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HANSARD

Tuesday, April 8, 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
Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
Hon. Jeanie McLean	Mountainview	Deputy Premier Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate
Hon. Nils Clarke	Riverdale North	Minister of Environment; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Government House Leader Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Sandy Silver	Klondike	Minister of Finance; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, April 8, 2025 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

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 Geologists Day

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to world Geologists Day, which takes place the first Sunday of April every year — so this past Sunday.

This is a day where we honour the important work of geologists. Their study of the ground that we walk on can give us insight into the deep history of our mountains and rivers, ensure our safety when it comes to landslides, and give us important information for exploring for minerals.

Today, I would like to welcome visitors from the Yukon Chamber of Mines and staff of the Yukon Geological Survey. I am also happy to welcome and honour the 2024 Association for Mineral Exploration — AME — Roundup award recipients, some of whom are with us today. I had the opportunity to attend the awards evening at the end of Roundup this year, and I was so proud to see so many Yukoners being honoured for setting the bar in responsible mining, exploration, and geology. These folks have been recognized for their remarkable contributions, achievements, innovation, and leadership in the mineral exploration and development industry in the Yukon.

Scott Berdahl of Snowline Gold Corp. received the 2024 AME H.H. “Spud” Huestis Award for leading the advancement of the Valley deposit in the Selwyn Basin in the Yukon to a significant deposit.

Also with us are representatives from Archer, Cathro & Associates, a consulting company specializing in Yukon mineral exploration. These folks received the AME David Barr Award for leadership in developing a culture of safety and exploration in the Yukon over the past 60 years.

Finally, Maurice — or Mo — Colpron of the Yukon Geological Survey was acknowledged with an AME Special Tribute for his leadership in mapping the Rackla belt and his valued contribution to the understanding of western Canadian and Alaskan Cordilleran tectonics and metallogeny. The mapping project initiated by Mo in central Yukon highlights the parallels in the depositional and structural settings of the Rackla belt and the Carlin gold district.

For me, I think about the people. Lately, I’ve been reviewing old Hansards and notice that the first tribute that I ever delivered in this House back in 2017 was a memorial for a Yukon colleague, geologist Charlie Roots, who I know is still missed. When I was down at AME Roundup, I saw the folks from Archer Cathro acknowledge their colleague Julia Lane, senior geologist and partner with Archer Cathro until her passing in August 2019.

I also happen to know that Yukon Geological Survey director Carolyn Relf is retiring this year, so a big shout-out to her.

The folks from the Geological Survey and the Yukon were all really proud to witness Mo and Snowline and Archer Cathro get acknowledged for their outstanding leadership in how mineral exploration can and should be done with best practices.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to geologists and to our visitors today for the work they are doing to support responsible mining exploration and development here in the Yukon.

Applause

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize world Geologists Day, which was celebrated this past Sunday, April 6. We stand in celebration of the work of geologists in our territory and the crucial role they play in understanding and guiding operations in our natural landscape.

The modern-day Yukon geologists stand on the shoulders of giants. Sir William Edmond Logan, geologist and the founder and first director of the Geological Survey of Canada, and, of course, the tallest mountain in Canada, located in Kluane National Park, bears his name.

From Logan on throughout the years, we have seen very successful geologists work in both the public and private sectors in our territory, and I would like to highlight a few.

The five generations of partners who form the foundation of Archer Cathro, from Al Archer and Bob Cathro in the mid 1960s through to current partners Heather Burrell and Steve Israel — their success can be seen on projects throughout the Yukon. They were recently awarded the AME David Barr Award for leadership in developing a culture of safety and exploration in Yukon over the past 60 years.

Scott Berdahl is a homegrown professional geologist and is leading the Snowline Gold team with their property in the Yukon. He was the recipient of the 2024 AME H.H. “Spud” Huestis Award for leading the advancement of the Valley deposit in the Selwyn Basin to a significant deposit.

The Yukon Geological Survey has done tremendous work and is recognized nationally and internationally because of it. Some of Canada’s finest geologists have worked there. At Roundup this year, Maurice Colpron of the Yukon Geological Survey was acknowledged with an AME Special Tribute for his leadership in mapping the Rackla belt and his valued contributions to the understanding of western Canadian and Alaskan Cordilleran tectonics and metallogeny.

Of course, no tribute to Yukon geologists would be complete without acknowledging the work of Carolyn Relf at the Yukon Geological Survey. She has been the director there

since 2008 and has served six ministers of different political stripes, starting with the late Archie Lang. Her professionalism and advice were amazing and certainly much appreciated by those whom she has worked with. We wish her well as she retires, and I know that she will continue to be busy with projects like Sticks Together, raising money for breast cancer research and support. Best of luck, Carolyn, with your future endeavours.

Geology in the territory is an expansive field and there is no shortage of work for a Yukon geologist. If you enjoy earth sciences from an environmental management perspective, mining and exploration, or both, you will find gainful employment in government or the private sector.

Good luck to all of our geologists with their summer season. We hope it is a safe and successful one for all.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the important contributions and discoveries of geologists, geophysicists, and geochemists.

But before I dig deep into these important careers, I wish to add our congratulations to Scott Berdahl, Maurice Colpron, and Archer, Cathro & Associates for their continued dedication to elevating the mining industry and their well-deserved recognition at this year's AME Roundup.

Now, back to the core of my tribute. Geologists rock the solid facts, so let's see what we can dig up. For example, without geologists, we would be oblivious that, in 200 million years, North America and Asia will collide and form a super continent. And without geochemists, we wouldn't know that diamonds aren't actually the longest lasting gems; it turns out that zircons are the honey badgers of the gem world. Zircons simply don't care what volcanic process you put them through; they will always keep their original crystal lattice structures. And without geophysicists, we wouldn't know that the Earth's magnetic poles have swapped 171 times in the last 71 million years and that we are overdue for another north and south pole swap.

Geology is incredibly important to our daily lives. As a science, it is important for agriculture, architecture, weather predictions, and anything that has to do with natural resources. It is an incredibly wide-reaching science, and those who study geology offer insights into nearly every area of understanding about our planet and its complex systems. As the world continues to face new challenges related to climate change, energy development, and natural resource management, the role of geologists will become even more important.

