



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, March 27, 2025 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2025 Spring 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, March 27, 2025 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**Withdrawal of motions**

**Speaker:** The Chair would like to inform members of a change made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 1192, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge, has been removed from the Order Paper, as it is similar to Motion No. 1209, which was adopted, as amended, by the House on March 19, 2025.

**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 Darby McIntyre and Owen Munroe,  
Special Olympics World Winter Games athletes**

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, all right everyone, buckle your seatbelts.

*[Member spoke in Italian. Text unavailable.]*

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to two athletes. These two athletes recently returned home from Turin, Italy: Darby McIntyre and Owen Munroe. How was my Italian?

Darby and Owen were in Italy as members of Team Canada's cross-country ski team competing in the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games. From March 8 to 16, Darby and Owen were on the ski trails representing the country and the Yukon. Their efforts led them to excellent results throughout the games. Their hard work paid off on the very final day of the games when both Darby and Owen found themselves on the podium. Darby along with three other teammates won gold in the four-by-one kilometre relay. Owen, also competing in a four-by-one kilometre relay, earned a bronze with his teammates.

These are tremendous accomplishments and Yukoners couldn't be more proud of them. Mr. Speaker, their successes show that, with enough drive, anyone can reach the top of their respective sports. They are an inspiration to us here at home and we can't wait to cheer them on again in the future.

Darby and Owen did not reach these heights alone. I applaud their coaches, both in the Yukon and on the national team, as well as their family and friends who have been with them on every step of their athletic journeys.

Last, I would like to thank the team at Special Olympics Yukon. Since 1978, this organization has been enriching the lives of Yukoners. Their programming helps world-class

athletes like Darby and Owen and also those at the grassroots level. We become our best selves when we live healthy, active lifestyles. I thank them for their support and dedication to sport for all.

Darby and Owen, congratulations once again on your accomplishments in Turin.

*Applause*

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to two exceptional Yukon athletes, Darby McIntyre and Owen Munroe, on their return from Turin, Italy, where they competed in the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games.

Both Darby and Owen competed for Team Canada against athletes from around the world and returned home to the Yukon with hardware that we see glinting in the gallery around their necks to show for their training and hard work.

Owen has been involved in Special Olympics for 20 years, competing in games across Canada and around the world since 2004. Darby McIntyre has been competing since he was selected to represent Canada at the 2015 Special Olympics World Summer Games at the age of just 15.

A huge congratulations to Darby on his gold medal and Owen on his bronze medal, which they were awarded along with their Team Canada teammates during the four-by-one kilometre relay in their respective divisions.

I also want to give a special acknowledgement and thanks to CEO Serge Michaud, all the staff, board of directors, volunteers, and families for your dedication to Special Olympics Yukon. Your dedication to these incredible athletes has been changing lives for over 30 years and counting.

Special Olympics Yukon will be hosting their annual dinner auction on April 26 this year at the Takhini arena. I am told that tickets will go on sale tomorrow for those who want to take part by either attending in person or by donating as a business or as an individual. We encourage all Yukoners to buy your tickets early and help support this very important cause.

Congratulations to our athletes, and we look forward to seeing them at the event in April.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate two hard-working Yukoners who just returned from their adventures in Turin at the Special Olympics World Winter Games. These athletes represent everything that we teach our children to strive for and everything that we as adults should continue to strive for. "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

Today, we celebrate Darby McIntyre and Owen Munroe, who are as brave as they are fierce. These two ferocious athletes have competed locally, nationally, and internationally for more than a decade. They worked hard to get to Turin and they left it all on the snow. Both brought home medals.

I know that these two live for much more than just winter sports. Darby works their way through more than one pair of sneakers a year, as running is one of their passions. And Owen — well, Owen gets more kilometres on his bike in the summer

than any single person I know. He wears through bike chains as if they were made of paper, if you can imagine. These two continue to show perseverance, determination, sportsmanship, and excellence in sport, and I know from personal experience that they are two pretty great human beings.

So, Darby and Owen, your stories are ones of constant evolution — every race, every challenge, and every adjustment has shaped you not just as athletes but also as people who embrace every opportunity to grow.

Congratulations; the Yukon is very proud of you.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of International Transgender Day of Visibility**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the International Transgender Day of Visibility.

This day falls on March 31 every year. It is a day about celebrating the lives, contributions, and resilience of transgender people in our communities and society. Rachel Crandall Crocker, an American transgender activist, founded this day in 2009. She wanted to create a day each year that would uplift and empower transgender people, a day that would act as a balance to the annual Transgender Day of Remembrance, which honours the lives of transgender people lost to violence each year, a day to raise awareness and celebrate transgender people's accomplishments.

Today, the International Transgender Day of Visibility is celebrated around the world. Visibility is a powerful concept. When a person is truly visible, those around that person — friends, family, acquaintances, strangers — see, hear, and accept them for their true selves, as they are. Unfortunately, for many transgender people — especially given the current political context — visibility can feel unsafe.

We cannot mark this day without also acknowledging that transgender rights are under increasing attack both in the United States and Canada. We are seeing an alarming rise in policies and legislation that seek to roll back hard-earned rights for transgender people. These actions seek to erase and invalidate the transgender community. These actions also foster a climate where transgender people are at increasing risk of hate and violence.

This year more than ever, I am reminded of the role that allies can have in supporting positive change. All of us have a role to play in creating a society where every one of us can choose visibility without fear of negative repercussions.

So, I encourage all cisgender Yukoners to mark the Transgender Day of Visibility in allyship with transgender Yukoners. This March 31 and every day after, voice your support for the rights of transgender people and stand up to transphobia. Show through your actions that you will do your part to create a safer place for transgender people to be visible.

To the Yukon's transgender people, I hold my hands up to you. I am grateful for your commitment to resisting the oppression and creating a more inclusive and accepting territory. I also recognize that, all too often, you are put in a position to explain yourself — who you are and why your rights

matter. Please know that I and so many Yukoners stand with you and that we will continue to work with you to create a territory where every transgender person can live openly and authentically.

Thank you again, Samantha Allan, for being here today and for all of your hard work with Queer Yukon.

*Applause*

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize March 31 as International Transgender Day of Visibility. Transgender Day of Visibility was founded in 2009 as a means to celebrate the contributions of transgender and non-binary people to society and to our communities. It's about honouring their resilience and recognizing the challenges they face every day — violence, struggles with identity, with family, with jobs. They are at a higher risk of experiencing discrimination in housing, employment, and health care. According to Statistics Canada, transgender people are significantly more likely to experience mental illness in some form than cisgender individuals.

By highlighting trans voices, stories, achievements, and experiences, we help to shed light on the issues that trans and gender nonconforming people face and also to raise awareness that while we all might be different, we all matter equally. It's on us as legislators. It's our friends and our families. We need to be allies, supporting them, educating others, and promoting understanding and respect. Always stay humble and kind.

*Applause*

**MLA Tredger:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate International Transgender Day of Visibility. Last year, we reflected on how transgender people have become more visible in popular culture through television, books, and news stories. It is incredible to see people sharing their stories, experiences, and joy. However, this increased visibility has been met with rising violence and attacks, both personal and political.

It is more important than ever that here in the Yukon we create a place where trans people have equitable opportunities, a place where trans people can safely participate in the full spectrum of public life, a place where we respect people's gender identities and stand against discrimination, a place where parents are supported to affirm their children's needs and gender expression, a place where trans people can share their art and stories without fear, and a place where trans community members are welcomed wherever they go.

We must stand united against hate and discrimination. This is a responsibility for all of us. It cannot rest solely on the shoulders of the trans community as it so often does.

Today, for trans day of visibility, we commit to much more than visibility; we commit to action.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter addressed to the Premier dated March 27, 2025 from the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada.

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

- Are there any reports of committees?
- Are there any petitions to be presented?
- Are there any bills to be introduced?
- Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to demonstrate their commitment to buying local by increasing advertising expenditures with locally owned publications and newspapers.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support the Yukon agriculture sector by purchasing local food for use in government facilities and providing Yukon food producers with multi-year agreements at a fair price.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House congratulates the Hootalinqua Fire Protection Society on the impressive number of people who attended the annual general meeting on March 26, 2025 to show support for the volunteer firefighters and their legal right under the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulations* to have full personal protective equipment that is in good condition and meets the standards set out in those regulations under “Part 11 — Firefighting”.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to release an official statement and apology to students, families, and teachers affected by homophobia, transphobia, and racism in Yukon public Catholic schools.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide an update, including a timeline, on the development of a process for registering and licensing social workers in the Yukon.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to expedite the implementation of licensing and registering social workers.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use waste-water surveillance testing for measles to inform health responses in the territory.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Forestry industry

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, in the face of the ongoing trade war, Yukoners have been looking for ways that they can buy more local products and support local businesses. One clear opportunity that we have here in the Yukon is our abundant forest resources. Unfortunately, despite being surrounded by abundant timber, the Yukon forestry sector has suffered under the Liberal government.

A few years ago, we faced a head-scratching shortage of local firewood, which led to woodcutters having to import from BC. The few sawmilling operations that we have left continuously plead with the government for access to logs, and we have heard that even log-home builders are having to turn to imported logs.

For Yukoners to buy local wood products, businesses in the wood products industry need access to timber. So, what steps has the minister taken to ensure that Yukon wood products producers have adequate access to timber?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, this question came up — was it last week or the week before? Again, thank you for the questions regarding the wood supply.

I went back and checked in with the Forest Management branch. I inquired first of all about the permit that is in place for the wood harvester down in Watson Lake and ensured that there is no restriction to supplying the wood for folks here in Whitehorse or the log-home builders here in Whitehorse. But they have been working with the Liard First Nation — Heartland Timber Homes — to supply wood there. The direction that I gave to the department is to please work to get more supply on. I will say that the branch has been doing that work to get more supply on for Yukoners.

Anyway, that is what the situation is. I know that EMR is going to be up in debate later today and we can have a fuller conversation about it then, but that is the work that’s being done by the branch.

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, Yukoners don’t have to stretch their memories back too far to recall the Liberal-made firewood shortage from just a few years ago. Because of a critical lack of access to timber, local firewood cutters raised the alarm bell that they were being forced to import wood from outside of the Yukon. Just last week, we raised the issue of log-home builders who were facing a similar challenge.

Yukoners who want to see a robust natural resource economy here in the Yukon and want to buy locally harvested, milled, and produced wood products are constantly left confused as to why, despite being surrounded by boreal forest, there always seems to be a shortage of wood.

Can the minister tell us what changes he will be making to help those businesses that specialize in Yukon wood products get access to a secure supply of timber so that they can provide Yukoners the opportunity to buy local wood products?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I think I just tried to give that information in my last response. I will try to give it again.

After the question came about whether we had been somehow restricting through the permit — that the wood supply couldn't come here to Whitehorse — I checked to make sure. No, we are not.

That harvester in Watson Lake has been working more closely with opportunities in the Watson Lake area with the Liard First Nation. That's great news there, but what we need to do is get more supply on. I did request that this be done, so that work is underway.

I can say that we have been doing other things. We have been looking to put forward more sites in and around Whitehorse to support the wood industry, whether that be sawlog or biomass or firewood. I know that we put in place incentive programs for our harvesters and wood suppliers. Overall, I have asked the department to continue to increase the amount of wood available for our industry.

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, last week, the Premier said this: "... we want to make sure that there is feedstock available and that they're not shipping logs in from British Columbia but that we are accessing some of the best logs that are available, which are in southeast Yukon." Well, Mr. Speaker, we couldn't agree more, but unfortunately, while the Premier says the right words, we just haven't seen that backed up by action.

