothermal company to do some investigation here in the Yukon. I think it's under the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative — IREI. Whether we have legislation or not doesn't mean whether we can have geothermal or not. For example, we have got all sorts of ground-source heat pumps which are in effect geothermal, but this is about trying to prepare in case this technology takes off more.

The last thing I will say is that *Our Clean Future* — we are always amending it, updating it. Just earlier this week, the Minister of Environment and I were there to release the latest report on *Our Clean Future*.

In late 2023 when we put out that year's annual report, we also adopted 42 new actions under *Our Clean Future*. Roughly half of those were assigned to Energy, Mines and Resources.

So, yes, this action is not completed as it was originally contemplated. As I have noted for the member opposite, that was at the request of First Nation governments to prioritize other pathways that they believe to be more important. We will continue to work on many initiatives, including geothermal, but the legislation or regulations are not ready yet.

**Mr. Kent:** I am just wondering if the minister can tell us if the delay or the lack of geothermal legislation will affect the *Our Clean Future* target of emission reductions by 2030.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The answer is that we don't expect this action item or not meeting this action item to have any effect on our emission reductions. The way that we look at geothermal is: Does it have potential? We don't know that yet. I will talk about one company that we had funded through the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative, Eavor — a company that has a lot of ties to the Yukon but is out of Alberta, I think. They recently initiated a project in Germany where they are doing a fairly significant trial to see if they can get what we think of as "deep geothermal", providing — not like Iceland, which has high heat near the surface. This is about tapping into low-level background heat and converting that into electricity and heat at the surface, concentrating it. Those sorts of projects have some promising capabilities, but when we did the modelling for *Our Clean Future* around emission reductions, we had no sense — and still don't — of whether or not geothermal could provide a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. So, we never built it into the modelling at all — that is what the team is telling me.

I think, though, with *Our Clean Future*, we are exploring a range of ideas, because we recognize that we need to always be looking on the forefront of technology in order to grab the ones that are really going to work for some place like the Yukon, which is an islanded electricity grid that is fairly heavily dependent at this point on fossil fuels for transportation and heating.

**Mr. Kent:** I wasn't going to bring it up because I wasn't really aware of the project funding, but the minister mentioned some funding for a company that I think he called "Eavor".

I'm just wondering if he could tell us how much funding was provided to them, and I just wanted to confirm what the project was — he mentioned a project in Germany. Was the funding that we provided them to do the project in Germany, or was there a Yukon-based project that we funded?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'm just going to acknowledge for everyone that the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative funding is through the Yukon Development Corporation, and I'm looking up the number as I have it here with me and I have the information. I will provide it, of course, but if I get many more questions, I'll need to try to check in with that corporation to get further information.

My note says that, for Eavor Yukon, we provided \$500,000 for drilling here in the Yukon. We didn't fund anything to do with the project that is in Germany, but we certainly are watching it closely, because it's one of those ones where — this type of geothermal, if it is successful, has the advantage of being baseload power and of being quite independent of location. So, that gives it a lot of attributes that would be useful for the Yukon and potentially for mining across Canada. So, we are certainly watching the pilot project in Germany to see how it is — you know, what its track record is over time.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that from the minister. I'm just going to stay on the energy theme here for a little while this afternoon. The first question I have is with respect to the *Clean Energy Act* amendments that were brought before the House earlier this Sitting and passed the House.

I'm looking back now at a CBC North article from June 4 of this year — 2024. It's entitled, "Yukon gov't considers subsidies for mining companies to reduce emissions". Then the subtitle is: "Internal gov't documents suggest move is to ensure investments in industry don't wither". Later on in that article — I'll just quote from it again — quote: "Now the government wants to slash emissions from active mines by 45 per cent by 2035" — which was what was included in the act amendments. "The plan is to legislate the target by amending the territory's Clean Energy Act. Officials said that is set to happen in the fall. Emissions from abandoned mines will be subject to a separate target.

"But the internal government documents appear to cast doubt on those plans."

This quote is from a submission by Energy officials, I believe, to a Cabinet committee. I will quote: "Implementing the proposed target without a specific plan for programs and investments that could support industry with the reduction of greenhouse gases may contribute to an inability to meet targets and negatively impact the government's relationship with industry..."

I know that the legislation that we passed enables the development of these programs and investments, but I'm just wondering if the minister can tell us if there are any specific plans or programs in place that are being considered to subsidize mining companies to reduce their emissions.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** There are a couple of things I want to try to make clear. One of things that the Member for Copperbelt South just mentioned was that abandoned mines were not a part of the target. They are — so, whatever this article from CBC is referencing and whatever documents they are, what I can say is that what we just passed in the House a week or two ago includes abandoned mines and the remediation of them and all that.