By celebrating national Geologists Day and raising awareness about the importance of their work, we make sure that geologists and geological science continue to help our understanding of the world around us.

Applause

In recognition of National Wildlife Week

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to National Wildlife Week. In 1947, the Government of Yukon proclaimed the week of April 10 National Wildlife

Week, which marks the birthday of the late Jack Miner, who was a Canadian conservationist who led groundbreaking work on migratory bird landings. Jack's work helped determine migratory paths of North American birds and contributed to saving the Canada goose from extinction.

Mr. Speaker, National Wildlife Week is an opportunity for us to take a moment to look for ways that we can continue to conserve and protect wildlife and their habitats. In the Yukon, animals play a vital role in our northern ecosystem and our lifestyle and continue to be a significant local food source and are culturally important to Yukon First Nations.

The Government of Yukon has made significant progress toward protecting and conserving areas of the territory. This includes reporting an additional two percent of Yukon's lands and waters as protected through the recent signing of the *Aullaviat/Anguniarvik Traditional Conservation Area Agreement* together with the Inuvialuit parties. Mr. Speaker, this brings the territory's total protected area to over 21 percent, which is the highest percentage of reported protected areas of any province or territory in the country. By conserving more areas of the Yukon, we help to protect sensitive habitat and help to protect or ensure that wildlife has an opportunity to succeed.

The Department of Environment, through work with management partners, undertakes wildlife population surveys and monitors sensitive ecosystems to understand and address climate change and its impacts. We do that work hand-in-hand with co-management partners, community partners, and organizations, including the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, renewable resources councils, the Wildlife Management Advisory Council for Yukon's North Slope, the Yukon Fish and Game Association, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the Yukon Wildlife Preserve, and the Yukon Conservation Society to name but a few. Together, we work to ensure that wildlife continues to thrive and remain on the Yukon's landscape for future generations.

I would remiss at this time not to acknowledge partners like Grizzly Bear Protection Yukon, whose dedication to raising awareness about coexistence with grizzly bears complements initiatives like the Klukshu area grizzly hunting ban. While the ban originated directly from the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations' stewardship and deep cultural ties to the land, it is through collaborative efforts with advocates like Grizzly Bear Protection Yukon that we strengthen our shared vision protecting Yukon's wildlife, honouring Indigenous leadership, and ensuring safe communities for all.

Mr. Speaker, this National Wildlife Week, I encourage all Yukoners to take a moment to appreciate and celebrate all the life that surrounds us. I encourage Yukoners to join us for the 2025 Yukon Biodiversity Forum taking place this weekend.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize April 7 to 13 as National Wildlife Week, observed annually during this week in which April 10 occurs. April 10 is the birthday of the late Jack Miner, who is otherwise known as the "father of North

American conservationism". This week honours his contributions to conservation.

National Wildlife Week, established in 1947, allows Yukoners to learn more about wildlife in our regions and their habitats. With the Yukon being home to a large portion of Canada's boreal forest, we are also home to a diverse population of wildlife. Creatures large and small inhabit our lands, many specially adapted to endure our rugged terrain and cold temperatures. Others stay for a visit or a seasonal stop following their migration patterns.

The winner for the longest migration is the Arctic tern, which breeds in the Arctic, subarctic, and Atlantic regions of Canada and then makes the long trip down to Antarctica for the winter only to return in the spring, a total of over 70,000 kilometres a year, with the potential of over two million kilometres in a lifetime. Who knew that Yukon's most loyal tourists come from Antarctica? Of course, swans and sandhill cranes are Yukon's favourite migratory birds, well-deserving of the celebrations that take place during their stay.

As always, our thanks and appreciation go out to all the organizations involved in wildlife management and conservation efforts in the territory, Yukon First Nations, the Department of Environment, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, our renewable resources councils, the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope), and Yukon hunters and trappers, front-line stewards of our land.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the Yukon Fish and Game Association, Wild Sheep Foundation, CPAWS, Yukon Trappers Association, Yukon Outfitters Association, Yukon Conservation Society, Ducks Unlimited — so many to mention — the Wildlife Preserve, and so many more. We thank you for your dedication toward our wildlife and our natural world. Get out and enjoy it, everyone.

Applause

MLA Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate National Wildlife Week.

We are fortunate to live in a place that values wildlife so deeply. We are lucky to live in the Yukon, where wildlife is a part of our everyday lives, from urban foxes to remote caribou herds. As Yukoners, we know that being good neighbours to wildlife means giving them respectful space and cleaning up after ourselves. We see this in the notices every spring during lambing and kidding season when we hear notices about areas to avoid so that animals and their babies can grow undisturbed. We see it in Yukoners taking care in the spring to be respectful of bears waking up from their dens.

We thank everyone who contributes to building a strong and healthy relationship with our environment, both the individuals and the organizations. I especially want to thank all of the Yukon First Nations, which have been honouring wildlife for a very long time. We are grateful for their stewardship and for their teachings about how to have a respectful relationship with the animals around us.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today two new documents: Yukon Energy's strategic plan entitled *Building a Resilient and Renewable Energy Future* and the first chapter or focus of that plan, "a reliable and robust grid".

I also have for tabling today a legislative return in response to a request for information for the Member for Copperbelt South during the debate on Vote 53, Energy, Mines and Resources.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada to reconsider his campaign promise to defund and close supervised consumption sites in Canada, undoing efforts to implement harm-reduction measures that save lives.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and downtown core concerns

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, in 2019, the Liberal government removed the Salvation Army and took over the operation of the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. What was particularly controversial about that was the Liberals' decision to change the operating model to a low-barrier approach that was much more permissive of drug and alcohol use.

Since that time, the Yukon Party, members of the business community, and many others have been consistently critical of that model, and the Liberals have spent the past six years ardently defending it. So, we were surprised to hear the Premier say yesterday that he was abandoning that model.