So, log-home builders have told us that if they don't see action from this government, importing logs from BC is exactly what they will have to do.

Can the government tell us exactly what they are planning to do to address the critical shortage of local logs for home building in the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I will say again that I checked in on the permit that we issued and that there is no restriction for that harvesting to be supply for the log-home builders here, but the challenge is that there is now more demand. That supply has been going to a great project in Watson Lake. I hope the member opposite supports that project.

I have asked that we increase the supply overall so that all of our folks who work in the industry will have supply that comes from the Yukon. I agree with the member opposite that we want to have Yukon wood going into these initiatives.

I can say that just today, through a meeting of Cabinet or Management Board, we just approved rezoning for a lot to the north of town to help with wood processing. These are all ways in which we are trying to increase the use of wood here in the territory.

I thank the members for their questions. I will follow up with the log-home builders directly and I will continue to seek to get more supply on for our great wood products industry.

### **Question re: Red tape reduction strategies for business**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, as businesses continue to navigate a trade war and an uncertain economic landscape, they have been looking to the government to improve the conditions for doing business in the Yukon.

One aspect of doing business in the Yukon that we continuously hear about is the burden of red tape and regulations that hamper local businesses' ability to compete.

Many other jurisdictions in Canada have adopted red tape reduction strategies that focus on measuring the regulatory burden, reporting on it publicly, and setting clear targets for reductions.

Will the Government of Yukon consider developing such a strategy here and start lifting the regulatory burden that so many Yukon businesses face?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, we continue to focus to make departmental access easier. I think that we are seeing as well from the private sector some great initiatives where they are also wanting to work with government to ensure that we can reduce red tape. It is, of course, a very broad subject. We saw, over the last year, some of the challenges around home building where the permit process at one level of government was challenged. As a government, we reached out to make sure that we could provide capacity. We want to see folks being able to build but also being able to understand the information that is available from government.

One of the things that we have done — our department — and I want to thank Economic Development. It is a new initiative over the last two years, and it is called our annual Funders Meet and Greet event. What we do is that we connect individuals, businesses, and other organizations with the programs that we have. In February, just before coming into the House, the event had 37 different organizations, enabling the public to connect with numerous Government of Yukon departments and branches, federal government departments, the Council of Yukon First Nations, City of Whitehorse, Yukon University, along with many other NGOs that provide funding to Yukoners.

I will share some more information as we go through questions 2 and 3.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, nine out of 10 Canadian small businesses agree that red tape significantly reduces their productivity and ability to grow. I will quote from the CFIB's red tape report card that was released in January — quote: "Whether through streamlining bureaucratic processes or through making rules and regulations simpler without compromising health and safety objectives, governments at all levels have an opportunity to spur growth by cutting down on the regulatory burden."

Does the Yukon government think that it is doing enough to reduce the regulatory burden on Yukon businesses?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I think that there is always more to do. I think that every government in the country should be focused on doing more. I appreciate the fact that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business was brought up.

Of course, we wanted to bring information to Yukoners here in the House in a ministerial statement and a response about the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and some of the information that they shared with us. One of the programs that we built — and it was a leading program in the country — was around a sick leave provision. We worked across the aisle — a great program making sure that people in the private sector could take the time they need not only to ensure that they could support themselves and their families but also to be in a position to not bring sickness to the workplace.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business urged us to continue that program. We met with the head of the organization last year. So, we work closely with them. We are constantly looking for ways to get guidance from them.

But internally, it is always going to be a consistent focus: reducing the red tape, making sure that private business can move in a more streamlined fashion and agile fashion.

There are always lots of challenges, to be very fair to the House, where the public service inside the government is doing their best to make sure that they do their programs right, but at the same time, we want to make sure that we can get things moving as quickly as possible.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** At the federal level, the Government of Canada has adopted what they call a “small business lens”. That requires regulators to consider the impact that regulations have on small businesses to ensure that they don’t have unintended consequences. This is combined with a one-for-one rule for new regulations that ensures that overall regulations don’t escalate.

Will the Yukon government consider adopting a small business lens for all Yukon government policy-making going forward and adopt a one-for-one regulatory rule to prevent the excessive growth of red tape in the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I appreciate the referral to some of those programs. The one-for-one rule — I didn’t quite get clarity about where exactly the example was coming from for the one-to-one rule. It has been contemplated in some jurisdictions, but part of the challenge — to be open and honest to Yukoners — is that all of us here in the House have made a commitment to First Nation governments to, post-devolution, build legislation that has to do with resources — shared regulation and legislation. That, of course, comes from the signing of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* done by one party across the way, then instilled in some of that work by another party, and we continue to do that work. So, you’re actually in the midst of building legislation in the Yukon, so it’s difficult to do sort of a one for one.

But a small business lens, I think, is a great topic. Really, all companies in the Yukon by definition are small businesses. We are always focused on those businesses and our lens is toward those businesses.

I do want to thank the Department of Economic Development. There are a lot of great folks in there who give a concierge service, boutique support to small business. Also, a good point today — in the mandate that I have given to my departments, there is a focus on red tape reduction, and I’m

happy to come back and have a broader discussion about that and go-forward activities.

### Question re: Macaulay Lodge site development

**MLA Tredger:** Macaulay Lodge used to be a long-term care home nestled in the heart of Riverdale where it supported Yukon seniors. When the building aged out, the Liberals decided to sell off the land to private investors. Yukoners immediately pushed back. Seniors and housing advocates were clear that it should be affordable housing. At first, it seemed like this government might have been listening. A CBC article from 2023 read — quote: “... [the Premier] said new property on the site will still help fill housing gaps, and that affordability is a priority for any development there.” So, Yukoners were shocked to see an ad for brand new luxury condos on the site. Far from affordable, the condos are described as the epitome of luxury living. What was once a public facility for seniors will now only be accessible to Whitehorse’s wealthiest citizens.

Can the Premier tell Yukoners how he went from a commitment to affordable housing to selling off public land for luxury condos?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to debate this in the House today. We had a long exchange yesterday afternoon. I respect that there is going to be a different opinion, but there is certainly a different opinion here on the floor of the House between me and the member opposite.

What we talked about was the fact that we sold a piece of land through a public process. It went out at market value. I think it was about \$1.3 million. I shared that with the House. What we said was that it’s a great place for affordable housing, but the programs that we have are going to be available to the developer. If they use those funds, whether from us or the federal government, and use them to offset the capital required for their build, there would be the ability to have affordable housing. If we go back to that original news release, you will see that.

In this particular case, the developer chose not to use money from the federal government or from the territorial government and to build market units. What I was shocked at yesterday was that the member opposite said that they are probably going to make a profit on this — like it was a dirty word. The reality is that you have to make a profit if you are going to be in the private market. We need private developers. The Yukon government is not going to be the only source of the building of houses here in the territory.

I look forward to the second question.

**MLA Tredger:** I don’t think it should have been a shock that the profit margins were higher on luxury condos than on affordable housing.

The site of the former Macaulay Lodge was a valuable public asset. It’s prime real estate in the heart of one of Whitehorse’s oldest neighbourhoods. It’s walking distance from downtown, across the street from a grocery store, and well-connected to bus routes. Lots like this are rare and precious, and we are not getting any more of them. When the Yukon public owned the land, it could have been turned into so many things that could have benefited the community. It could

have been seniors care; it could have been affordable housing; it could have been a recreation centre or a public health clinic. But instead of investing in the community, the Liberals sold it to private developers, and now it will be luxury condos.

Does the Premier really believe that luxury condos were the best use of this valuable public land?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** There are a number of parts to that question that I would love to have time to respond to.

I don't think "private developer" is a bad word. We're building with a number of partners — whether it's a development corporation, First Nation, or private developers or it's folks who are just out there in their business trying to build houses to meet the demands in the Yukon. We think that is a good thing.

In this case, the city wanted us to rezone the lot and now there is an opportunity for other commercial businesses there. We think that's good; it makes Riverdale even more walkable, it gives opportunity for more businesses to thrive, and it also provides housing.

The remark about profit margins — I don't have access to the business model or to their pro forma — I guess the member opposite does and knows how much profit is being made on each asset and unit. That's shocking and interesting.

The other thing I said yesterday was that we are in a position where we are building a record-breaking amount of affordable housing. I said that if we weren't doing that, you could really challenge the fact that this wasn't just affordable housing. But the fact that we're building a record-breaking amount of affordable housing — and I went through the list of all of the projects that we've partnered on — the ones that are being built at the end of Main Street — whether you look at the projects that are being built in Whistle Bend — an incredible amount. So, we're doing the affordable housing, but we also need market housing to make sure the ecosystem is healthy.

**MLA Tredger:** I often hear about people who are struggling to find affordable housing. I haven't yet heard from someone who couldn't find a luxury condo.

Whatever the case is, this beautiful and accessible piece of public land is gone and it can't be replaced, so Yukoners are wondering if it was worth it. The Premier said that the lot sold for \$1.3 million. That sounds like a lot of money until you start doing that math. The new development will have 54 condos and four commercial spaces. The prices aren't yet public, but it seems like a given that they'll sell for at least half a million dollars apiece. That means the developer will cover what they paid to Yukoners by selling just two or three of the units, with the profits of the other 55 units going straight to their investors. The developer will make sky-high profits, the wealthiest people in Whitehorse will have more luxury condos to choose from, and the rest of Yukoners have lost a precious collective resource that could have benefited everyone.

Does the Premier think it was worth losing this public land so a developer could make profits on luxury condos?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I think it is a good thing for the Yukon government to provide land when the opportunity arises so that the private sector can grow in the territory by having land to invest in and do projects. Yes, I do.

I do think there is a role to play for the Yukon government when it comes to affordable housing.

Yesterday, we talked about the fact that, just two years ago, the wait-list for Yukon Housing was over 500 people — north of 500. What we have seen, even a month ago, is half of that. We are actually seeing hundreds of lots being currently developed in Whitehorse that are affordable.

I think it's important to work with groups like the Yukon land trust. I think it's important to work with First Nation development corporations and NGOs. I think it's important to have a program like the housing innovation fund, which has put \$35 million into the economy and that has now turned into a \$350-million investment to build 931 new units since 2018.

I think you have to do all of those things, but I have to say that I am happy in the House today to draw the line and say that I think it's really important to have private development, and I think that will add some great assets and amenities to Riverdale, and people won't have to drive and they will be able to walk, and we will continue to build affordable housing.

#### **Question re: Mining industry support**

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, so the US government is escalating its trade war against Canada and the world. In the face of this, there are opportunities to make the Yukon economy more resilient.

On March 5, Canada's energy and mines ministers issued a statement from the annual PDAC mining conference in Toronto. Here is a quote from that document: "... we will take decisive action to ensure Canadian companies remain competitive and succeed in the global market, including the acceleration of resource development through more efficient and timely permitting and regulatory processes."

So, can the minister of EMR tell us what concrete steps and decisive action he has taken since this meeting to make our permitting and regulatory processes efficient and timely for resource development?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I was there at that meeting, and we did meet with ministers of energy and mines from across the country, and all of us said that we need to be part of Team Canada. I think that was a pretty strong position that we all took in that, and we talked about the work on internal trade. We talked about the work of the premiers and the great work they are doing, and I thank them for all of that.

What have we been doing within EMR? My deputy minister was there with me as well at that meeting. Just even yesterday, we had another task team meeting around how to move decision documents through the system — ones where EMR has more control.

We talked about how to support other groups, like YESAB and the Water Board, so that they can be moving those things. We talked about sitting down with industry to keep information as up to date as possible as we deal with the backlog.