Second of all, we don't have any, I would say at this point, solely mining actions under *Our Clean Future*. What we have done is to look through the existing actions under *Our Clean Future* or programs or incentives to see which ones we think would be useful for mining companies.

So, those programs that we are already trying to run for all Yukoners, would they have a meaningful utility for mines? So, ones that I will sort of reference quickly, things like, especially

if a mine is off-grid, then a solar project or something like that or a renewable energy project can be very helpful in displacing. We have several exploration companies now that have invested in these. I think there are a few placer outfits that have invested in solar. There are programs within the Yukon government for any company to apply for these.

Another example that we have talked about during the *Clean Energy Act* which we feel would be very meaningful for mines and mine operations is renewable diesel. That has been a conversation with mines around that. Of course, the way we think about that is how that will enter into the Yukon through our fuel sellers and be part of the mix for everyone, including mines.

Then the last one I will reference here right now — which I guess is probably different from some others — is that if mines connect to the grid, then they very quickly can offset quite a bit of fossil-fuel use.

I would have to check that history and how we have supported that or not over time, but we don't have a specific program that I'm aware of, certainly not under Energy, Mines and Resources, which incentivizes that, but I would have to check back through the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation, et cetera, to find out what opportunities are there.

All of these things are there where they could be used for a range of activities and industries. They were not created solely for mining.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate the clarification on the piece around the abandoned mines — I appreciate that from the minister, but again, I just want to circle back on this submission from I believe Energy officials to a Cabinet committee that is referenced in this article. I will quote it again: "Implementing the proposed target without a specific plan for programs and investments that could support industry with the reduction of greenhouse gases may contribute to an inability to meet targets and negatively impact the government's relationship with industry..."

Again, that was sent to a Cabinet committee that I presume dealt with the legislation — the amendments to the *Clean Energy Act*. I am just wondering if the minister can explain how those concerns from his department officials that are referenced in this article were dealt with, because it doesn't appear that there is a specific plan. The minister mentioned renewable diesel, but during debate on the *Clean Energy Act* amendments, there were a couple of things on cost, anywhere from 30 to 60 cents per litre additional to what conventional diesel now sells for. I think the minister also said that he is not even sure at this point that renewable diesel will work in a northern climate.

The minister also mentioned assisting mines connecting to the grid. That would obviously be great, but there doesn't appear to be a plan for programs and investments in that, either. Again, back to that initial question: How did this submission from Energy officials get taken into account when developing the legislation?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** There is one sentence here that I am hearing. Every submission that goes to Cabinet or Management Board for consideration always has a range of

analysis that is done talking about potential concerns. That analysis is done by a group of departments; it isn't just done by the submitting department. It will also be done by other departments. I am not going to be able to speak about the specifics from June. What I know is that we had a healthy deliberation, as always, about what the pathways are to support, in this case, the mining industry — but just in general when we are talking about *Our Clean Future*, the Yukon — in working to transition away from fossil fuels. These are complex, involved conversations that cover off a range of perspectives at all times.

I guess I have spoken very specifically on this topic in the House about the importance of working with industry and about harnessing their know-how and ingenuity to work to make this transition. While I wouldn't say that everybody in the Yukon from any sector, including mining — we wouldn't have universal agreement about issues like climate change, but it is pretty universal, no matter what group I am talking to, that they would be interested in reducing their use of fuel because that is a cost. There is almost always some place where we get significant alignment and we will always try to use that position.

Was there analysis done for Cabinet's consideration about challenges that would be faced in trying to achieve the targets of *Our Clean Future* and, in this case, the mining intensity targets? Yes, there is always that analysis. Was that analysis considered? Yes, it was. In the end, we made the choice to move ahead and that is why we brought it to this Assembly.

**Mr. Kent:** When the choice was made to move ahead without having a specific plan for programs and investments in place — even though there were risks associated with the inability to meet targets and negatively impact the government's relationship with industry — it sounds like the government decided that those risks were manageable, I guess. It sounds like, when you are submitting to the Cabinet committee or Cabinet, you win some and you lose some. Energy officials lost out on this specific recommendation, but I am just wondering now if the minister can give an idea on when we can expect a specific plan for programs and investments that could support industry. I know it's in the legislation, but I am wondering when that specific plan will be developed.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Again, we are taking a sentence from a package that will talk about a whole range of things. There are risks on the side of not acting — risks like watching industry make investments that won't stand them in good stead over the long term as we make a transition away from fossil fuels and risks like not addressing the underlying causes of climate change and ending up exacerbating the impacts of climate change. There are all sorts of risks on both sides of this equation. I don't think we can take one side. I will again say for the member opposite that I am not sure that this was Energy, Mines and Resources' analysis, because there is a range of departments that are asked to put in perspectives around submissions. They often list a range of risks on multiple sides.