Can the Premier tell us why it took so long for the Liberal government to realize that the way the shelter has been operated since the Liberals took it over in 2019 has been flawed and misguided and has contributed to so many of the problems we see in the downtown core?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, it's always an important opportunity for us — and me — to be able to speak about 405 Alexander and the importance of the work that goes on there. I think we should be clear. As I noted a few times yesterday, there is information in the preamble to the question that is completely not accurate. In no way is the shelter or the

operations at 405 Alexander permissive of drug and alcohol use. There are strict programming policies. I should note that the second and third floor of that particular building is housing for individuals who are vulnerable. They're not permitted to use drugs and alcohol in that location. We look to improve the programming there to make sure that this is, in fact, better known. The Yukon government is working to support our community through the operations at 405 Alexander. We work to protect vulnerable populations by providing 24/7 shelter and supportive living units and a range of drop-in services at 405 Alexander. There are many operations and community partners who work out of 405 Alexander. We have emergency medical services, we have doctors, we have nurses, and we work to protect the community.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I remind the minister that in the fall of 2023 when the Premier announced that he was taking over this file from the minister, the Premier defended the operational model chosen by the Liberals and the programming in the shelter.

In October 2023, he said that he thought there was very good programming being delivered at the shelter and there was only a problem with what was going on out in the street. His exact quote was: "I don't believe that we are failing the individuals who are inside." But now, Mr. Speaker, we've seen a complete about-face from the Premier.

Yesterday, he told the media that he wanted to make a massive change in the operating model of the shelter. He said he wants to see the housing units moved from the current low-barrier model to what he called a very, very high-barrier approach with strict controls. This is a dramatic change from when the Premier took over the file back in the fall of 2023.

Can the Premier explain why he is finally willing to admit that the Liberals' model for operating the shelter has failed?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, again, the opportunity to provide accurate information to Yukoners is always important. The Department of Health and Social Services supports 405 Alexander guests with Mental Wellness and Substance Use outreach services — including the Referred Care Clinic's opioid treatment services — with emergency medical services, and with home care.

The Government of Yukon is addressing the complex challenges of homelessness, substance use, and public safety in Whitehorse through continued collaboration with Connective and the Council of Yukon First Nations.

In October 2024, we completed the jury's eight recommendations. Among them, the Government of Yukon and Connective have reviewed 104 policies, implemented and trained staff on new procedures, developed a critical incident reporting framework, and continued to work on creating a safe, welcoming space for the guests at 405 Alexander.

This is an important opportunity for our community to respond. New and updated policies and procedures at 405 Alexander were introduced through 2024 and are continuing through 2025. I'll be happy to arrange a tour or a briefing for the members opposite if they don't have the information that's up to date about how people are being helped at 405 Alexander and how lives are being saved at that location.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, for years now, the Liberals have been defending their decision to take over the shelter and move it to a low-barrier operating model that has been much more permissive of drug and alcohol use. When we challenged them on this and when residents and businesses pleaded for change, the Liberals defended this model. The Premier himself even dismissed that there were concerns with what was going on inside the building and insisted that the problem was strictly what was going on outside the building.

Here's a direct quote from him on October 4, 2023: "The clients inside right now are getting good programming." He went on — quote: "... I have heard that there are individuals who are feeling uncomfortable accessing the services inside the building because of the activity on the outside of the building."

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is finally talking about a massive overhaul to the model for the units inside the building. He is now talking about a very high-barrier model and what he called "strict controls". So, can the Premier tell us when this shift to a very high-barrier operational model will begin?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the programming at 405 Alexander. Our ongoing programming at 405 Alexander includes the Council of Yukon First Nations cultural programming, EMS paramedic specialist program, a downtown outreach clinic with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and home care weekly on Wednesdays — and this is in addition to Connective's regular outreach worker who is also available on-site to provide one-on-one supports — and a Mental Wellness and Substance Use services counsellor on-site. We have Referred Care Clinic medical professionals there twice weekly. We have Blood Ties Four Directions outreach there weekly. We have connection circles on a monthly basis. I could go on and on.

I note that all Yukon First Nations have been invited to a leadership summit where we will discuss shelter programming and the opportunity for us to adjust to concerns and the future of a shelter strategy going forward. That summit will be held on Friday, April 11, and I look forward to the conversations that we will have with Yukon First Nation leadership as a result of our conversations most recently at the Yukon Forum.

Question re: Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and downtown core concerns

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Health and Social Services confirmed that the government has purchased the land and building that used to be the Duffy's Pets store. This sparked a lot of interest from other business owners in the area who have also been seriously negatively impacted by the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter since this Liberal government took it over in 2019. The minister said — quote: "We're committed to dealing with the properties such as the old Duffy's store..." It was not lost on other business owners that the minister used the plural in that sentence — about "properties".

So, will the minister explain what other properties the government is considering purchasing in the area near the shelter at 405 Alexander?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I didn't know that the members opposite, particularly the Member for Lake Laberge, even listened to me that closely, but now I have a plural versus a non-plural. So, I think what is very important is that we are, in fact, listening to the community. We have the opportunity here to reiterate to Yukoners that they deserve to feel safe and to be safe. We are certainly aware of the impacts in downtown Whitehorse with respect to the activity that has increased there with respect to addictions. We are committed to providing appropriate care and wraparound services for individuals who are dealing with housing challenges, addiction, mental health trauma, and poverty.

These challenges did not appear overnight, Mr. Speaker, and we look forward to the continued work we do with our partners. They also won't be solved overnight.

The indication with respect to the services that are at 405 Alexander — I have listed many of them already here today and I can list more. This is an ongoing process. It is work that we are doing with our partners collectively to make sure that we are treating our most vulnerable Yukoners with the care that they need and also taking into account business and community members in the downtown.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Speaker, it has been six years of these problems and the Liberals are clearly not listening to Yukoners.

In the fall of 2023, closure of the Alpine Bakery sparked a lot of concern and a public outcry about the negative impact the emergency shelter was having on homes and businesses in the area and on public safety. Here is a headline from the *Yukon News* at the time: "Premier admits he should've intervened earlier in Whitehorse Emergency Shelter file" and says he "... remains fully confident in his minister despite taking over the file".

It was also around that time that the Premier said that he was taking steps to address the situation at Alpine Bakery and acknowledged that government did bear responsibility for what happened to that business. Can the government confirm if they have had discussions with Alpine Bakery about the possibility of buying them out in a similar fashion to what they did with Duffy's?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Member for Lake Laberge had talked about — he doesn't agree with the planning process for this particular area. I think that it is important just to identify some of the work — not just the plan but what the plan has led to.