So, there is specific oriented, focused work to try to deal with this, and it is important to keep the regulatory system moving.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I know the minister was in Toronto, because all Canadian energy and mines ministers



issued this statement that I quoted from. This was a commitment to address problems in our permitting and regulatory regime to help protect our economy from the Trump tariffs.

The minister needs to take it more seriously and begin to act on it decisively, as was promised on March 5. I'm glad we talked about the backlogs, because I've mentioned in the past the delays facing placer miners, but there's also a significant amount of time for other projects to go through. Exploration projects spent on average over 300 days in YESAB in 2024, which was almost double what was spent in 2023.

Approximately 80 projects have finished the YESAB assessment and are waiting for the Yukon and/or Canada to issue a decision document. So, can the minister explain why there are so many projects that are awaiting a decision document, and what decisive action he is taking to clear this backlog?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I think that the most significant thing that has happened, which we have acted on, since March 5 is the fact that, at the First Ministers' meeting last week, the commitment that was made at the table by the Prime Minister was that the federal government would let the provinces lead when it came to assessment and that the federal government would let the provinces take the lead on the interventions.

So, the member opposite knows well from previous work that this is a significant commitment. What I had said at the table to the premiers and to the Prime Minister was that we want to see this test-driven in the Yukon. So, does that mean that the federal government will let the territory ensure that they take the lead on decision documents so that we can speed them up? A great test case will be the work around BMC.

We have a fantastic project that is in the Yukon. It is working through; there have been some challenges, but it could be Canada's next biggest zinc mine. In that case, we'll be looking to see if Canada will fulfill the commitment that was made in front of all of the premiers on Friday.

We also have a great project with Minto, and we think that, if we can get to the final agreements with Minto and with the nation, this will be another great test case. Of course, we did bring an amendment to Parliament, and we're waiting for them to fulfill the reduction of red tape —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, in early 2017, BMC Minerals submitted an application to YESAB for the Kudz Ze Kayah project.

In 2021, the YESAB recommendation was referred back by Canada for further work. This was followed by the issuance of two decision documents in 2022 and 2024. Now the project is faced with another court-ordered consultation for Canada and Yukon to meet with affected First Nations to fulfill their duty to consult, but almost four months after the court ordered the consultation to proceed without undue delay and over three weeks since the minister issued this statement in Toronto on fixing the permitting delays, the company is having to go to court tomorrow seeking to get a time limit on these

consultations to provide some certainty as to when they can expect a conclusion to this process.

It doesn't sound like a government working on efficient and timely permitting. So, does the minister believe that it's reasonable for a company to have to go to court to get certainty on a project eight years and counting into the permit process?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Look, it probably makes for good Question Period fodder, but the member opposite well knows that there are interventions from different governments that are not the Yukon government. The member opposite knows that there was a decision made by a judge that — of course, we don't affect that. The member opposite knows that, in all cases, we as a government have made sure — and yes, there has been a timeline, and the members opposite can speak off-mic, but the reality is that we will work on what we can control.

The first time that BMC talked about putting it forward, that was the intervention that I made in front of the Prime Minister and all of the premiers when I had an opportunity to say: We have a project; this has been delayed; we're doing what we can, but if you really want to see projects move forward in this country, you're going to need to work with us.

So, what a great test case for the federal government to support us and not see timelines lag on. We think that is an example.

Of course, just from my answer on the second question, we did come together with First Nation governments. Of course, the member opposite would remember that wasn't quite the tack done before. We then had an amendment that was agreed upon; that is in Ottawa. So, we want to see YESAA appropriately and respectfully amended to reduce the red tape that we're seeing inside that process.

#### **Question re: Rural solid-waste tipping fees**

**Mr. Istchenko:** According to public notices, the Liberal government plans to increase tipping fees at rural solid-waste stations starting next Tuesday, April 1. Despite public notice that the tipping fees will increase, the government hasn't actually communicated how much they will be increasing. So, what will the new tipping fees be for a rural Yukon solid-waste facility, and why hasn't the government communicated these new fees to Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I really appreciate the question from the member opposite this afternoon. I'm happy and really glad to have the opportunity to talk about all the work we're doing to improve our solid-waste system here in the territory. As I have said many times and the member opposite will know, this came to us from the Association of Yukon Communities. They asked us to do this work. It was my predecessor in this role who got the ball rolling, and I am happy to continue that work on behalf of all Yukoners but certainly the municipalities who asked us to intervene. So, we have done that, and we are now well into phase 2.

We are now making a polluter-pay system, because this society of ours is generating far too much garbage. One of the ways to reduce that is to put a price on pollution. Yes, we are imposing tipping fees across the territory. They are going to be consistent across the territory so that people don't dump shop.

We saw that in Haines Junction. I heard from the municipality how people are going to their dump and dumping stuff, because it was one of the last places without tipping fees. We are going to do this.

There will be more to say on this with the member opposite's next question, and I'm happy to continue.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Well, the new tipping fees that will be charged in rural Yukon seem to be the best-kept secret in the territory. There is no information on the government website. There is no mention of this on the Community Services Facebook page, and some folks in rural Yukon wonder if this is just a bad April Fool's joke.

I will give him another chance. How much are the rural tipping fees going up by next week, and why is the government keeping it a secret?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I was saying, this is an important shift in the territory, modernizing the way in which we handle garbage across the territory. It's happening in tandem with the blue bin system in Whitehorse and the improvements we are doing to recycling across the territory. It's doing an awful lot. It's helping to make our municipalities more sustainable when it comes to the running of their landfills. It is also helping to reduce the amount of garbage that society is creating. It's actually making it fair across the territory so that no one community is paying more than the others. That's really what we want to do.

We want to have a system in place where everyone pays roughly the same amount from community to community so that there isn't an impetus for people going around moving their garbage to places so that one community takes more. That's really what we wanted to do, and that's the regime we have in place. I am really happy that we're on the cusp of it.

The member opposite is, of course, correct: We are increasing tipping fees at the municipalities across the territory starting on April 1. It will be in line with Whitehorse's. Whitehorse has just announced that they are increasing their tipping fees as well. It will be \$1.50 per bag coming into the rural landfills. We have been communicating that to municipalities.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, many folks in rural Yukon have expressed concerns about the government's poor communication about the fee increase, among other issues. There seems to be no information about these changes on the government's website or on the Yukon Community Services Facebook page. In the case of some of my constituents, they're concerned about the timing of the implementation and the poor communication from the government.

They reached out to me and I forwarded information off to the minister, but we haven't heard anything back. Next week, Tuesday, April 1, is when they come into effect.

Since the government has communicated this so poorly, will the Liberals consider putting the date for this change off for a year to allow some time for everyone to adjust?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Oh, good lord, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to continue my conversation with the member opposite on this solid-waste regionalization, which has been going on for almost nine years now, actually. I think it was 2017 when it first

began under my predecessor, and we're now into phase 2, and I'm happy to be there.

The member opposite is talking about the tipping fees. The Department of Community Services has been communicating. We have material up. I'm sorry if the people he has been talking to haven't seen it, but as I said, it will be \$1.50 a bag. It'll be consistent across the unincorporated communities that CS is responsible for, and we'll let municipalities decide what their tipping fees are, but we're hoping it will be consistent across the territory.

I will also say, Mr. Speaker, because we are introducing a change in tipping fees, I actually signed earlier this morning a one-month holiday to transition Yukoners so they're not hit with something. People can bring their garbage to the regional landfills. They will be told at the gate. All the investment we've made in rural Yukon — new jobs, new infrastructure — all the investments we've made in rural Yukon, because we know how important it is to get more money into rural Yukon. We have done that at the regional landfills, hiring people, putting in electricity, putting in gates, putting in fences — all that investment is going to pay off on April 1. We're putting in a tax holiday; when they come, they'll be told they will have one month, and next month it will be \$1.50.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

### **Bill No. 216: *Third Appropriation Act 2024-2025* — continued**

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 216, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2024-2025*.

Do members wish to take brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

**Bill No. 216: *Third Appropriation Act 2024-25* — continued**

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 216, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I want to welcome back to the Assembly deputy ministers Sierra van der Meer and Paul Moore.

I am not going to stand on my feet too long, but there were a couple of things that I wanted to provide for information. When I tabled a legislative return in response to questions from the Member for Copperbelt South, he then responded with some additional questions. One of them was: What were the deliverables — sorry, this is regarding contracts between the Yukon government and PricewaterhouseCoopers since 2018. What were the deliverables or were there reports? The response is that there were six contracts performed for Energy, Mines and Resources and one performed for Highways and Public Works since 2018. Of the EMR contracts, the only contract to produce a report is for the Wolverine security determination, which can be found online.

Then there was a question about the Piteau report recommendations from 2022, and the question is around: What recommendations were not implemented and what role did the department have in ensuring that those were being implemented? All of the recommendations were accepted and included as implementation expectations in the quartz mining licence. The company had not yet fulfilled all of the expectations. They were in the process of submitting information about that fulfillment when the heap leach failure occurred.

The final question was: Since the heap leach failure, how many directives were issued to Victoria Gold versus how many new ones have been issued to PricewaterhouseCoopers, the receiver? A total of seven inspectors' directions to Victoria Gold have been issued since the failure.

Five were issued prior to the receivership and two were issued after the receivership was in place, although as I noted previously in my responses, the receiver is responsible for the implementation of those earlier five directions. We can say that the receiver has completed and reported on the directions and the activities and response to those directions. They were tabled, I think, in the second report of the receiver, and copies of all the directions can be found on the yukon.ca website.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister. I believe that information was included in the legislative return that he provided. I did submit a number of other questions as well. I am hoping that perhaps the minister can give me a sense of when I can expect a response to those. They were submitted a couple of weeks or 10 days prior to the briefing we received before we returned to the House. I have resubmitted them to the

minister and made a couple of changes based on responses that I received in that legislative return. I am hoping to get a sense on when I can get an answer. There are probably 14 or 15 different questions here that I have submitted in writing, first to the department and then resubmitted to the minister last week, I think.

I did also want to go back to where we left off yesterday. We were talking about the money advanced to Victoria Gold through the receiver. The minister confirmed that the interest rate on that money is nine percent. In the supplementary estimates, there is a \$3 million increase in revenue, recognizing the interest earned on the loan to the Victoria Gold Corporation through the receiver to align with updated forecasts. I am just curious: If the interest is reflected in the revenue, is the principal for that year reflected in the revenue as well? Perhaps it's not in these supplementary estimates; was it in the first supplementary estimates that were tabled last fall?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** A few things. Yes, the department has drafted some responses to the written questions; I just got them a couple of days ago; I haven't had a chance to go through them yet, but I will get there shortly, and I will make sure to table them again. I guess I was thinking that I would do it as a legislative return, but I will figure that out. I will get them either way.

Next, the way it works is that we advance money to PricewaterhouseCoopers and that is money that they use then to — in the form of a loan — that is money that they use to execute on the environmental remediation and managing the health and safety risks at the mine site. There will always be an amount of money to allow them to have sort of a positive cash flow. Like, now we are up to — I think it's \$105 million that has gone to the receiver. Over time, as we advance money and until that money is spent, then they are holding that money. That money that they are holding at that time — whatever that positive cash balance is — that is what is accruing interest over time. I don't believe that was reported yet in the fall submission to the courts. I think that it is being submitted this time — for the first time — and that is why we see that number, and I believe the total was \$3 million or just over \$3 million.

**Mr. Kent:** I am just trying to wrap my head around this.

The interest on this loan — which won't be recoverable or won't be revenue until and unless we sell the mine and get the money back from that — is recorded as revenue, but the principal that is charged on the nine-percent interest is not recorded as revenue. I am just trying to figure this out.