The intention here for this submission is that we should flag the importance — or that it did flag the importance — of continuing work after — when it came to us this past spring or

summer, we hadn't yet brought the bill before this House and we didn't have the amendments to the *Clean Energy Act* as of yet. But that note — and several other notes I am sure in that submission that we are talking about — is that we should work with industry and continue to work with them. That is exactly what the department is doing right now. I don't have a timeline in front of me yet about what that plan will look like, but what I can tell members of the House is that the first place we are going to start is with those actions that we have already developed under *Our Clean Future*, because that is the smart place. I remember having that conversation with industry already.

That work is underway as we speak. In fact, I would say for the members opposite that my sense is that the department had been working on it even before we had made amendments to the *Clean Energy Act* because, of course, we had already — a year ago — made the announcement about the target, and so that is when we started working with industry to develop a strategy around working with them to get those greenhouse gas emission reductions over time.

**Mr. Kent:** The CBC article also says that in the documents that they are referring to, those targets are called "aspirational". I think we have established that they are not firm targets — the 45 percent by 2035 on the intensity targets or the 45 percent by 2030 for the balance of the Yukon for reductions. Obviously, being that they are aspirational, I am worried that there is no urgency; there is no sense of urgency for the government to do things like developing a plan for programs and investments to support industry with these greenhouse gas reductions.

I am going to move on to some other energy topics that I wanted to discuss here this afternoon. I recall seeing in one of the *Our Clean Future* documents, I believe, that there is proposed legislation being developed to set the amount of electricity that is generated by renewables. I am just wondering if the minister can confirm that for us and give us a sense on where we are at with that legislative commitment.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, can I just respectfully disagree with the member opposite. I think that the targets are both aspirational and firm. We are aspiring. These are not easy things. This is the goal. To transition away from a fossil-fuel economy is not a simple thing. If we don't put in place some intermediate targets, our experience tells us that we don't actually get there.

One of the things that we did was to build the *Clean Energy Act* that now says that the government has this responsibility. If some future government wishes to not have those targets anymore, then they have to come back to this Assembly to change that law. That forces future governments to be more transparent around this goal.

We do have a range of actions that we are working on that we think are going to be useful for mines. For example, there are things like the low carbon economy funding that we have for renewables. We think that there is usefulness for that in off-grid mines. There is already the federal output-based pricing funding mechanism. Anyway, I have spoken previously about

piloting renewable fuels here in the territory. There is a range of things.

The member asked about other targets that are there in *Our Clean Future*.

There is a target to have 93 percent — like, I think it's a decadal average; I'll have to look it up in *Our Clean Future* — that should be the amount of — our electricity should be at least 93-percent renewables. Then there is another action that says: bring that in under the *Clean Energy Act*. As we work toward that, we understand that there are some technicalities that we have to be careful about, because, for example, we have the Yukon Utilities Board, and we don't want to compromise that board's role in how it considers rate applications from our two electric utilities. So, we are navigating that to think how that might be — or not depending on how that lands — but *Our Clean Future* does have that target built into it already.

**Mr. Kent:** Again — sorry — because the minister stepped back, I wanted to step back and clarify that when I said that the targets were aspirational, that quote came from the internal documents of the Government of Yukon that the CBC reporter had. So, those weren't my words; those were words from internal documents that the CBC reporter had and referenced in his article. I just wanted to clarify that here this afternoon.

The minister mentioned it, and it was earlier this week that he and the Minister of Environment released the 2023 annual report for *Our Clean Future*. I have a few questions with respect to this report.

The first one is about the reduction of the Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions. Obviously, the minister will know this: "In 2022, non-mining greenhouse gas ... emissions were ... 6 per cent higher than 2010 levels." I'm just wondering: With respect to the original *Our Clean Future* and the 30-percent target, where were we supposed to be in 2022? And then, what is the difference between that and the revised 45-percent targets that came in with the original CASA agreement and the *Clean Energy Act* that was passed in this House a couple of years ago?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am going to go back as well. I agree with the member opposite that these targets are aspirational. I agree with that part of the article. What I heard the member opposite say was that these were aspirational, not firm. I think that it is aspirational and firm, so it's just a conjunction issue.

Where are we with respect to hitting our targets? I will share a couple of things that I heard from our director of the Energy branch and I think the director of the Climate Change Secretariat. They were there at the presentation as well and talked about where we are on the path toward reducing our emissions by 2030 for the Yukon-wide target and 2035 for the mining industry.

The first thing that they explained at the news briefing is that the greenhouse gas emissions, when they are reported — so, what we were sharing with Yukoners earlier this week were the greenhouse gas emissions of 2022. There is always this delay in measuring emissions, adding them all up, and getting that report out, so we are talking about back in 2022. In our

minds, let's go back to that period of time. We were just coming out of the pandemic. In particular, before that, there had been a significant decrease in travel and economic activity, and then it was ramping back up.