First of all, we have funded modifications for 408 Alexander to support Safe at Home in launching a new supportive housing program. We have provided initial funding for Council of Yukon First Nations' mobile Moccasin outreach initiative. The Yukon Housing Corporation extended hours for security services. We have hired a community safety specialist. We have launched a program to fund crime prevention initiatives for businesses, NGOs, and organizations affected by crime. We have partnered with Blood Ties Four Directions to extend and enhance their healthy meals program, providing lunch and dinner service seven days a week. We have established the presence of two outreach workers at the

Whitehorse Public Library. Again, I am curious to see if those will be two public sector jobs that the Yukon Party would support. We have developed a warming centre here at the Jim Smith Building, which most folks are aware of, and have worked to support the RCMP.

We have sat down in the past with Alpine Bakery. There were a number of things that they had asked of us. We fulfilled all of those commitments, and I look forward to the next question from the Member for Lake Laberge.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, only the Liberals seem to think that this is going well. The Premier was not clear about whether they are going to buy out the Alpine Bakery.

Yesterday, the Premier told media that the former Duffy's Pets store would be used for some type of service delivery. The Premier said — and I quote: "So, we're in final conversations of being able to have some new services provided out of that space."

After six years of the shelter being mismanaged under the Liberals, people in the area are immediately worried about what that might mean. What services is the Premier planning to provide out of that space, and will residents and businesses in the surrounding areas actually be consulted first?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, no matter what the innuendo is that comes from the Member for Lake Laberge, I want to be very clear. There is a great opportunity that has been presented with the building at 408. We are not in discussion with any other business. We have been very clear. This is, of course, the leave that was handed to us.

I would like the member — take a little walk a bit down history lane. The Member for Lake Laberge — this is his vision. The Member for Lake Laberge went and bought a piece of land — a piece of land on a sole-source deal without talking to anybody in that community. NGOs, the Government of Yukon, and citizens have been responding since that day — since that day. The members opposite don't want to hear that, but those are the facts. It was identified, this was the spot chosen, and what we have been doing is, in this particular case, continuing.

The problems of poverty, crime, trauma — the Member for Lake Laberge — maybe he is going to pull out his cowboy hat and the picture of his horse that he has every four years before an election and ride in and save things, but that is not going to happen.

The problems that are in front of us — the problems that are in front of us around crime, poverty, and generational trauma have been here. They weren't overnight. They will continue to be here and we will make sure that we put the services and investments in for all Yukoners, not just some.

Question re: Mining within municipal boundaries

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, currently, Gladiator Metals is looking to expand their exploration within Whitehorse city limits. This company has already been fined for not following their previous permits and now they are applying to do more extensive work.

We heard from Cowley Creek residents at a recent engagement session about the disruptions from current

exploration. Cowley Creek residents have already felt the impact. Drilling is occurring as little as 800 metres from people's houses, recreational trails have been blocked by equipment, and irreversible damage has been done to Cowley Creek park. With further permits, people are concerned about water contamination, air quality, and the impact on wildlife. Community members are deeply frustrated and are looking to this government for direction.

So, how will this government support Cowley Creek residents and other Yukoners who are concerned with mining in their backyards?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I understand, from the issues that arose with Gladiator back when those concerns were raised by neighbours, is we fined Gladiator and then made sure that they cleaned up the work that they had done. That, as I understand it, has happened. They are there doing that work right now.

I heard about the work with — or the folks presenting to city council last night, and I thought to myself that I should reach out to them directly. I think that they are better to present to us. I have met with the mayor informally, and we've agreed to set up a time when I would go and sit down to talk with council about several issues around Energy, Mines and Resources and Tourism and Culture with the city.

So, right now, this is in a process through the YESAB process, and I encourage Yukoners and residents to use that process. It was developed by Canada, by the Yukon government, and by Yukon First Nations as our assessment process, and it is an effective process, and I encourage all Yukoners to participate in it.

Ms. White: So, this is not just a Whitehorse issue. Dawson City residents are also frustrated with mining being prioritized over their needs. Since 2010, Dawson residents have been fighting to save their ski trails from being destroyed by mining claims. Mining has been approved along the Dome Road and was recently approved again. Dawson residents have spoken out about this many times but have been ignored by Yukon government. Residents are concerned about the loss of an important recreation area, safety concerns on the Dome Road, the disruption to residents from dust, vibration, and rock runoff, and the impact that this will have on the future development of residential building lots.

Through their lack of action, this government is telling Yukoners that mining claims and future exploration are more important than anything else, including community needs.

So, why is this government continuing to prioritize mining claims over the community needs of Dawson residents?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm going to go back and check my notes. I had a call with the Mayor of Dawson City; it has to be about two weeks ago now. He talked about some potential to work together to find some solutions around the activity that is happening on the ski trails, and I don't want to misquote him, but he suggested there was an opportunity, and I put him in touch within the department who to work with, and I haven't had any follow-up since.

At least how I came away from that call was that there was a constructive solution to dealing with some of the pressures that were there.

I'll make sure to follow up. But I recognize, from having been on city council in the past, that there are always challenges where municipal issues and land-based issues intersect, but in the case of Dawson, I thought there was some positive work that was able to come out of it.

I don't disagree with the member opposite that there always are some conflict files and we need to pay attention to them.

Ms. White: Currently, this government allows mining within and near municipal boundaries. Yukoners have brought forward real concerns about the risk to their health and well-being when living next to mining development, but despite this, the government continues to ignore them. There are real and immediate issues and long-term impacts of mining. When you couple that within or near city limits, those issues and complications grow — air pollution, exposure to toxins, and contaminated water, to name a few — and some of these effects are irreversible. Yukoners have seen the irreparable damage that mining disasters have caused across the territory, most recently with Eagle Gold.

Last night, Whitehorse citizens packed city hall to oppose mining in and near municipal boundaries, and on March 18, Dawson City residents did the same. Municipalities do not have the power to ban mining within or near their boundaries; they need action from this government.

So, will this government commit to banning mining within or near municipal boundaries until new minerals legislation is passed?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I will commit to working with municipal governments. I have always believed that all orders of government have responsibility and that there isn't one that is above the others. I certainly will continue to work with municipal governments.