The minister is correct. In the 2024-25, it's \$3 million for that interest. I know we will get there when we get to the mains, but the interest in the mains is \$9.5 million according to the handouts. I'm just wondering why the interest would be determined to be additional revenue but not the principal that we are hoping to get back as well if there is a successful sale of the asset.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Again, as I said yesterday, the bond has been approved. It has been received and even spent. The question that is outstanding is about how it will be treated from an accounting perspective. There are still steps to take through the court that will influence that. It is a very technical

finance question from my perspective. What the team is just explaining to me is that how that accounting treatment takes place is still yet to be determined. Ultimately, it will matter how the court deems it. That is still in front of us, but the bond has been received and used.

**Mr. Kent:** So, when I'm reading page 2 of 2 of the handout on the supplementary estimates, under revenue, it says that a \$3 million increase recognizes the interest earned on the loan to the Victoria Gold Corporation through the receiver to align with updated forecasts. Isn't that the \$50 million that was advanced, or is that the \$55 million or however much was drawn down on the bond? I am trying to figure out exactly what this interest is being charged on at this point — or is it a combination of both of those?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The interest, Madam Chair, is not just on the loan; the interest is on dollars that are advanced to the receiver until such time as they are used. That includes the bond dollars — that loan — and that includes money that is coming from us as a government — also as a loan. Whenever we advance dollars and before they are spent, those dollars move from us to the receiver; those dollars accrue interest until such time as they are expended.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for clarifying that. As I said, the document that we received said that the \$3-million interest or increase recognized the interest earned on the loan; it didn't mention the bond. Now I have a better sense, so it will be the \$105 million that gets drawn down from the bond plus whatever is loaned up until the end of this fiscal year and then into the next fiscal year and years following if needed.

I guess the \$3 million that is in interest earned for 2024-25 plus the \$9.5 million potentially — or it could possibly be more, I guess, depending on if the receiver gets approved next week for their revised budget. That will be additional money. Does that form part of what the Government of Yukon will recover as the super priority lender in this case? So, it's the principal of the loans and the bond and the interest accrued — so that all Yukon taxpayers are first in line for all of that revenue if or when the asset is sold.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am going to say a few things here. First of all, I am going to talk about the super priority charge a bit. The main reason that we applied to the courts in order to get a receiver to put in place was really about addressing the environmental and worker health and safety risks that were on-site, but there is another thing that happened in that moment — or that happened out of that court hearing. It is that the Yukon government, as the primary lender, got this super priority charge. What does that mean?

For the average Yukoners to understand — say that we weren't there. The group that gets the super priority charge or the first access — if there is any realization of assets — is the banking syndicate. That's who would get the money if there was money there. Now, because we have come in as the lender, the courts have deemed that we are in that super priority position.

The next thing to understand is that, as there is cash on hand that has come through these loans, that cash should still be trying to do whatever work it can. It earns whatever interest

it can. That interest is as though it was dollars that the Yukon government gave to the receiver to do the remediation work. There is still this technical piece around how it will get accounted that still depends on decisions in front of the court, but the way that I have understood it is that the interest amount on the cash which is sitting on hand is an additional asset to then be used to address the remediation. So, the \$3 million to date and the \$9.5 million currently projected will help to address the costs of remediating at the mine site.

Will they be repayable to us? My understanding is yes, but how that happens is still dependent on the court choices in front and around sale and things like that. There are still issues to be resolved, but overall, the interest is being used to address the remediation on-site.

**Mr. Kent:** Whenever we get the chance to schedule the next briefing, I will have some additional questions on this just to seek some clarity around how that works — on interest accrued on a loan that needs to be recovered from the sale of the asset. I will dig in with officials on that when we get a chance to have another briefing.

I do want to quickly touch on the interest — the \$12.5 million that is reported so far, and it could be more that is reported in this year's supplementary and then next year's mains. The minister mentioned and I understand, of course, that the Yukon government, since they applied to the court and had the receiver appointed, now has first priority for repayment, and then the financial institutions are next. I am assuming that after that it would be the service and supply companies and local creditors that have the priority after the lending institutions.

Does the minister have any idea — beyond the amount that the Yukon government has lent so far and is planning to lend into the next fiscal year — how much more is due to the financial institutions before the service and supply companies can get a shot at it? I ask that because, if the interest is in there, then that is \$12.5 million less than the service and supply companies, especially the local creditors, would have access to. What is owed to those financial institutions that are between the government and the local service and supply companies that are owed money?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will refer colleagues to the first court report. I am looking at clause 33 of that report, and it is saying that there is \$236.8 million in long-term debt.

It is breaking that down into \$188.1 million, which is, I believe, the banking syndicate; in this document, they refer to it as the "loan facility". Then the other part of that is \$48.7 million, which is debt outstanding pursuant to some equipment-financing facility. Those are the two numbers that I see, and they are in the first court report.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that from the minister. I'll have a look prior to the next official briefing that we receive from officials at some time. I believe that he mentioned just on the way out of the Legislature yesterday that — looking after April 1 when the next court appearance is supposed to happen, which, of course, makes sense.

I do want to talk a little bit about procurement at the Eagle mine. I'm going to refer the minister to this — it's a March 24,

2025 document, *Second Amended & Restated Receivership Interim Financing Term Sheet*, and I'm going to jump to page 7. I'll read out for the minister what it says here. It says: "Within ten (10) days of the 15<sup>th</sup> day of each calendar month, the Receiver shall deliver to the Receivership Lender..." — which I believe is the Yukon government — "... a monthly progress report which shall include ... a local procurement tracker in respect of members of the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun ... and Yukon residents..."

I just wanted to make sure that the minister has been receiving — or the department has been receiving those reports, and are they available publicly for Yukoners, especially those contractors, to look at?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The first answer is yes, we are getting those briefings and that information. That has been happening.

The second response is that we are not able to share the entirety of the report, but we have asked and confirmed that we can share the information about the local hire portion of that — like, amounts. I know that we have shared that information, for example, with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and their development corporation. That has been happening.

**Mr. Kent:** I am just wondering: If it has been shared with the First Nation, when can we expect it to be shared publicly?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** My apologies. I didn't catch whether the member is asking about the entire report or the information about the contractors.

**Mr. Kent:** I believe the minister said that the entire report is not available, but the information about the contracts has been shared with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. I am wondering for that specific information — when he can tell us when that will be made publicly available.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** To date, what we have been doing is just responding to questions if they get posed. I can say that the note I have is that \$18 million has been paid to local contractors to date. If the member is asking that we do make this public-facing, I can work to get that done. One of the ways I might do it is by just asking the receiver themselves to put that information up, but I will see one way or the other.

If they feel that is what they would like us to do, I am happy to get the department to do it or to work with the receiver to get it done.

**Mr. Kent:** I just want to confirm with the minister. I think he said if "they" said that is something they wanted to do; who was he referring to as "they"? Is that the receiver? Sorry, I didn't catch that.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Madam Chair, one of the challenges of always speaking through you — the government has been making that information available to groups who have requested it from us. To date, that has been the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and their development corporation.

If the Official Opposition would like us to get that information to them, we certainly can make it available for all members of this Assembly. If the Official Opposition is requesting that we make it publicly facing, I can work to get

that done. I am just looking to see what the member opposite is requesting.

**Mr. Kent:** I won't speak for the Third Party, of course, but I am sure that my colleagues and I in the Yukon Party would prefer that it was a publicly available document so that contractors could look at it — something similar to the contract registry that is available on the Yukon government's website and shows who the vendor is, what the contract was for, whether it was direct-awarded or a competitive bid, and the amount of the contract. The same type of information that is available on the contract registry, I am sure, would be something that a lot of people would be looking for on this. I think that would also include the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, which, on February 12, wrote a letter to the Premier, copying the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Minister of Environment, and both leaders of the opposition parties — the Yukon Party and the NDP.

There are a couple of updates that they were looking for on some key areas and hoping the minister can provide some clarity around that. The first is procurement oversight and transparency. They say in this letter — and I quote: "What mechanisms and safeguards are currently in place to ensure that procurement at Eagle Gold and other major projects adheres to best practices in accountability, fairness, and economic benefit for Yukoners?"

Having recently come out of a Public Accounts Committee hearing on procurement, there was a lot of talk during the Auditor General's report and the questions that we asked about value for money. I think that a lot of this money is Yukon taxpayers' money, so we, along with the chamber and others, would be looking for some indication on how we are receiving value for money for the contracts that are being let there.

I will just let the minister answer that question from the Chamber of Commerce on the procurement oversight and transparency aspect that they asked about in this letter.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The first thing to recognize is that the receiver is an officer of the court. I recently heard the Official Opposition say that there was no one overseeing the spending, and I thought: Well, that's not right, because the court is certainly overseeing the spending and so are we and so is the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. There is oversight.

As an officer of the court and appointed by the court with the support of the Yukon government and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to oversee a very difficult environmental remediation in circumstances requiring an urgent response, in consideration of the interest of key stakeholders, the receiver operates with the powers and authority in the court order and subject to the supervision of the court, including in its management of procurement for the Eagle mine site. It's important to note that the receiver is required to operate in a fiscally responsible manner and ensure that the funds available under the receivership are allocated appropriately.

The Government of Yukon continues to serve as the primary territorial regulator for the mine site and also acts as the receivership lender. I will stop there and see if there are further questions.

We did get the letter from the chamber and there is a response coming.

**Mr. Kent:** I guess that the minister opened the door here on the court providing the oversight. We know that the court is located in Toronto. It's an Ontario court, so how many times have representatives of the court been to the mine site?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I guess because the member has opened the door, I want to ask if he doesn't support the court order.

**Mr. Kent:** So, the minister mentioned that the court is providing oversight on how the receiver, PricewaterhouseCoopers, is operating.

On a daily — if not weekly — basis, we hear stories from contractors and people who are on-site about wasteful spending up there. The minister is saying that the court is providing that oversight, so my simple question was: How many times have representatives of the court been to the site to provide that oversight and accountability with the receiver?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Madam Chair, the court does its work through the court, and these submissions are public. The members opposite have seen them. Our government is there on a regular basis with specialists there whom we have retained to provide advice. Again, I ask my simple question back to the member opposite through you, respectfully: Do they respect the court?

**Mr. Kent:** Again, the minister is not answering the question. I understand that the court has not been to the site. The court is in Ontario. The court is out of downtown Toronto. I get that they haven't been to the site. It is quite obvious that they haven't been there.

As I mentioned, we hear stories of wasteful spending up there, and there is very little accountability. I guess what I will pivot to is my final question on Eagle here today, and that is with respect to a motion that I put on the floor earlier this Sitting asking that representatives of PricewaterhouseCoopers appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions about what's going on at the Eagle site.

Is the minister willing to have them appear as witnesses prior to the end of this Sitting?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, I thought I said the same thing that the member said — that the court has not been there, but the way that the court is dealing with this is through these court hearings. Yes, they are taking place in Ontario. I don't know if it's in Toronto.

Back when it was Victoria Gold, I didn't get this much information. I didn't get monthly reports and I didn't get that information flowing. I didn't have financial reports. I wasn't aware of any of that stuff. We didn't have the ability to review work plans or to review invoices, but we have that now and so does the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun.

The court is reviewing these through the submissions that are coming to the court.

By the way, PwC is putting up monthly reports. They have put up this much larger and more detailed report, so that is more information than was there under the company when they were doing the work. But again, I will just say that, for all of us, I wanted more information when Victoria Gold was in charge,

but the real issue was that we didn't see that the environmental remediation was happening, nor did we see that the worker health and safety risks were being addressed. Those are really big deals.