The next thing that the department folks shared was that we could see that emissions had gone up, but we could see that they had gone up much, much less than both GDP and population growth. So, the first indicator that we look for is: Are we starting to decouple population growth and GDP growth from emissions growth? I think the answer is yes. That is how the team explained it to me — definitely, we see that.

The next thing they explained for the media this past Tuesday is, when we introduce actions that we think will have an impact on emissions reductions, they are not typically actions where emissions reductions happen at a go. What they do is happen over time.

So, let's take, for example, the Minister of Environment, who has talked often about putting solar into some of the highway camps. When you do that, you get a reduction that year from offsetting fossil fuels that would have been used in the camp. It's an off-grid camp, so it is definitely going to be using a lot of generators, and you would then have this fuel usage. You get some reduction that year, but by two years, you get twice that reduction, because it is adding up, and by three years, you get three times. So, you see, as we do more and more of these actions, they all start to add up over time.

When I ask the officials whether they feel we are on track, the general answer is yes, but they are always, always re-running these models and retesting them. As I said earlier in my responses, we add new actions. We start to estimate what those should look like against it, so we are always looking to improve *Our Clean Future* as we move forward. The officials have said to me that they feel that we are where they anticipated us to be and that is generally on track and that there is still a lot of work in front of us. It is one of those things where we will continue to work hard on this, because it's going to take — I have described it as a complex issue, and it will take a range of actions, and we will continue to work on a range of fronts.

**Mr. Kent:** I am just hoping the minister can provide us with a number. When the original *Our Clean Future* plan was developed in 2020, they had 30 percent reduction by 2030 — below 2010 levels by 2030. Just what was the target for 2022? Was it a six-percent increase? Is that what he is saying? Were we expecting in 2022 to be six-percent higher than 2010 given the actions that had been put in place?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Madam Acting Chair, there is no target for 2022, so that isn't how this works. What they do is they run models to say: Okay — for example, they estimate a population growth, and they say that if you have that kind of population growth, you are going to have this many more people. That means you have this many more cars, and that means you'll have this many more computers — that sort of thing. This is the typical energy use — a range of factors — and then they run the model, and then they model how these actions look and what kind of result they think we should get or could get with it, and so, the way I understand it is that is a pretty complicated model. I forget — they used a term for it, but it

will be some sort of energy population growth model, something like that. Then they run that forward to 2030, and then they see what our projection is. When they get new data each year, they keep inputting it and talking about it. One of the things that happens — for example, when this came out in 2020, there were projections for growth, but it turns out that both the population and the economy have grown faster than we anticipated. So, then, you have to adjust it again, and you recalibrate it based on that new information.

There are no targets for 2022. When I asked the department whether they feel that we are progressing well and generally on track, the answer is yes.

**Mr. Kent:** I am going to dig into this a little bit more so that I can try to understand what the minister is talking about. I will take him to page 7 on the 2023 *Our Clean Future* annual report. Figure 1 is there. It has Yukon's non-mining greenhouse gas emissions and a bar graph that takes us to 2022 where our non-mining greenhouse emissions were 618.1 kilotonnes, and then there are two lines after that, from 2023 to 2030. One line has projected emissions without *Our Clean Future* and then the other one is projected emissions with *Our Clean Future*. So, the 2023 numbers with *Our Clean Future* look like they are set to drop substantially to just above 500 kilotonnes.

Even looking at this document, the target by 2030 of 321 kilotonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> is still not achievable with what we have in *Our Clean Future* as of right now. It says at the bottom here for figure 1: "The Yukon's non-mining emissions from 2010 to 2022. Modelling provided by..." — a research company — "... has estimated that current *Our Clean Future* actions are projected to reduce emissions by 29.6 percent."

My question for the minister is: Where are we finding the additional 15.4 percent that will get us to the 45-percent target that is aspirational but firm?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Yes, I think that we have talked about this before. We continue to update *Our Clean Future*. Some of the upside is that we have added actions that will continue to try to work us toward that target. I have sat in on a couple of the meetings where there are folks from the Energy branch, folks from the Climate Change Secretariat, and people from the university who deal with energy stuff, and it's our utilities and our other departments like Highways and Public Works that have a lot of the actions.

They all get this group of folks in the room — and including some from outside of government or energy utilities — and they say: Here are the actions that we have so far. Which one of these do you think we can improve? Which ones can we accelerate? Are there actions that we have missed? Oftentimes, we are watching sort of on the technological front. Earlier today, we were talking about geothermal. For example, if that proves out, then maybe that's an opportunity.

Another technology space that is changing very quickly is battery technology. As those things come on, do we make a pivot and move in that direction?