By the way, let's also include in there First Nation governments. Can I also acknowledge that some of the projects that are being discussed here are projects that are in conversation with First Nations? So, you can get a very complicated situation where you can have one order of government that is supportive and another that is not, and I think that we need to have these conversations.

Also, when I think from an environmental perspective, I care about the footprint of our mines, and having mines that are far off and far away — that may be out of sight, but that doesn't mean that there isn't an environmental impact, and it also can be very different if those mines are close.

So, I think there is a real conversation to have with Yukoners, I think it's an important conversation, and I think that we need to be open to hearing their concerns and hearing how we want to move forward as a territory.

Question re: Building code and standards

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, oil-fired mechanics follow the rules set out in the Building Code.

The Yukon government Building Safety and Standards handles permit applications for small-volume tanks, and the Fire Marshal's Office previously handled permits for the larger tanks of, I believe, over 2,000 litres.

Recently, the Fire Marshal's Office stopped issuing these permits and handed the administration and tasks over to Building Safety and Standards. We have heard from contractors that this has become a huge issue mainly because of the capacity in the branch. While the branch used to have multiple inspectors, we are told that now there is only one to service the entire territory.

With this increase in work volume, what is the minister doing to alleviate the increasing backlog of permits?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really do appreciate the question from the member opposite about the capacity within the branch.

I was actually just talking with the Deputy Minister of Community Services this very morning about this very issue. I am exploring it within the department. When we have more to report, I certainly will get back to the House.

Mr. Istchenko: Another issue that has been brought to my attention around this issue is regarding the list of red seal contractors whom homeowners must use as provided by the Building Safety and Standards branch. You can find that list on the government website. We are hearing that some contractors listed on the website are not red seal and are not filling the permits out as required. This has resulted in improper, unpermitted work done by contractors from government-provided lists, leaving homeowners with a huge financial cost and little support from the department.

My question now to the minister is: What qualifies a contractor to be added to the government's approved list of oil-burner mechanics, and how often is that list reviewed to ensure that all contractors are qualified, obtaining permits, and performing quality work?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That is a very specific question, and I really do appreciate the detail with which the member opposite is talking this afternoon. I will certainly endeavour to get an answer for the member opposite. I do believe that it was their government who brought the red seal requirement into place, so I will look back and research this, looking into the backstory on this. I appreciate the question; it is an important issue, and I want to make sure that we get permits to contractors as soon as possible in unincorporated communities. Of course, the municipalities are the ones who do a lot of the work within the municipalities, whereas the Yukon government — we are responsible for the unincorporated communities and home building that is outside of those boundaries.

I will certainly endeavour to get the member opposite an answer to that question. I will endeavour to get an answer for the member opposite.

Question re: Flooding preparedness

Ms. McLeod: In recent years, the South M'Clintock and Army Beach communities have been impacted by flooding that

required emergency measures. The community has formed a water committee under the LAC that is collaborating on solutions for engineering and mitigation measures to address future flooding.

Can the minister tell us how much money is in this year's budget and what work will be done on flood mitigation at Marsh Lake?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As we all know, we have had some flooding — more flooding in the territory in recent years. Our climate is changing, Mr. Speaker, and we're seeing a lot more incidents of this kind. I think, in 2021, we had a flooding event in the Marsh Lake area that was orders of magnitude in size to what we normally see, and we're expecting that — it was a 200-year flood I believe was the number I heard. We had to call in the army to help with residents in that area. A lot of work has been done since that time.

There is a lot of focus on former studies that had been done and not really followed in the past. So, I take this very seriously. I lived through that event. I was down in Marsh Lake seeing how this happened.

We are working with the community of Marsh Lake. I know the MLA from the area is reaching out to me on a regular basis to get updates on what's happening within this area. I know that there is a local advisory committee meeting tomorrow night, and we'll have those questions posed to us again tomorrow.

Ms. McLeod: Now, one recommendation from the local water committee was that the government should fund work to develop a continuous berm to be built to a consistent minimum flood design standard engineered and developed in consultation with property owners.

We have heard that, last year, the department hired consultants to conduct a feasibility assessment and mitigation solution. So, can the minister update the community about this work and tell us how much has been committed to this project in the current budget?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I think the very premise of the question suggests that there is work being done in that area to help residents. We have consultants who have been hired to actually assess this thing that we're doing — flood mapping. We're actually working and encouraging residents themselves to make sure that their insurance policies are up to snuff and that they do work around their properties both in firesmarting and flood preparedness, because every one of us, from the citizens who own the properties to the municipalities and local area councils to the First Nations to the federal government, all have a responsibility to deal with protection and mitigation of floods and fires.

Flooding hazards and climate-related emergencies have increasingly impacted infrastructure and residents, with South M'Clintock and the Army Beach community experiencing historic flooding that required emergency measures — as I said a few minutes ago. The Yukon government values the South M'Clintock water committee's local knowledge and is collaborating with them to develop engineered drainage solutions and long-term design and policy measures to address lake flooding. An ongoing collaboration and updates with the

water committee remain a priority to support community efforts in mitigating flood damage.

We have been doing an awful lot of work there and as well in other communities; I think McConnell Lake was mentioned. I can answer more at the next question.

Question re: Resource Gateway project

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, in September 2017, the Yukon Liberals were proud to stand next to Justin Trudeau to announce the Yukon Resource Gateway project. At the time, the Premier said that the impacts would be seen — quote: “in the coming months and years”. Well, Mr. Speaker, that was eight years ago.

We know that the original agreement that the Liberals signed had a completion date set for 2024, but they clearly missed that deadline. After that failure, the current Premier moved the goalposts and said that he would get the project done by 2025. A 2019 *Whitehorse Star* article entitled “Gateway still expected to wrap up 2025” quotes the Premier saying this: “I’m comfortable with what we’re moving toward for 2025...” But as is common with this Premier, he is all talk and no action, as it’s 2025, and there is no end in sight.

So, can he tell us what the new deadline is for this project?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker — very clear — the Yukon Party wanted to take the original proposal, spend hundreds of millions of dollars on roads to projects that don’t exist. We don’t think that is the best way to spend the money — to build a \$100-million road to a project and a mine that absolutely would never ever be licensed because of the ownership — the foreign ownership.