For example, the court has appointed technical oversight of PwC's work that is there on-site. They review the work plans and they review the invoices. The court has its agency there, and we have our technical folks — our Compliance, Monitoring and Inspections folks — and they are still going up and doing weekly work, but we also have retained technical expertise to review the work plans and review the invoices. As PwC addresses the situation on-site, they are working to inform us about how they are proposing to address the issues on-site.

Finally, the member has talked about a motion that he has tabled. I did hear about that motion. I inquired about what the differences are here. The difference simply is that the receiver is appointed by the court, and thus they have a set of rules around that.

However that works, we have to abide by that set of rules. I am saying to Yukoners today that we support and believe in this court process. I don't think the members opposite do, but I welcome them to decide whether or not they are going to say that to Yukoners. That's what I would like to hear from them.

**Mr. Kent:** So, it sounds like the minister is not willing to have representatives of PricewaterhouseCoopers, the receiver, come to the House as witnesses and appear and answer questions from members of the opposition and, indeed, members of the government, I guess, if they wanted to question them. I guess we will see what other procedural ways we can go about trying to make that happen, and we will see if that works going forward.

I think there are a number of questions. There is a substantial amount of taxpayers' dollars that have forwarded to the receiver to be expended on-site. As I have said, we have a number of questions and concerns about some of those expenditures from what we have heard from Yukoners who have been working on-site, and I think that it would be helpful to have PwC — their project manager, whoever that is — on-site. I don't recall the name, but if we have to, we will certainly put that into a reworked motion to have them appear here before duly elected members of the Yukon Legislature to answer questions about taxpayers' money and the expenditure of those funds that have been forwarded to them.

I do want to move on to a few other topics before I turn the floor over to my colleague the Leader of the Third Party.

Since we appeared yesterday and earlier on in Question Period today, I referenced a joint statement put out by Canadian ministers of energy and mines at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada conference in Toronto on March 5.

In response today, the minister said that they were doing some work on clearing up the backlog of decision documents. The last I checked the YESAB registry, there were approximately 80 recommendations awaiting decision documents. Some of them are older; they are not all within Energy, Mines and Resources, but I am just curious if the minister can expand on what he mentioned earlier in Question

Period with respect to how the department is looking to clear the backlog of decision documents that are awaited at YESAB.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The department folks are working to get the information about the YESAB decision documents.

I want to say a couple of things, though. The member said I don't want to have PricewaterhouseCoopers here. Please don't put words in my mouth. I will honour or uphold the rules of the court; I hope the members opposite will, too. That just has to be how this is put in context, that's all.

By the way, as the member noted earlier, I just got requested by the Yukon NDP for another briefing, because we have this court submission which has just happened and a court hearing coming up. Yesterday, I said yes, but we have also given three other briefings, I think, for the members opposite. Come on; like, that's not me, right? That's the department doing good work to try to get information for the members of this House. We have had a whole lot of briefings that we put on for the public and for the media, and I will continue to say that PricewaterhouseCoopers, as a receiver who is there not to take over the mine but rather to deal with the remediation of this slide, has been, on a regular basis, providing information to our team, our technical team, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun's team and their technical team, and they are doing that work all of the time.

Okay, I will work to get the information about the YESAB backlog, and I will — the next time I rise to my feet, I will try to get the answer for the member opposite.

**Mr. Kent:** In that statement that was put out at PDAC by the ministers of energy and mines, they did talk about taking decisive action to — I'm paraphrasing — to expedite the licensing and permitting processes — you know, this is, of course, in response to the trade action being taken by the President of the United States. I'm curious what — the minister during Question Period referenced the decision document backlog issue. So, are there other decisive actions that he is taking to speed up the licensing and permitting side of things for resource projects here in the territory?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** By the way, for the member opposite, when we were talking during Question Period today, he said that I was in Toronto for Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada meetings because all the ministers were there; they weren't — just to let him know. So, I was there in person; it was a great meeting, but it wasn't everybody who was there in person.

What are we doing around this? I have asked the department to pull together additional resources to work on it. The deputy minister pulled together a task group to address it. We are triaging those decision documents based on a range of factors, but predominantly, when we are looking at a renewal of a permit that has been there for a significant amount of time and there are no changes to it, those are the sorts of things that we put into one group. If there are ones where we have heard concerns from First Nations or other types of consultation around our decision document, we put them into another group. We are working to put them into blocks to keep them moving as quickly as possible. We are in dialogue and coordinating with YESAB and the Water Board.

I think that the department issued five decision documents in the last several days. I think that they have another half-dozen coming up in the next several days. I think that we are doing our diligence around consultation with First Nations. We are certainly engaging with industry to talk through, first, what we're doing, making sure that our understanding of the information is the same as their understanding of the information.

Lastly, I will just mention that the Premier has talked about one of the specific approaches that we took. He talked about that in Question Period today. We talked about the streamlining and whether the federal government would support the territorial government being the lead on these renewals and those types of decision documents where we are talking about things like critical minerals. He has made that request directly through First Ministers. He has for some time now continued to press the federal government to get the amendments into YESAB that were worked through with First Nations as a tripartite piece of legislation. That is kind of the list that we have.

I am happy to answer further questions.

**Mr. Kent:** So, that is on the decision document issue. Is there anything else that the department is undertaking to take decisive action on improving the permitting and licensing regime here? Obviously, there is some immediacy to this given what is happening on the trade front with the US.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** There are two sides to this. The first one is internal to Energy, Mines and Resources. That is where we're dealing with decision documents. Where the ball is squarely in our court, that is one of the fronts. The other front that we're working on is how to streamline the process, I guess, more broadly.

For that, we are definitely working with the Executive Council Office, because they have a role in this as well. They would be working more closely with the Water Board than EMR is — and YESAB for that matter. So, there is that piece that goes outside of EMR as well. In my previous answer, I talked about what the Premier is doing in order to streamline that process, and that is in how that work is progressing.

There is, for example, internal to EMR and across that broader question, work to prioritize the permits. The factors that we are using are: Have these been permits in place and they are in for renewal? Have they been sitting in application for a long period of time? Those are the sorts of questions. We are working to not just get them in priorities but put them in bundles so that when we go out and consult on them, we're sharing sort of the same group of permits. If the permits are problematic for any range of reasons, then we are putting resources specifically against them to support them as they navigate through renewal.

That is the overall approach. I asked that I get briefed on sort of the through-put of this in terms of which ones we see on the horizon and how fast we are moving them through. What I will say for Yukoners is that I appreciated that the department, by putting this group together, started to issue the decision documents and we have several more coming. The process —

it's early in the stages of addressing it, but it appears to be working.

**Mr. Kent:** Does the minister have statistics on how many decision documents were outstanding when they started this work versus how many are outstanding now? I believe he said that it appears to be working, so I just thought he would have those statistics.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The deputy minister has effectively a live spreadsheet which is shared across the folks working in the background and it is updated every couple of hours, but it is not sorted by how many decision documents are outstanding, so I will have to come back and get an answer for the member opposite. I will ask the department to dig in and get some numbers for him.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that. Maybe if the minister could include some of the dates — when it started, how many there were outstanding and then as we have progressed to now as far as clearing the backlog of those decision documents.

I heard today from someone in the industry that some of their clients are concerned about delays in the class 1 notification. I am just curious if the minister has any stats on how many of those are outstanding and then some of the timelines associated with them. It is easy enough to find the YESAB statistics on their website and in their annual reports, but I don't think I have been able to find anything around class 1 notifications. How many notifications are currently out there, and what are the timelines that they have been sitting in the system?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Each year, we have several hundred that are class 1 typically. It ranges — some years, it's 500; some years, it's a couple of hundred. Currently, we have in the system right now just under 250 — I think that the number the department has given me is 247.

The answer about what was the average time, number of days, to issue in 2024, that was 37 days. Our goal is to get it to 25 days. Those are the numbers that I have from last year and what we have in front of us this year, right now.

**Mr. Kent:** Are proponents able to check in with government officials to get a sense for where their particular notifications are within the process? Is that something that is available to them publicly, or do they have to request it from the department?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I don't believe that we have a public-facing dashboard about this, but the proponents are welcome to contact the district office if they want to find out information about their application.

**Mr. Kent:** I just want to clarify: Does the minister mean the mining recorder's office in each of the communities or whichever district? Is that what he means by the "district office"?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Yes, the mining recorder's office.

**Mr. Kent:** I just have a couple more questions here on some topics.

Yesterday, I asked about a water treatment contract at Wolverine. That initial one had been terminated and then the minister said that it had already been retendered and awarded, I believe, to someone. I am just wondering if the minister can

tell us why that initial tender was terminated. Were there budgetary concerns? What changes happened to the tender in the meantime from that first tender cancellation to the reissuance of the tender? What was that time frame as well? How long did it take to retender it?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Yesterday, I think I said that the RFP had been reissued and it closed. We haven't yet awarded it; they were being reviewed. The member asked why that had happened. We had one bidder that had come in and that bidder was overbudget, so we rescoped the project and reissued it. We anticipate that it should be awarded in the coming weeks.

While I'm on feet, the department asked me to clarify one thing that I said yesterday that I didn't get quite right. It is with respect to EMR's budget on the grid project. The project responsibility moved over to the Yukon Development Corporation, but \$500,000 was surplus; it wasn't put over. Yesterday, I think I said that all of the funds had moved over — so, \$500,000 just went into our surplus.

**Mr. Kent:** I have just a couple more topics here then before I conclude today.

On March 19, there was an article from *The Canadian Press* titled *Ottawa provides \$20M for B.C.'s forest sector amid softwood duties, trade war*". Going down in that article, it said: "Ottawa has also announced \$5 million in funding for four projects in B.C. and one in Yukon aimed at helping laid-off workers from the forestry and mining sectors." I'm just curious if the minister can tell us what project that is in the Yukon and how much of that \$5 million flowed to that project from Ottawa.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The department is looking to get me that information. I will just try to give the floor up to others and, as soon as I get that information, I will pop up on my feet and add it to one of my responses.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that. I look forward to getting that information. As I said, it was a March 19 *The Canadian Press* article — more focused on the \$20 million for BC's forest sector, but there was a component in there that talked about the Yukon.

My final question is with respect to the Michelle Creek property. The Yukon sought a judicial review with YESAB over the recommendation that they had issued there, so I believe that the Yukon government was not successful in the courts with that, so I am curious about where we stand now. There is a recommendation from YESAB that is outstanding. Is the department now working on consulting on putting forward a decision document with respect to that? They obviously have the ability to accept, reject, or vary the recommendation from YESAB. I am just looking for some sort of an update from the minister as to where we are at with the Michelle Creek property and the recommendation from YESAB that is currently before his department.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, I am just going to ask the member opposite if he could do me a kindness and copy that article so the department can check in on it. I would appreciate that.



Second of all, we are still evaluating the court decision and considering our next steps. I don't have any answer today regarding Michelle Creek. I think that will happen fairly soon.

**Mr. Kent:** I am just sending the copy of the article that I have over to the minister. I can find the publication that I got it out of as well, but it is an article from *The Canadian Press*.

With that, I will conclude my questions for today. I thank the officials for not only coming here today but for all their work in the briefings that they have provided and the briefings especially on the Eagle Gold project. Those are much appreciated.

**Ms. White:** I thank my colleague for the extensive questions on Eagle mine, which means that I am not going ask. I'm not going to revisit some of those questions, because as the minister mentioned, I have asked for a briefing after this next court hearing.