The group is always working to improve *Our Clean Future* and get us further. Then there are other things that work against us. For example, I have already stated that, if we are growing faster than we anticipated and if our economy is more active or

robust than we anticipated, I think that the models have in them projections of economic growth and of population growth, but you have to make an estimation. If those estimations underestimated the performance of the Yukon — and so far, they have because the Yukon really has been growing quickly and its economy has been doing well — then you have to add more actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. At some point, though, some of these things become self-supporting. For example, once someone has moved to an electric vehicle, they tend to be pretty strong proponents of it, and we expect them to continue on that path. Those sorts of things then start to change more quickly.

A lot of it is trying to analyze how quickly these technologies will be adopted in the Yukon and we are sort of estimating where the Yukon will be. In some things, the Yukon has moved faster than other provinces and territories, and it is interesting to watch. It's difficult to know exactly where that is, but that is the way in which we are sort of working.

The term for *Our Clean Future* is to use an "adaptive management approach", and most jurisdictions that have serious plans use the same adaptive management approach.

**Mr. Kent:** Just flipping over to page 9 in that annual report, we were talking about zero-emission vehicles registered in the Yukon. It looks like we have 344 zero-emission vehicles registered in the Yukon; that was by the end of 2023. Obviously, that has probably gone up to where we are in real time.

One of the things that I noticed with respect to figure 3, which is the graph, is that, when I looked at the 2022 annual report, the target line was around 1,000 electric vehicles, but in 2023, it has been moved down to where we're at, which is about 344. I'm just wondering if that is part of the minister's adaptive management — to keep moving the target line down based on how many electric vehicles are registered. Why is there such a change year over year to the target line? That target line, I would assume, would remain constant and then we hope to meet it from underneath. If the minister looks back at last year's report, he'll find that target line substantially higher than where this new one is. So, I'm just curious: How is that helpful for Yukoners trying to figure out how we're going to get to this 4,800 target if they just keep sliding that target line down to match where we're actually at with vehicles registered?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What the branch is telling me is that the 2022 report used a pretty simple projection using five-year tranches for the projection, and now we are using a more precise S-curve that more accurately projects how the technology is adopted. This is just an example of how we improve our projections and modelling over time.

I now have the 2022 report in front of me and you can sort of see that it is more Lego-like rather than a smooth curve. They have just updated that model to reflect reality. Again, here in the Yukon, we are the third highest in adoption of electric vehicles. I just continue to say to Yukoners that it's kind of wild that a northern territory is number 3 in Canada when it comes to electric vehicle adoption.

Of course, this report talks about what the numbers of vehicles were as of 2023, but we've already seen the data for

this year and that it has been increasing on this curve as we projected, and the adoption is strong here in the territory.

**Mr. Kent:** I will look forward to next year's report and see if that target line has moved again if we are not meeting the targets.

One thing that I'm kind of curious about with respect to sort of the entire *Our Clean Future* emission reduction plan and the annual reporting — and I'm not sure if this is in there, but maybe the minister can tell us if it is and then explain why or why not — is with respect to: With all of these different initiatives and all of these different things that we're bringing into force, what will the impact be on the consumer? Obviously, the federal government continues to raise the carbon tax, which has an impact on the price of gasoline and, living in a northern jurisdiction, the price of freight for essential goods to get up here. The clean fuel standards will have an upward price on fuel and heating oil and those types of things. So, has there been an overall consumer cost analysis done as part of this so that Yukoners can know what it's going to cost them at the kitchen table as families to implement this plan?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'll check in with the department about whether there is any broad economic analysis. No matter what I say here, I think we have to acknowledge that there is a cost on the other side too. So, there is a cost to transitioning away from fossil fuels, but there is a cost to staying with fossil fuels. In my experience, when I look at the issue of climate change and try to understand how big those impacts are over time, the cost of inaction is incredibly significant, and I don't often see a lot of analysis except sort of at a global level where it's a huge cost. Just basically what I hear from Yukoners is that we should be making this transition. Part of it as well is that it's difficult.

If we take electric vehicles as an example, the upfront cost is very high, but the ongoing cost or the operating cost of the vehicle is much lower. The cost for the electricity that is used — the cost for the electricity versus the cost of filling up at the pump is much lower. Certainly, the maintenance cost is way, way down. It is difficult; it is often an apples-to-oranges comparison.

I will ask the department whether they have done — I think generally what they have done is that they tried to cost individual things. We have put incentives in there to help make the transition, for example, to electric vehicles but also other things like heat pumps. I know that in the economic models, they often also want to cost those things to try to see what impacts they have. Often, after we get early adopters in, one of the things that happens is that the marketplace starts to shift and it drives prices down, and they are tough to project.

I guess in the broadest terms, we perceive that the costs of inaction are more expensive than the costs of action. It is difficult to be able to quantify that exactly, but the issues of climate change are pretty significant here and around the world.