So, what we thought was best was to ensure that we went back, made sure that the money could be used to build roads to projects that actually will be built in the Yukon. That’s really the difference between the view of the Yukon Party and us.

Mr. Hassard: As I stated, it’s the Premier’s own words from 2019 that boasted that he would have the Yukon Resource Gateway project completed by 2025. Again, from the 2019 *Whitehorse Star* article titled “Gateway still expected to wrap up 2025”, the Premier was quoted as saying this: “As 2019 dawns, the government says it’s still expecting to wrap up the project in time for the 2025 planned end date.” The article goes on to state that the Premier explained that the end date is slated for 2025 and that there is no expectation that this would be pushed back at all. Again, a quote: “I’m comfortable with what we’re moving toward for 2025...”

So, Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell us: Of the original \$468 million that the Liberals announced eight years ago, how much has actually been spent?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite well knows, this government was able to renegotiate the extension of this program, and the funding ends in March 2031.

The Government of Yukon has worked to establish a broad base of project components in the scope of this critical agreement that benefits communities throughout the Yukon and improves the safety and resilience of, among other things, the highway network for all users. Now more than ever, it is essential that the Government of Yukon ensures that these

funds are invested in the Yukon. As we advance delivery of this important program, we are also required to continually adjust the program.

With respect to the — the Government of Canada and the Yukon government recently amended the objectives of the Gateway contribution agreement. The original Gateway agreement supported infrastructure upgrades of existing roads in areas with high mineral potential and active mining in the Yukon. The revised agreement emphasizes roads benefiting both from mining and also interregional connectivity projects and Arctic security. This is good news for the Dempster Highway — \$45 million is now allocated toward this important Yukon highway to make much-needed improvements and improve regional connectivity.

As Canada’s only all-season public road crossing the Arctic Circle, the Dempster Highway is a vital transportation route for residents, businesses —

Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, so I guess if you can’t complete the project, you just move the goalposts. That is how this Liberal government does it.

So, with the new addition of the Dempster Highway to the project, what is the deadline now? Given the Premier’s many broken promises on this file, why should Yukoners believe the Premier when he says he has accomplished so little in eight years?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, this is the fourth year where we are budgeting almost a \$500-million capital expenditure in the Yukon. If that is doing nothing, I’m not sure what the Yukon Party was doing in fiscal 2015-16 when they got \$185 million out the door. That’s like less than nothing, I guess.

We have: Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, \$250-million capital expenditure; Nisutlin Bay bridge, a \$183-million capital expenditure; ongoing payments structure in the national transportation corridor fund — oh, wait, there’s more. So, now we have completed the Dempster redundant fibre. The Dempster redundant fibre project is finished, and that was another \$110-million infrastructure. My goodness, what a time for infrastructure investment in the territory. It keeps going and going and going.

We look forward to continuing with the Gateway program.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 49: *Technical Amendments (Estates, unclaimed bodies and related matters) Act (2025)* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 49, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 49, entitled *Technical Amendments (Estates, unclaimed*

bodies and related matters) Act (2025), be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 49, entitled *Technical Amendments (Estates, unclaimed bodies and related matters) Act (2025)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This technical amendments act 2025 amends several acts to make real estate planning and administration easier here in the Yukon Territory. To accomplish this goal, revisions are needed to the *Estate Administration Act* and the *Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)*, which was assented to in 2020 but has yet to be enacted, and minor amendments to the *Coroners Act* and the *Funeral Directors Act* are also needed.

Most of the amendments are to the *Estate Administration Act*, which governs how the estates of those who die without a will are resolved. In 2024, several bodies remained at Yukon's morgue for prolonged periods because the deceased did not have a will and no next of kin were willing or competent to administer the estate.

Under the current *Estate Administration Act*, the public guardian and trustee must agree to administer the full estate of an intestate deceased person to direct the disposition of the body. Requiring the public guardian and trustee to administer every intestate estate is not in the public interest. A recent study by a leading estate planning law firm found that 62 percent of Canadians who die each year do so without a will in place. This is consistent with what we see here in the Yukon.

On average, more than 160 Yukoners die each year without a will. We may even be at a record body count this year. Another study noted that, on average, it takes 500 to 700 working hours and 18 months to fully administer an intestate estate. The public guardian and trustee simply do not have the staff or resources to administer such a high volume of intestate estates each year.

The amendments included in this bill will help streamline that process. Section 34 of the current *Estate Administration Act* requires that the public guardian and trustee be notified of every death and that for those individuals without a will or named executor, the property of the deceased must be immediately delivered to the public guardian and trustee. The current act, however, does not authorize the public guardian and trustee to deal with that property unless the public guardian and trustee applies for letters of administration, which would mean that they would have to deal with the entirety of the estate. As a result, all that property must be stored indefinitely.

This bill includes amendments that will authorize the public guardian and trustee to be able to immediately dispose of items that are perishable or have limited value — literally — such as food, partially used toiletries, or soiled clothing. If no estate administrator has been named within six months after the death, the public guardian and trustee will then be authorized to convert any of the property of value into cash and hold that cash in trust in the name of the estate. The bill amendments further authorize the public guardian and trustee to donate any usable items after all reasonable efforts have been made to sell them.

Finally, the amendments empower the public guardian and trustee to direct the disposition of the body of an intestate person if the body remains unclaimed by next of kin for more than 30 days after death, providing a process to ensure that no bodies will be left in morgues indefinitely.

The bill also includes a minor amendment to the *Funeral Directors Act* that will provide the public guardian and trustee with the authority to respectfully dispose of unclaimed cremated bodies. We know that Heritage North — the territory's only funeral home — holds a growing number of unclaimed cremated bodies. There is currently no legal authority to dispose of the cremated remains, and the funeral home does not have the facilities to store them indefinitely. The amended *Funeral Directors Act* will authorize the public guardian and trustee to perform these tasks without applying for letters of administration, noting that "letters of administration" means that they would have to administer the entire estate.

The proposed amendments are intended to empower the public guardian and trustee to deal effectively with the physical property that is delivered to them by law in the situation of an intestate individual. In this bill, we are also granting them the authority to direct the burial of bodies of intestate individuals without having to assume the responsibility of administering the full estate.