I do have a series of other questions. Just because we just spoke about Wolverine, I am interested to know what the full cost of Wolverine was for 2024-25, and then I have additional questions about the Wolverine site.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The total in 2024-25 — they gave me a number and then sent me a text saying, "Not correct." Let me just sit down. As soon as I get the information, I will share it.

**Ms. White:** Possibly in that same text message or note, if we can find out how much Yukon has paid above and beyond what the environmental security was — I'm interested to know how much Yukoners have paid since the closure of Wolverine.

Then I'm also curious or interested — and I may not be able to get the answer now, so I would look forward to a legislative return — but I'm wondering what assets are left at Wolverine.

I bring this up only because I left the Wolverine site when the mill was under construction, but there was extensive infrastructure there — including many ATCO trailers, the power plant, the water treatment plant — at the time, including the old camp that was down by Wolverine Lake itself, which at the time was wall tents and, of course, it had an outhouse.

Anyway, I'm interested to know what is still there. I'm interested to know how many people are still on-site doing the water treatment and the maintenance.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am still working to get how much was spent this fiscal year, but what I do have is information that overall the spend at Wolverine has been \$47 million. I believe that the security that had been held was \$10.5 million. The number that they gave me previously is now confirmed. This year, 2024-25, it is \$5.7 million on-site.

Then the member asked about how many folks are there. Typically, it is about four people on-site. The member asked what is still there. A couple of summers ago, the company Welichem sold most of the assets on-site to a company called Norzinc. Norzinc is, I think, still in the works of the removal of that equipment. I would have to get an accounting of what is left. Clearly, there are still things there around doing the water treatment, for example. The large buildings are still there — that would be like the mill building, the crusher building, and

the concentrate load-out building. The plan is for those buildings to be removed this year.

**Ms. White:** So, if those buildings have still been on-site for this entire time, who has been in charge of maintaining them?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The responsibility for those buildings was the owner, Welichem.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate that.

Moving on to Minto, I know that we had a substantially larger amount of environmental securities held there. Can the minister tell me the amount of money spent on Minto between the 2024-25 budget?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I think that the number so far that we have appropriated has been \$21.7 million. I think that we have — our anticipation is to get that up to \$24.5 million, and I think that some of that is sitting in this very thing that we are debating here today.

**Ms. White:** Can the minister tell me what the difference between the \$21.7 million so far up to the \$24.5 million will be used for in the supplementary budget?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The broad category is "site operations". I know that is not very informative for the members of the House, but I think that — the way that the department is describing it to me is that the remediation work has been successful and we have been able to move more quickly and, you know, more constructively around this. So, I think that the additional work represents an opportunity — would include things like water treatment. I would have to ask Assessment and Abandoned Mines to give me a more detailed breakdown, but the way that I think that we can best understand it here is that they have been able to move the remediation work ahead more quickly.

**Ms. White:** How much is still held of that environmental security?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The original security that we held when the folks abandoned the Minto mine was just over \$75 million. I think it was \$75.2 million.

If this supplementary budget passes and the work continues as we hope will happen, then what we anticipate is left in the security — that has not been spent — is \$27 million.

The work plan that we have in place for Minto for this coming season — what's in the budget that's before the House right now — is about \$21 million. That would be \$6 million out of that still remaining.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate that answer from the minister.

I spent quite a bit of time in all of the briefings asking about the cost of the Michelle Creek court case where, of course, the YESAB recommendation was challenged. I asked in Energy, Mines and Resources, I asked in Environment, and I asked in Justice and I really got told that there was no number there. Does the minister have a sense of the amount of staff time spent on the Michelle Creek court decision — whether it was staff members of EMR supporting Justice? Is there any sense of the amount of time that Justice spent on this particular court issue?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will work to try to get some additional information, but when I talk with the deputy ministers about what resources EMR has put toward it — we

don't have anything dedicated to it. Once the decision was taken for us to do that work, then that is moving, so there isn't additional time that has been put toward it.

Where I have spent time is in conversations with the northern chiefs. I have occasional meetings with them. I think I went up there and a lot of our agenda on one of our days of meetings was spent talking this issue through.

I've had several meetings with folks from the public or environmental organizations to discuss it. I usually have quarterly meetings with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Yukon. It's often a conversation, but I always have those meetings anyway. I don't know whether that's a specific resource or anything like that. So, there's nothing that the department would have as measurable time for this or dedicated resource to this court hearing.

**Ms. White:** Can we expect future actions taken by the department when it comes to YESAB decisions — for example, looking for clarity through the courts?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The way this happened is that the district office drew conclusions that we felt had — what's a fair way to say it? We felt that there were errors in that process. There was no mechanism within YESAA for us try to seek to address that — for example, to ask that things be redone — so it was not contemplated that it would be needed when the legislation was originally drafted or originally set into law. So, we asked the court to carry out a judicial review. The way that the member refers to it — my colleague opposite is saying that we took YESAB to court. I would say that we asked for a judicial review to try to get clarity around this. That was the purpose.

When we're not at the district office, my understanding is that there are other mechanisms that can be used. It is my hope that the way in which we work with YESAB will evolve over time and be refined. I believe in this legislation; I also believe that there is room for improvement on the legislation. We have made some of those very recommendations and took those to the federal government because, as a tripartite piece of legislation, it is passed through the Parliament of Canada.

My understanding is that it was in the queue, but we hit an election. So, you know, I think that it is a good piece of legislation, and we will always do our best to work within it. I would also say that we completely support the Peel plan and the goals of the Peel plan.

I will stop there and see if there are further questions.

**Ms. White:** I know that since probably sometime in the new year, the minister received a lot of correspondence from folks from the Nygren subdivision or Bear Creek subdivision in Haines Junction around the proposed land treatment facility at the Macintosh gravel pit. I understand that is a file that is being led by Environment, but did the minister respond to the folks who took the time to write him letters?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I did not respond, although I did ask and was told that, yes, the Department of Environment and/or the Minister of Environment was responding. So, I can check to make sure that happened, but as is the case when we get — for example, if requests come to us from different angles and we see that — if, for example, I am the lead, then it is my

job to respond on behalf of other colleagues even if they are the ones who get the letters originally. I can check in and make sure, but when I had checked when the letters first arrived, I was assured that there was a response forthcoming to those folks about the submission.

**Ms. White:** I will just note that there were many, many letters from folks who will be affected by that proposed land treatment facility, and I will note that there were 34 comments on the YESAB site in regard to it. I do recognize, of course, that this is not the minister's portfolio, because I do have questions about it, which I will try to get in Environment.

A lot of the questions that I have for EMR can be asked in the mains, and I understand that we are pressed for time, so I will stop my questions for today.

**Deputy Chair (MLA Tredger):** Is there any further general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources?

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

**Ms. White:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried**

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures  
Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$51,820,000 agreed to  
On Capital Expenditures  
Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to  
Total Expenditures in the amount of \$51,820,000 agreed to  
Department of Energy, Mines and Resources agreed to*

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 216, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Deputy Chair:** Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter now before the Committee is continuing

general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 216, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2024-2025*.

**Health and Social Services — continued**

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

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would like to welcome today, assisting in this debate: Deputy Minister Matt King from the Department of Health and Social Services directly to my right; one chair over is Jared Wong, the senior advisor to the deputy minister; and at the far end of this row, we welcome back Melanie, who is the director of Finance.

**Ms. Blake:** I would like to thank the officials for being here.

The supplementary budget this year has a significant increase in emergency medical services pressures. In the briefing, we were told that there was a \$400,000 increase to meet these pressures. We were also told that this was due to a 77-percent increase in EMS call volumes over the past five years.

Can the minister describe some of the trends that the Yukon is seeing in EMS, and is the department tracking the different types of calls? The other question is: Which areas of EMS are seeing the most calls?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I don't think that I properly introduced Melanie; I just think I said "Melanie". It's Melanie Wallace — so, thank you very much for being here.

Thank you for the question. With respect to Emergency Medical Services and the supplementary budget item, EMS is facing increasing pressure as our population grows and ages. So, in fact, the trends with respect to call volumes have risen significantly, and we are seeing more demand for emergency services than ever before. It is a matter of aging population, increased population, and, you know, complex medical matters as the population ages. EMS call volumes have increased from 8,434 back in 2019 to 14,907 calls for service in the 2024 calendar year. This is a 77-percent increase in call volume over the last five years. Labour hours have also increased by 11 percent between the 2023-24 and 2024-25 fiscal years, reflecting the additional demand for emergency services.

Until now, we have been managing these pressures through overtime and auxiliary-on-call staffing, but that is not sustainable long term as a solution. The additional EMS positions in the second supplementary estimate were necessary to address these increasing demands. These positions help to stabilize the system and ensure timely emergency response for Yukoners and support to community health centres during times of reduced staffing.

We have built \$1.975 million into the EMS 2025-26 main estimates for Emergency Medical Services staffing to address increasing service demands. This will include 24-hour ground ambulance coverage and 12-hour air ambulance service. This reflects an estimated 11-percent increase in the EMS hours worked year over year, ensuring that enhanced medical emergency response capacity.

I have more information about the main estimates, but the question was — so, those are the trends, I think, that we are

seeing. Yes, calls are tracked all the time, both in communities and in Whitehorse.

I think the last part of the question was where the calls are highest. If I can quickly look at this chart — let me just say there are 15 communities in the information I have, except Old Crow. Each one has an ambulance to respond to the emergency requests. There are an additional four ground ambulances used for training and during rush hours. It looks like some of the highest numbers are in Watson Lake and Dawson City, outside of Whitehorse. They are Watson Lake, 578 calls in 2024, and in Dawson City, 253. After that, Carmacks and Carcross are close to one another, with 91 and 94 respectively. The others have lower numbers.

I think, I hope, that answers each of the questions posed.

**Ms. Blake:** My next question is: Is staffing at EMS adequate to keep up with the increased demand in services with the number of calls that we are seeing from communities?

With Old Crow, one of the questions that I commonly hear from citizens — so, how it's set up in the community with the health centre is, if somebody needs emergency transportation to the health centre, they have to call the First Nation office to access the elders van, which is a part of the home and community care program. Is there any work happening with Vuntut Gwitchin Government or the community health centre to bring an ambulance to the community?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** There are 80.8 FTEs, or full-time-equivalent, individual positions, and 128 community responders providing emergency medical services across the territory. Currently, operations include air ambulance operations and land ambulance operations. They are fully staffed in Whitehorse.

Emergency Medical Services provides ground and air transport for patients in communities who require care in hospital. EMS continues to recruit and increase the number of responders in Whitehorse and in all communities. Yukon EMS has been supporting services with a float medics program out of Whitehorse since the start of 2024 to augment local community gaps. Community responders are provided non-operational pay of \$19.08 an hour to attend training and have access to additional funding to attend training programs outside of their home area, and this includes an offset for meals, incidentals, tuition, books, and accommodation. We hope that is continuing to encourage new people to join Emergency Medical Services as community responders. They do receive an honorarium as well for their commitment. There is also a bonus based on the hours that they train.

I can note that, with respect to Old Crow, EMS does not have full-time operations. I think that part of the question was about Old Crow. There, residents are encouraged to seek medical support from the new health centre, of course, as needed. In case of an emergency, they are to call 911. EMS responds in Old Crow via air ambulance request, and response time is approximately two hours. As of February 10, 2025, EMS had no calls requiring a response from the community.

In the 2025 calendar year, we continue to work with the community of Old Crow as well based on their new health centre and how we can augment services for individuals.