**Mr. Kent:** I understand obviously that there are costs associated with a changing climate for the government when it comes to flood and fire mitigation and those types of things. There are bigger costs as well, but I think something that Yukoners would want to know is: What is this going to mean

for their family? Every family in the Yukon has to sit down at the kitchen table at the end of the month and try to figure out their budget. So, with increasing costs associated with implementing this plan to fuel and the associated costs to freight rates and other costs in this plan, I am hoping that I can get the minister to commit to at least looking at including a consumer cost estimate. Families need to know what this means. One of the members of the family may have to take on a second job in order to cover off these costs; they may have to make those decisions. These consumer costs will probably influence collective bargaining from unions as we go forward.

We are not that far from 2030 and the end of this plan that was put in place in 2020. There are costs to inaction, but there are also costs to action and I hope that the minister understands that. There are costs to individual families and consumers in the territory from implementing this.

I guess that a broader cost question that I will ask him is: We are closing in on being five years away from this, so is there a line item in the five-year capital plan that the minister can point to that specifically talks about the cost of implementing this plan? Obviously, there are electric vehicle subsidies, there is renewable energy production, and there is a whole series of different commitments that have been made. So, is there an overall cost to the taxpayer or Yukon government that will appear in the five-year capital plan as early as perhaps next spring?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I recall seeing in one of the spring budget documents where it got pulled together. The challenge, of course, is that we're pulling stuff from five or six different departments; it's both in capital and O&M. So, I'll see if we have a global picture about what that investment looks like for this year, for 2024-25. I just had a hunt through this year's highlights and budget documents to see if I could see it, but I didn't find it.

I know, for example, that it's really quite complex because, as we start to make these investments, we also know that we're going to have spinoffs with clean jobs. What happens is that, under *Our Clean Future*, we anticipate that there is still going to be this economic growth, so that is factored in. They run the model, and you have to sort of start to imagine that you are transitioning your energy economy over. So, it's complicated. I know I have said that already today.

What I will do is ask the department if we have done that global pull-together like I saw in one of the recent budgets where we grabbed it all, put it in a bucket, and said that this is how much investment there is — sort of based on all of these *Our Clean Future* strategies.

Sorry, we did have it in this year's press release. This year's budget delivers on our commitments to environmental stewardship demonstrated through support for existing and new actions identified in *Our Clean Future*. More than \$55 million in this budget is dedicated to *Our Clean Future* initiatives. This includes: \$12 million for the green infrastructure program; \$6.9 million for the low-carbon economy leadership fund; \$7.3 million for government building retrofits; and \$6.4 million for the energy rebate program.



I would have to check the numbers to see whether that is all adding up to one thing or whether that is just a partial list, but that is the rough estimate of how much we are investing in *Our Clean Future*.

**Mr. Kent:** Hopefully, when the documents are tabled in the spring, that number will be broken out in that five-year plan so that we can get a sense for how much more investment is required. Obviously, that number for the electric vehicles, at \$5,000 per vehicle, will drive that number up substantially if the new target line that's in this year's report is adhered to.

That said, Madam Acting Chair, I know the Member for Takhini-Kopper King had some questions that she wanted to ask, so I will swap out with the Chair so that the member can ask her questions here today.

### Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

**Acting Chair:** I would like to participate in debate. Are there any volunteers?

*Member for Copperbelt South rises*

**Acting Chair (Mr. Kent):** Is there any further debate?

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Mr. Acting Chair. It is lovely to change sides of the table.

I actually just have brief questions, to be perfectly frank. Of course, I am welcoming the officials here to the Assembly.

I wanted to get more of an idea about the terms of reference for the independent review that is happening at the Eagle mine site. Can the minister give us any additional information about what their terms of reference are? Mostly, I am really interested to know if they are going to be able to investigate government's role in what happened there.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, the independent review board is three members, and they are experts in the field. They are independent. It is an independent review board, but even the management of them is done through the receiver, not through us, which is to create distance so that, should they wish to consider us as government in our role so there's no influence, they can do that. It really is to look at what are the root causes of the slide, but that might include, for example, licences that we issued or terms and conditions of those licences. I think that they could consider that. They could also consider any inspection reports that we had carried out.

They certainly can ask PwC for any information about Victoria Gold, because PwC has now taken over that management and whatever information they have on hand would be accessible to the independent review board.

One other thing I think I should note is that, how it was originally set up, there is the ability for the independent review board to compel information should they require it, so there are some teeth there. I think that we have made it clear to the independent review board that, if they have any requests for information, we would work to get them that information.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate that answer from the minister. Is the independent review board able to compel witnesses?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have just asked the department to confirm this for me, but I will encourage the member to ask

other questions. As soon as I get that answer, I will share it here when I next rise.