To adequately address the issues of unclaimed bodies, this bill, should it pass, makes a minor amendment to the *Coroners Act* to remove the duplication of authority to direct the burial of unclaimed bodies that were subject to a death investigation. The other important aspect of this bill is the necessary amendment to the *Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)*.

When the *Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)* was amended five years ago, one of the key provisions allowed Yukoners to create enduring powers of attorney without the need to hire a lawyer. The intent was to make estate planning more accessible; however, the 2020 act amendment required the use of mandatory prescribed forms. During the drafting of the regulations and while designing the forms that were needed to bring the act into force, it became apparent that the mandatory forms would be too complicated, making the process less accessible than it was intended to be. This would become a barrier to Yukoners establishing an enduring power of attorney. No other jurisdiction in Canada requires that donor-drafted enduring power of attorney forms be mandatory.

The bill before us now, Bill No. 49, includes minor amendments to the 2020 act that remove the requirement for mandatory forms so that we can reduce the red tape and move forward with a simpler and more user-friendly process. Should this bill pass, like other jurisdictions, the Yukon will offer templates for those seeking to draft their enduring power of attorney without the need to hire a lawyer. The templates are simple and will demonstrate what information must be included in the document to be valid. Instead of prescribing mandatory forms in regulations, we will post the templates on yukon.ca.

making the process accessible and allowing the forms to be updated more easily.

Mr. Speaker, this bill also includes an amendment to strengthen protections for vulnerable Yukoners creating enduring powers of attorney. The 2020 *Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)* gave financial institutions the option of contacting the public guardian and trustee whenever they freeze bank accounts because of suspicious activity by someone acting under a power of attorney. This bill will make that reporting by the banks to the public guardian and trustee mandatory and will require banks taking such actions to contact the public guardian and trustee, protecting against fraud and the abuse of vulnerable people.

Combining the necessary amendments to address intestate property, unclaimed bodies, and enduring powers of attorney into one bill, Bill No. 49, allows us to resolve issues relating to estate planning and administration efficiently as well as clarifying the role and the authorities of the public guardian and trustee in these key areas.

Every Yukoner deserves a decent and respectful burial regardless of their economic status. No one should be left unclaimed and unburied because they did not have a will or family or others able to come forward to administer their estate. Every Yukoner should have the option to make their wishes known regardless of their finances, including those who live in rural communities without ready access to a lawyer and those who cannot afford or do not want to hire a lawyer.

Vulnerable Yukoners need the ability to estate-plan. All Yukoners need the ability to estate-plan and to arrange sufficient protection when someone else looks after their money or their property or their financial affairs. We also need to support our officials and staff in public administration, giving them the tools and the authority that they need to effectively address the property that is left behind when someone dies without a will.

Mr. Cathers: This technical amendments legislation appears to be relatively straightforward. At this point, we have not seen any concerns with it or had any brought to our attention by anyone. I look forward to asking questions in Committee.

Ms. White: Today, I am speaking to Bill No. 49. I just have very few comments. I was excited previously when we passed the changes for the enduring power of attorney — pardon me, the enduring power of attorney — no, that's not right, either. Anyway, I was excited when we passed that paperwork or what that intention was to allow people to get their enduring power of attorney without needing an attorney. That was really important.

In recent years, I supported a senior friend in her efforts to get all her planning sorted out. We had to go to see a lawyer, and at that time, the lawyer said that, well, there was hope that this would come. The most exciting thing for me in this technical amendments act is that discussion. It has to do with changing the regulations. There was a good briefing on the format and the templates that would be created, so I'm excited to see that for the reasons that the minister mentioned. Folks

living in rural Yukon shouldn't have to come into town to access a lawyer to do standard estate planning.

When we get to Committee of the Whole, I don't actually have a lot of questions, because when the minister walks us all the way through it, it really doesn't leave a lot there to ask, but I do appreciate cleaning up these different pieces of legislation. I think it's important, with the public guardian and trustee, for example — their liability waiver and things like that. It all makes sense to me, so I'm looking forward to a bit of a discussion on it. Fair warning: I don't have a lot of questions.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments by the members opposite. What I can say is that I'm proud of the work that has been done by the departments of Health and Social Services, Justice, and others to bring these important amendments in through this technical amendments act format. I think it's incredibly important for the efficiency of the way that we can work to solve these problems, solve them for private business like the Heritage North Funeral Home, solve it for public entities like the public guardian and trustee, make sure that Yukoners are supported, reduce red tape, and make sure that there are real options that are supportive of Yukoners' needs in their estate planning. I look forward to the passing and support from the members opposite for this bill.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it.
I declare the motion carried.
Motion for second reading of Bill No. 49 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: 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.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 49, entitled *Technical Amendments (Estates, unclaimed bodies and related matters) Act (2025)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 49: *Technical Amendments (Estates, unclaimed bodies and related matters) Act (2025)*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 49, entitled *Technical Amendments (Estates, unclaimed bodies and related matters) Act (2025)*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am joined today — and I ask my colleagues to welcome Mark Radke, the Deputy Minister of Justice, and Debra Komar, the senior policy analyst with the Department of Justice. I would like to express my thanks to all of the individuals who worked on this technical amendments act 2025. They have done extensive research and policy development as well as drafting to bring us to today where we amend several acts as part of Bill No. 49. I look forward to the opportunity if there are any questions regarding this. I also thank those individuals who were involved in providing an extensive briefing, answering questions, and the opportunity here today to continue that if there are any.

Thank you very much to Mark and Debra for joining me here today and to all of the folks who work on these important pieces of legislation behind the scenes.

Mr. Cathers: This legislation seems relatively straightforward. I also appreciate the briefing provided by officials. At this point, I have not had any concerns come to light. The only question that I have at the moment is: Could the minister indicate what consultation may have been done on this with stakeholders or people who have had past experience dealing with the situations that this is intended to address?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. Public engagement was undertaken prior to inform the *Enduring Powers of Attorney and Related Amendments Act (2020)* receiving assent in 2020. So, that was public engagement in relation to that piece of legislation. Additional targeted engagement is planned with the Yukon Law Society's seniors groups and stakeholders once the templates and the user guide for donor-drafted enduring powers of attorney are developed. So, we will work with them to show them the templates and make sure that they are responsive to the needs of those groups. Because the issues relating to unclaimed bodies were time-sensitive and legislative remedies — of course, this came to our attention through work that we have done with Heritage North Funeral Home. Extensive consultation was done with them and informed the drafting of this bill. Of course, the public guardian and trustee were also part of our conversations to determine the remedies to address the issues that were known to them. The remedies were relatively limited. No public engagement was recommended for the purpose of the specific amendments that are included in Bill No. 49.