I do have a list of how many community responders. I think I read it into the record the other day when I was asked a similar question by another member regarding how many community responders there are in each of the communities. I am happy to repeat that or provide that if that is helpful in writing, or it will be in Hansard. We do continue with the changes to this budget and the changes to the budget for Emergency Medical Services in the 2025-26 mains to increase funding for those programs so that we will have more community responders and the appropriate number of EMS staff to serve communities.

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

When travelling to the communities, I often hear from Yukoners who are clients of the non-insured health benefits program of the numerous challenges that they encounter when they are trying to access services and support through that program. I am wondering if the minister is working with the First Nations or with the federal government to address some of the issues that are highlighted from First Nation folks who fall under the non-insured health benefits program.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. The gaps with respect to how Yukoners are served who are subject to coverage by the non-insured health benefits through the federal government is a topic of concern to the government of the territory and clearly to First Nation governments as well.

Last spring, in 2024, I wrote to Minister Hajdu expressing my concern. I have met with her on several occasions, including in person in December 2024, and expressed our continued interest in working on this together, because we don't want there to be gaps. We want to make sure that we can resolve the issues and make sure that NIHB is either changing its program to provide services similar to those here in the territory for coverage or that we can come to some appropriate conclusion and serve individuals here in the territory well.

I can also indicate that the three territories recently wrote to Minister Hajdu as well expressing issues around NIHB. We have different issues. The three different territories have three different sets of concerns, but nonetheless, we have offered to speak to her and to any future minister in her role about resolving those issues, particularly from a northern perspective. I understand that there has been a sort of tripartite working group put together. It is at the early stages. It's at the officials' level, but it is federal government, territorial government, and hopefully participation from some First Nation governments to make sure that this is a topic that continues to be discussed, because providing health care to all Yukoners is our primary goal — and health care that responds to their needs.

**Ms. Blake:** With Old Crow when it comes to issues with the NIHB program, I often hear from people who are struggling to have access or approval from NIHB to access services that fall under optometry, dental, physio — and there is another area that I just can't recall right now. Those are some of the issues that people are often calling about from Old Crow — people who struggle to get approval through NIHB so they could get their travel coverage provided. That creates issues for people to have longer wait times to have their dental issues dealt with or

they are living for longer periods of time with glasses that are no longer suitable to their vision.

How is this government ensuring that rural and remote communities have consistent access to health care professionals, especially when communities don't have optometry or dental providers visiting communities?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. It's not necessarily a supplementary budget question, and I'm keen to make sure that we address all of those, but I'm happy to just comment. What has been identified here in this question is exactly the gaps that are of concern to us, exactly the gaps that we have taken to the tripartite table to be resolved, because there are challenges to the service that NIHB does provide.

The other two territories in Canada — the Northwest Territories and Nunavut — do administer NIHB for their citizens, but it has also been problematic. So, as I noted earlier, there are problems with how that is managed with the federal government. I can note, with respect to dental — I'm not sure about physiotherapy or optometry — but we certainly would hope that ultimately we might be able to help with services at the new health centre in Old Crow. It is a beautiful, well-designed place and has places for individuals to have those services, and if individuals could travel — medical professionals could travel — that might be one way to provide that service. Of course, if it doesn't line up with when your needs are, it's not going to be that beneficial.

We do have an itinerant dentist program that does serve communities. Optometry and physiotherapy are some things that we have to continue to discuss, but individuals can make application through NIHB to travel to Whitehorse for those services.

We will continue to advocate that the gaps that NIHB presents for Yukoners have to be closed.

**Ms. Blake:** I understand that the questions I'm asking might not be related to the supplementary budget, but what we're seeing in Old Crow is that we have a high number of people who live with chronic dental pain; these people struggle to get access through NIHB for coverage, and then it puts increased pressure on the health centre for nursing to provide supports. So, we're seeing a lot of our citizens in the community being told to take Tylenol for longer periods of time. I don't think that's appropriate for people to be relying on Tylenol when they're in need of emergency dental support.

Another issue that we're seeing in the community is that sometimes people need emergency access to doctors or to mental health nurses, especially those who are dealing with substance addiction. We have a high rate of people in our communities who are struggling with addiction to crack cocaine. That's common knowledge across our territory. So, I'm wondering: What is the government doing to ensure access to mental health specialists in communities, particularly in more remote communities like Old Crow and Ross River?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am not at all intending to dismiss the concerns that individuals or communities have with respect to dental care, particularly in Old Crow — or any health care, because dental care, in fact, is good health care. At no time am I intending to dismiss that. I am just trying to focus on issues

that are here in the supplementary budget. I am doing my best to provide the answers for the questions that are being asked — budget-related or otherwise.

I can note that the federal dental program is a new nationwide dental program that is anticipated to be eligible — all Canadians will have access by the end of 2025. Canada is interested in understanding how to improve uptake in the territory, and we are working to help them work toward that.

I want to be clear: I know that there have been some rumblings in scrums or with reporters and other things that Yukoners can use both the Canada dental care program and the Yukon dental program to maximize their dental coverage. I should note that we have no intention of the Yukon dental program being changed other than to make sure that it dovetails well with the Canada dental care program so that Yukoners can benefit to the best of their ability.

I can note that, with respect to mental health care in the communities, the Dawson City hub provides services to Dawson City, Mayo, and Old Crow. As of February 26, 2025, the Dawson City hub has four community counsellor positions. At this point, we are still recruiting for two. Three clinical counsellor positions — one position remains unfilled — are: one child, youth, and family clinical counsellor position, two mental health support worker positions, and one mental health nurse position. The child, youth, and family clinical counsellor and the mental health nurse travel to Mayo from Dawson City monthly, and the child and youth clients in Mayo are also supported by a full-time school counsellor. The clinical counsellor travels to Old Crow every two weeks and a clinical child and youth counsellor travels to Old Crow every month. Virtual or in-person Whitehorse sessions with a clinical counsellor are also available when the counsellor is not in the community.

**Ms. Blake:** I just have a quick question in regard to the child and youth counsellor allocated to the Vuntut Gwitchin. In my last visit to Old Crow in February, I was told that the counsellor might be departing his position. I am wondering if there is work happening to ensure that the position is filled before his departure.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I don't have that information with me as to whether or not there is a particular individual leaving their job or moving positions. I can look into that matter and our team will. I can also indicate that in the event that someone is leaving, we work very hard to recruit so that there is no gap in service. Hopefully, there will be an overlap so that there could be some training as well. I'm afraid I don't have that information with me.

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

Can the minister provide an update on staffing levels in community health centres? Are all health centres fully staffed across the territory with all nurses, and what is being done to fill any gaps that may exist? Are there enough health services, like physiotherapy, counselling, and dentistry, to fill the need in communities?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Deputy Chair, as of February 2025, the Department of Health and Social Services has a total of 52

nursing positions filled in rural communities. Nurses work in communities through three groups of programs: community nursing, Mental Wellness and Substance Use community hubs, and regional home care. Community nursing currently has 20 filled primary health care nurse positions; 14 additional filled on-call or float positions; and 15 primary health care nurse-in-charge positions across 11 communities. We have 25 community health nurse full-time-equivalent positions, and of the 25 full-time-equivalent positions, four full-time-equivalent positions are vacant. These positions are within Whitehorse, Watson Lake, and Dawson City. Two community health nurses are dedicated to Watson Lake and two are dedicated to Dawson City. Three nurse practitioners whose positions are shared across communities — excluding Watson Lake and Dawson City — and four community health nurse full-time-equivalent positions — these positions are shared among various communities, excluding Watson Lake and Dawson City. There are home care nurse positions in Watson Lake, Haines Junction, and Dawson City, and there are currently 35 staff with the Mental Wellness Substance Use hubs. Four mental health nurses are dedicated to community hubs, providing direct support to Yukoners; nine mental health support workers also assist individuals in accessing and navigating wellness services; 22 counsellors are available across the communities, offering essential mental health and wellness support.

We are actively recruiting people to fill any vacant positions, and we continue to do that on a constant basis. In the case that individuals leave or that they need leave from those positions, we want to make sure there is coverage.

As of February 2025, there are a total of 362 active nursing positions within the Department of Health and Social Services, and this includes registered nurses, nurse practitioners, a psychiatric nurse, a primary health care nurse, and licensed practical nurse positions. Of this number, 228 are permanent positions, 41 are term positions, and 95 are on call or what is known as auxiliary-on-call positions.

**Ms. Blake:** Information that came up in the briefing was that there have been decreases in capital for Social Services for the Young Offenders Facility renovation, Community and Primary Care for Yukon Communicable Disease Control equipment, and continuing care for the Whistle Bend courtyard project delays. We were told that these decreases came from the delays in procuring capital.

Can the minister explain what these delays are and when these projects will be back on track? Also, is the minister planning on maintaining the same funding for these projects once they are started again?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that what is being asked about are two projects in which funds were decreased in this supplementary budget and then two items where we are looking at equipment. I will deal with the two projects first. One is a decrease of \$102,000 for Social Services, which is a decrease to some renovations that were delayed to the Young Offenders Facility. The answer to that question is: Yes, we intend to complete those renovations, and we expect the budget to be the same. The other project question was: \$440,000 of the decrease shows here because it was not spent in 2024-25. It is for

development of a courtyard at Whistle Bend Place, and that project will go forward in this fiscal year, we hope, and then be completed. We expect the funds to be spent there.

Again, we are talking about the supplementary budget. A decrease of \$823,000 shows for Corporate Services. This is a decrease in department-wide operational equipment budget — items that just couldn't be purchased. We ordered some things, and they didn't come in time or the ordering of the items didn't get done prior to the end of the fiscal year, so we do expect that Corporate Services will need to continue to purchase that equipment.

The last one, I think, is \$64,000 for Community and Primary Care — a decrease for equipment for the Yukon Communicable Disease Control Unit and some funds that didn't get spent on those items in that fiscal year, and we expect that would be carried over and done for 2025-26.

**Ms. Blake:** My next question is in regard to the managed alcohol program. I think this will be my last question, and I'll save the rest of my questions for the mains.

So, what I'm hearing across the Yukon from people, including here in Whitehorse, is the high number of people who are struggling with addiction to hand sanitizer — the consumption of hand sanitizer. So, with the managed alcohol program, are people able to access the managed alcohol program through any of the three hospitals, or is it accessible in any of the communities?

The other question I have that ties into support for those struggling with addiction — one of the common calls I often get from folks across the territory is the struggle to access beds at detox. I believe there are 11 beds at detox here in Whitehorse that are available for Yukoners to access. Those beds are often occupied, and people are left struggling and left waiting for days on end until they can access a bed at detox. I'm just wondering: What other options are in place when people can't access detox when they need and want it?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. The managed alcohol program is a long-term program geared toward supporting individuals who live with severe and treatment-resistant alcohol use disorder. It is a residential program that has been developed and opened in Whitehorse in early November of 2024. The initiative will help to protect one of Yukon's most vulnerable populations and support public health and resource allocation. It is a 10-bed residential facility located here in downtown Whitehorse at the former location of the St. Elias group home. Renovations were done, the program opened, and individuals were able to participate.

I am told that we have had up to seven individuals participating in that program, living in that centre, and we currently have probably, as of early March of 2025, six people residing there, one individual having left the program. I am not sure of the circumstances of that and I wouldn't be able to say what they were anyway, but it is a residential program. Individuals can be referred from any health centre in the territory and certainly through any hospital, any program, any health care community centre, or anywhere where an individual might come into contact with individuals who are assisting them and want to refer them to that program. Assessments are

done by the program managers and by the skilled individuals who work there to determine the needs and if they're a good fit for the program. I can also indicate that there are, I believe, intake assessments done, support workers, and medical oversight at the program.