**Ms. White:** I am sure at this point in time that the minister is familiar with the *Public Inquiries Act*. One of the reasons why the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun continues — well, and others actually such as CPAWS, YCS, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and the Yukon NDP are examples — to call for a public inquiry is because of that body's ability to compel witnesses as well. I am interested specifically in whether or not the independent review folks are able to compel witnesses. I appreciate that they are able to compel information, but I am also interested to know if they can compel witnesses.

While we are waiting for the minister to get that response, I wanted to know if the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has anything to do with the old Macaulay Lodge site.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources did the land sale for the Macaulay Lodge, so yes, we had a responsibility there.

**Ms. White:** I am just asking the minister to remind me if that lot has sold. If it has sold, what kind of stipulations are around it, for example, when construction should start?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** There is an agreement in place for the Macaulay lot. They are sort of in the phase of planning and permitting right now. Sorry — and construction will begin once the permitting authorization is done. I think that the agreement for sale is that construction needs to begin within three years.

**Ms. White:** Thanks to the minister for that. Is there some place where folks like myself can go and see what the plan is for that Macaulay Lodge thing?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'm working to find out on whether the information about the plans for Macaulay are public-facing or not; I have not seen them myself, I will just say. One of the things that the department has shared with me is that the title isn't transferred to the new owner until those conditions are met — in other words, for the construction to begin. I don't know whether that is public-facing, but if I find out that it is, I will make sure — and if I don't get it today, I'll make sure to share it with the members opposite.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate that from the minister. There were a lot of press releases going from the 2022 demolition — many years after it was actually emptied out and it sat vacant with a housing crisis, but that's beside the point. But there were lots of press releases from government talking about how it was going to be affordable housing and it was going to be multi-use housing — there were lots. The lot has been sold, and I'm just interested to know what is going to be on it, appreciating that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources may not be the right department, but I'm still curious about the Macaulay Lodge site.

I wanted to just follow up on my colleague's questions, actually. We talk about different things in *Our Clean Future* — incentives, for example. So, the minister today has talked about electric cars and heat pumps. I don't want to surprise anyone in this House when I say that I'm supportive of both. I don't have an electric car, but I do have a heat pump.

One of the challenges with how well the Yukon has adapted, of course, is capacity generation. There were a whole bunch of things that were incentivized. The cost was saved by the consumer to get people to switch, which is good, but the capacity never kept up with that.

This is the other part: When we talk about renewable energy, I appreciate that when we talk about large-scale renewable, which is really what we need right now, that is not a quick process, and unfortunately, solar panels are not going to help us necessarily with that.

What is the minister's plan for capacity, knowing that Yukon right now is on the cusp — let's just say, not to make it scary — but we are in a bit of a pickle, to be perfectly frank.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We need to do two things at once. We need to shift from fossil fuels over to electricity and we need to build our renewable electrical capacity. So, yes, there is a ton of pressure on our utilities — and that is both Yukon Energy and ATCO. They are working right now to modernize their system and to try to beef it up, and so that takes significant investment. Some of the infrastructure is aging. Yukon Energy is working on relicensing almost everywhere on our significant renewable projects. There is a lot of pressure on the system. We had this question just the other day from the media as well.

Members may have had a chance to check, but I tabled the Bureau of Statistics' analysis of energy here in the territory over the last decade, and in the last six years, we actually have increased our renewable capacity here in the Yukon. That is terrific, but we have also increased our dependency on fossil fuels. This winter coming up in particular, there is a lot of pressure on the system for a couple of really big reasons. The first one is that Aishihik dam didn't recharge through rainfall; it was a bit of a drought. So, they ended up with about 35 percent of what is a normal amount of water, and that means that there is less renewable energy — or hydro power. At the same time, there have been challenges with the first turbine at Aishihik. They had done refurbishment work on it earlier this year, but then still, something happened to that turbine, so that puts pressure on the system. We talked earlier — maybe it was in Question Period — about a series of repairs that have to happen in Mayo. So, there is a lot of pressure on the system.

The member asked what the plan is. There are three parts to the plan. For the immediate term, it's to make sure that we have backup on the system so that we can keep the lights on. I think that having reliable electricity is pretty important. The immediate term is typically diesel. The next nearest term is the battery project that we have talked about, because once the battery comes on, it makes the wind better and it does peak shaving, so those are two really important things. That's an improvement.

The next phase of it is finding more dependable winter capacity. For Yukoners, think "winter energy". I know that the team at Yukon Energy will get after me, because there is a difference between energy and capacity; I don't want to be pedantic. But where are they looking for that? The typical place is to work with First Nations and to do projects. A really great example is to just put out a call for dependable winter energy — renewable energy — and the typical one that I think is sort

of nearer term here is wind/battery backup. Those are the types of projects that you could get going in a handful of years.

The next realm of projects — and we are in conversation with several First Nations around possible hydro projects. I think it is really important that we go for the projects that First Nations see as their priorities and want to bring forward. There are definitely those possibilities. If we ever get pump storage, that would make all of the intermittent renewables better for all Yukoners — including solar. That's important.

Then the last one in the mix is grid connect. If you get grid connect — shy of that transmission line going down — you have the ability to deal with growth or, at times when your economy contracts, you can adjust. What my colleagues at the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation would always emphasize is that it doesn't take away our interest in building local renewable energy projects. In fact, it improves their viability typically, because if you have that grid connect in place, we still really want to make sure that the energy is produced locally if possible. So, it's a complicated — I have used that word too many times today. There is a suite of things happening to address the need for more renewables here in the Yukon.

**Ms. White:** I want to highlight by talking about myself. I think it's the easiest way to not make any changes. I would be what is considered to be an early adapter of a heat pump. I removed my oil-fired appliance in 2016 and got a heat pump. We talked a lot about that because Energy Solutions at the time was monitoring it and I am very proud of the \$8,000 rebate and hopefully the bigger rebate that comes now with the federal government. That's great.

I am solely dependent on electricity at my house, which means, as we have the more frequent power outages, there is a vulnerability in my home — a vulnerability that I recognize. I have discussed multiple times with my partner that we really need to get a woodstove as backup because of that vulnerability.

Looking at the population growth, it's almost 10,000 people between 2016 and 2024. In 2016 when Yukon Energy was doing a consultation on whether or not they should build a permanent diesel plant or whether they should rent diesel, I was a proponent of renting at the time. There was a plan. There were expectations that we would be working toward this, and I appreciate that we are still working toward those renewables. I don't think that should change.

At the time, I had a really good conversation with one of the electrical engineers from Yukon Energy. He said that he understood what I was talking about with the rental diesels, but could we buy the connecting parts? Could we buy the parts that aren't the backup generators? He said that the parts that come with these rental diesels are really bad. The diesel units themselves are okay, but the parts that come with them aren't any good. They travel, they are used, they get abused, and you never know where they're coming from — so if we could have that as a permanent asset.

We had that conversation and I included that in my submission letter at the time. I said that we should rent diesels;

you should be able to buy these parts. We have to make these moves.

But that was before we increased by 10,000 people — thousands of houses. Now I look at Whistle Bend where, in 2016, I think there was one blue house on the corner, which I talked about because it was \$400,000 for it to be plowed in that area and was a little bit obscene at the time. But it's gone from one house to hundreds of houses.

The reason that I bring this up, Mr. Acting Chair, is that they are all electric — they are electric. They are not diesel; they are not propane. They are electric and, in most parts, it's because it's the cheapest to put in their baseboards, which I compare to toasters, because as soon as you put a toaster on, it draws direct energy. To heat up your little elements, it's a direct draw. Well, baseboards are a direct draw, and if you have hundreds of, if not a thousand, houses that all have baseboards and all have a direct draw at 7:00 a.m., what is our energy security when we're depending on rental diesels? I say this knowing how uncomfortable it is to talk about: Do we have to consider something different?

I have looked into — not that I'm a professional, to the professionals listening in or reading later on — the possibility of: What is the resale of a diesel plant? The fact is that you can re-sell them. I was glad to know that you could re-sell them. So, we talk about capacity generation — so, when all of those toasters in Whistle Bend go on and everybody across the territory is dealing with minus 45, are we there? Do we have that ability?

I appreciate so much the new wind farm and I appreciate the battery, but the reality is: Just due to the sheer growth of the territory, do we have that energy security right now? I guess that's the question: Does the minister feel that we have that energy security right now? The minus 45, toasters in Whistle Bend going off, and people like me who are solely dependent on electricity — do we have the capacity?

Mr. Acting Chair, I feel like the minister is probably going to take longer than four minutes to respond to that. So, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

**Acting Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King 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 Government House Leader 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 Chair of Committee of the Whole?

### Chair's report

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

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

### The following sessional paper was tabled November 14, 2024:

35-1-182

*Yukon Housing Corporation Annual Report — For the year ended March 31, 2024 (Pillai)*

### The following legislative return was tabled November 14, 2024:

35-1-155

Response to Motion for the Production of Papers No. 34 re: Takhini neighbourhood traffic study terms of reference (McLean)

### The following document was filed November 14, 2024:

35-1-284

Budget speech from March 7, 2024, letter re (dated March 19, 2024) from Ted Laking, President, Association of Yukon Communities, to Hon. Sandy Silver, Minister of Finance (Dixon)

### Written notice was given of the following motion November 14, 2024:

Motion No. 1120

Re: disposal of Bill No. 45, *Electoral District Boundaries Act* (Streicker)