A resident has to have a diagnosis of alcohol use disorder and residents must be unable to seek other treatment for alcohol dependence. Alcohol is prescribed by a physician as medically necessary. That is just a little bit about that program.

The withdrawal management services is a 24/7 operation, medically and psychosocially supported program that provides a safe place for people in withdrawal from substance use. Our government has increased funding for withdrawal management services to hire additional licensed practical nurses. With these additional providers, the program has been able to increase admissions and provide more comprehensive withdrawal care to continue to keep clients from unnecessarily attending other places for care or the Whitehorse General Hospital, for instance. There are 14 beds available for adults and four available for youth.

In 2023, Mental Wellness and Substance Use services began hiring additional nursing staff to increase the number of bed nights in withdrawal management services, although bed-night data can vary. The percentage increase in bed nights is considered to be an accurate reflection of the increase in bed usage at withdrawal management services between 2022 and 2024. Bed-night usage increased by 42 percent, so more service is being provided.

In 2024, the program had approximately 3,830 bed nights. There were 1,123 total admissions in 2024, and that is an increase over 2023. The 2024 program averaged 93 admissions per month. Services include medical assistance for withdrawal from substances, psychoeducational programming, referral to ongoing treatment, counselling and social work supports, therapeutic groups, and other support services. Withdrawal management staff can also refer individuals to the Referred Care Clinic and opioid treatment services.

My recollection is that — and I think I would have some information; we can get if I don't have it here. It's first come, first served. Our intention is that no one who cannot be served right away is left to their own devices. They are supported in other ways and provided with support. We often have the ability to have individuals return within a day or two. I appreciate that this is not always what an individual needs in that second, but we do understand that, when people come to that program — come to the door — that they need assistance right away. That work continues.

**Ms. Blake:** I just have one more question in regard to detox. In February, I dealt with three different individuals from my home community who needed admission into detox. With the first person whom I was supporting, when I called detox, I was told over the phone that they had 11 beds available. Are all staff in detox informed on the number of beds available?

I think it was with the third individual from my riding whom I was providing support to that I was able to advocate with some of the agencies that we have in town for him to be kept in Whitehorse for a week before he was allowed

readmission to detox. I was told by detox that, after their discharge from detox, they have to wait at least 72 hours before they're allowed back into the facility. Can I get some clarification on that? That is my last question.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. I don't have information about the specific program notes that have been made in this question; I will follow up with it. I can get that information from the managers of the programming. I'm not sure what their policy is or what the specific policy that is being referred to here is.

I do want to note one additional piece to the question that I answered earlier. That is that we can hold beds at the unit for individuals who are coming from a community if a health professional or individual calls ahead and says that they are travelling from a community. We appreciate that this might either cause someone to leave their community to come there for care or to not depending on whether or not there was space, but there certainly is an understanding that individuals who come from the community have to know before they leave their home that they can come there and they can get service.

We can get some programming information and policy information about programming that I just don't have at my fingertips today.

**Mr. Dixon:** Can the minister provide an update on the provision and availability of dental services in Dawson City?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** We have the concept of funding a dental program in Dawson City. I can also indicate that it has been filled in the past by an itinerant dentist who visits the community. The dental room and equipment are available at the hospital in Dawson City.

At present, there is no government-funded provision of dental services for adults in the general communities, but Health and Social Services has been working with itinerant dentists before in Dawson. We are trying to establish, on a trial basis, to help offset the costs of independent private dental practices offering services in the communities, and there has not been an itinerant dentist for about two years, since March 2023 when the contract to serve at that time ended. We have been actively recruiting for an itinerant dentist to provide dental services in the communities — Dawson City being one of them.

Rural Yukoners can still access dental services in Whitehorse while other options are being explored. A medical travel subsidy can be accessed for Yukoners seeking dental care that falls under the health care insurance plan. Most often, this extends to services provided in a publicly funded hospital, but of course, we also have the dental program that allows individuals to access dental care. Those dental offices — a lot of them here in Whitehorse that are taking patients and providing service to patients and paid under the Yukon dental plan in Whitehorse are very open to having patients and understand the concept of patients needing to travel as well.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate that response from the minister.

We have heard that Dawson was without a social worker currently. Can the minister confirm whether or not there is indeed a social worker available in Dawson, and if not, how are those services provided in the community?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. We can get updated information about whether or not there is a vacancy specific to Health and Social Services in Dawson City. I know that there was a social worker there last summer. I met personally with that individual when we were there visiting Dawson for a number of Health and Social Services and Justice issues, but I don't know if that person has changed their employment. I will check into whether or not there is currently a social worker there and, if not, when that position might be filled.

**Mr. Dixon:** Earlier this week, we asked a question about the Canada prenatal nutrition program and the funding from the Yukon government for that program. We know that the federal government is in the process of reviewing their funding here in the territory, changing the funding formula and the way the funding flows to the groups in the Yukon. I had asked in Question Period, but I will try again now. Does the government intend to continue to match funding from the federal government beyond 2026 for this Canada prenatal nutrition program, or do they plan on adjusting the formula for their support for that program based on the changes the federal government makes?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The Canada prenatal nutrition program supports families and assists in setting the foundation for strong, healthy families and communities. The Government of Yukon continues to match federal funding of \$677,000 annually to support the Canada prenatal nutrition program in the Yukon. It has been ongoing since 2021-22, with funding scheduled to end about a year from now, because that is the program length. At this time, we expect that it should continue.

The Canada prenatal nutrition program operates through the following community groups and communities: In Dawson, which is the one being asked about, it's Healthy Families, Healthy Babies. It is a very well-supported program in the community. In Carcross, there is something similar as in Watson Lake. In Whitehorse, parts of the program are operated by the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre and the Teen Parent Centre.

There's the Canada prenatal nutrition program at the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, les Essentielles, and in Teslin, the Teslin prenatal program. The Government of Yukon also provides \$175,000 to Yukon's network for healthy early human development for the fiscal years 2022-23 and 2023-24, and this is part of the federal government's community action program for children, with funding going to March 31, 2026.

In addition to the funding through Family and Children's Services, the midwifery program offers infant feeding on Mondays to any Yukoner who requires support with some prenatal and postnatal care. The program provides services for up to 10 clients a day who are accessing that kind of program at the midwifery clinic, which is, of course, here in Whitehorse. I don't know — I also said this the other day — I'm not sure what the federal government is going to do with programming at the end of 2026. We certainly support this program; we continue to support it.

In fact, back in 2014, the Yukon Department of Health and Social Services — which then had a minister from the Yukon

Party — refused to pay some \$387,000 that was required for the program. At that time, the program funds only came from Canada. The Government of Yukon had not agreed to pay any matching at that time. What I can indicate is that, when this matter came to my attention, we were very keen to make sure that services were provided for these programs; we understood how important they were. We matched the federal government funding back in 2021; we have continued to do so until now. We will continue to do so, because this is an important service provided in our communities. There is almost nothing more preventive than making sure that there are healthy moms and healthy babies and that individual youngsters, infants, and toddlers can have services that ultimately make them into healthy little humans and they can continue on their journeys in that way — a great start for them.

I'm not sure why there continues to be a question about something that we might do — or what the federal government might do — in 2026 — so, a year from now when, of course, we are in a federal election right now and there will be a change of government, no matter of what form — this will be a question for them.

We support this program now; we intend to continue to support it into the future.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would like to first of all return to the topic of EMS. I'll start out with a question on behalf of my colleague the Member for Kluane and concerns that he has heard from constituents related to gaps in EMS coverage in his riding, and that includes all of the communities that he represents. But recently, there were concerns regarding lack of local responder coverage in Haines Junction on weekends, and it was prompted by — I understand that there was a health incident that drew people's attention to it.

The question first of all on behalf of my colleague is: Can the minister tell us what the coverage gaps in locally available response capacity have been in Haines Junction throughout the past year?

I am aware, as the minister has mentioned in the past, that responders do come from Whitehorse, but there is a big difference in the speed at which local responders are able to get to a situation versus paramedics dispatched from Whitehorse. So, the first question is: How many times have there been gaps in local response coverage in Haines Junction for EMS in the past year, particularly on the weekends? I understand they are a particular concern.

I would also ask if the minister has that information available regarding gaps in local EMS response capacity throughout rural Yukon — that would be appreciated.

Secondly, the minister made reference earlier in debate today, as well as earlier when we debated the department, about the EMS call-volume increase of approximately 77 percent in the five-year period from 2019 to 2024. I'm looking for the information on call volumes per year. As the minister knows, there has been a change of which department it is under and some changes in the budget format, and I wasn't finding it easy to locate that call volume information for 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023. Could the minister provide the information on the EMS calls per year for each of those years?

Next, recognizing that those questions will probably take a moment for officials or the minister to find it, I'm going to touch on another area on behalf of one of my colleagues.

In this case, my colleague the Member for Copperbelt South heard from a constituent with concerns about the Yukon's pharmacare program. The specific concern is that there is not an online portal where this person was able to find out information on claims submitted. For example, that person noted that they are able to go online with the health and dental provider Canada Life for the private insurance portion of the program and see which claims are pending, which claims have been paid, et cetera. Also, the additional concern was that not having a government portal to submit claims for pharmacare creates a situation for people out of town where they either need to mail them in or make a trip into Whitehorse.

Finally, I will just raise a concern that I have heard from two constituents of mine about within the last 24 hours, that being that the ongoing issues related to the surgical sterilization equipment problem at Whitehorse General Hospital have apparently resulted in a number of people being informed that cataract surgery was being cancelled. The one constituent who contacted me today indicated that he was also emailing the minister and said that — I believe the number that he said was 30 — he had been told that there had been about 30 people who had surgeries cancelled due to that sterilization problem.

I recognize that this sounds like it may be a new development and that the minister may not have information about the number of cataract surgeries cancelled due to the surgical sterilization problems, but if she could look into it and commit to coming back to this House with information on the number of people who have seen their cataract surgeries delayed or cancelled and what the impact of that is, that would be appreciated.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate that the time is running short. I will try to answer with what I have here. I do have some information with respect to Haines Junction. There are 16 community responders in Haines Junction. The most recent coverage that I have is total coverage for the month. It's not broken into weekends. Haines Junction in November had 91-percent coverage. In December 2024, it had 99-percent coverage, and in January, it had 99-percent coverage.

I do want to note — and I think that I have noted this already and I can get the proper title or wording — that there is a group of individual EMS folks now who form support for communities, so if there is going to be a vacancy in communities, they can go and do shifts in communities for additional coverage, but Haines Junction has had good coverage.

I note that the call volumes that are being asked for — I have just written 2021, 2022, and 2023 for those years. In 2021, the total call volume of emergency medical services was 9,699, up two percent from the year before. In 2022, it was 11,569, up 19 percent. In 2023, it was 13,255, up 15 percent.

With respect to the pharmacare claims, working on a patient portal is something that is in the works with respect to the digital health strategy. Ultimately, a patient digital portal for individuals to check on claims or for their care is ideal. It is



not something that is currently available. We will continue to work on that.

I don't have numbers. The member opposite was correct with respect to numbers of cataract surgeries that have been delayed as a result of the surgical sterilization issue. I do know that some other kinds of surgeries were prioritized. I do understand there to be a situation report that comes regularly. I don't have it with me, but we can look into the number of cataract surgeries that have been delayed as a result of that particular difficulty at the hospital. I also should emphasize that the hospital continues to work diligently to resolve that issue completely.

Deputy Chair, noting the time, I move that you report progress.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

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

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

### **Chair's report**

**MLA Tredger:** Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 216, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2024-25*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.*