Mr. Cathers: I would just note that I think that it probably would have been a good idea to do consultation with more stakeholders as well as a short period of public consultation even if there was some time sensitivity around it. That being said, again, I have not come across anything in here that has caused any concern or had any concerns brought to my attention.

With that, I will thank officials for the briefing as well as attending here today, and I will turn the floor over to the Third Party.

Ms. White: Of course, I thank the officials for attending today. I warned them coming in that their briefing was so thorough and so good that I had very few questions.

One of the things — and it turns out that I did get the terminology correct but then didn't think that I did when I was standing on the floor — so, what is enduring power of attorney or powers of attorney?

One of the things that we were told during the briefing is that the regulations would be created, for example, to allow for the forms and templates that will be available online. I believe that we were told that it was going to be a targeted engagement for those forms. So, maybe the minister can walk me through what that process looks like and that timeline. One of the things that we were told is that it wasn't expected to take a long time but that there were some ideas already underway, so I'm just interested to know when that will happen for folks.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I just noted in the last answer that there will be targeted engagement. It is planned with the Yukon law society, seniors groups, and stakeholders once the templates and the user guide for donor-drafted enduring powers of attorney are developed and, of course, the opportunity for them to have input before those are completed.

Specialized legal counsel was retained to assist with the drafting of the prescribed forms. By removing the requirement that the use of prescribed forms is mandatory, the templates for a donor-drafted enduring power of attorney can be made available online, making them readily accessible for all

Yukoners seeking to estate plan. The templates will ensure that the necessary elements and information which is included in the donor-draft forms will provide sufficient flexibility to allow Yukoners to tailor their enduring powers of attorney to meet their needs so that they can express their wishes.

Once they are published online, a targeted engagement is planned, and we will solicit feedback from the Yukon law society, seniors groups, and other stakeholders. Providing the templates online rather than in regulation will allow for easier and more timely subsequent revisions.

I can just check with our folks here, if I have a moment to step away from my mic, to see if there is a timeline available.

Thanks for the opportunity to get some more information.

I am told that the English version of the templates will be ready in May — finalized in May — and then there will be consultation with respect to those templates and documents to see if they suit individuals in our targeted consultation. Once the input has been gathered, they will be translated and provided on yukon.ca, so within the coming months.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I am just going to ask the minister for some clarification. I appreciate the great amount of work that went into the technical amendments even if I don't have questions. I am interested if the minister would like us to go line-by-line to be able to raise where there are points of interest to highlight as opposed to me having to direct the questions.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much for that question. I don't have anything specific. I was extremely pleased and expressed my thanks to the folks here, and hopefully, they will pass it on if I don't have the right audience for the information I was provided to give to the Legislative Assembly in second reading.

I do have the opportunity again to highlight the importance of this and what this bill will be doing upon third reading, should it pass second. I don't have anything specific with respect to those clauses that I would bring to the attention of the House at this time.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Again, I echo my thanks to the officials both here in the room and those behind the scenes who were tasked with going through this legislation to find the changes that needed to be made. I know that this will make the process of not only dying but supporting those on the other side of that easier for the folks in the territory, and for that, I am grateful. I thank the minister for her time and the officials again for the great briefing. If it had been less great, I would have more questions, but with that, I will take my seat.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 49, entitled *Technical Amendments (Estates, unclaimed bodies and related matters) Act (2025)*?

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

Ms. White: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 49, entitled *Technical Amendments (Estates, unclaimed bodies and related matters) Act (2025)*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title of Bill No. 49, *Technical Amendments (Estates, unclaimed bodies and related matters) Act (2025)*, read and agreed to

Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 49, entitled *Technical Amendments (Estates, unclaimed bodies and related matters) Act (2025)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 16 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 49, entitled *Technical Amendments (Estates, unclaimed bodies and related matters) Act (2025)*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South that the Chair report Bill No. 49, entitled *Technical Amendments (Estates, unclaimed bodies and related matters) Act (2025)*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 217: *First Appropriation Act 2025-26* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*.

Department of Environment — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to be back here in Committee of the Whole for general budget debate on the Department of Environment. To my right, assisting me, I have Deputy Minister Dennis Berry and, to my left, Assistant Deputy Minister Marc Cattet.

I do have some additional information arising from questions that were posed from our last budget debate, although I don't believe I have much time right now, so I will provide this in my future answers.

Mr. Istchenko: I want to welcome the staff who are back today, like I always do, and those on the phone assisting or via moccasin telegraph or tin cans or however we do that in this day and age.

My colleague the Leader of the Third Party had some questions about — it started off with the minister about the Nygren subdivision. I also have quite a few questions for the minister about the proposed land treatment facility in the Nygren subdivision — we left off last time the minister was on his feet.

I know that the minister is aware of this file because I have written to him about it and many other people have.

Can the minister tell me, now that the decision document has been issued — there is a lot in that document — what the requirements are that are laid out in the document and how that would alleviate the concerns of the local residents?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite.

I do have information — high-level information — with respect to this question. I will see if I can get any more specific information for this afternoon.

As the member opposite indicated, on March 14, the Department of Environment issued a decision document that accepted the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board's — YESAB — recommendation that the project proceeds with more stringent conditions. The decision document does include more stringent conditions and measures to mitigate negative impacts identified during the YESAB process, including specific measures to address concerns raised by the public. These conditions include: protections to mitigate the risk of transport of dust from the site, increase the type of information that must be shared with local residents, and require a more detailed system for local residents to submit feedback.

Issuing the decision document concludes the environmental assessment process and allows the project to proceed to the regulatory phase. This allows the proponent to apply for the necessary permits for the land treatment facility, the LTF, under the *Environment Act* and the *Lands Act*.

At this stage, the proponent requires both an *Environment Act* permit and a land use permit under the *Lands Act* to operate. It is expected that the proponent will submit applications to obtain these permits.

The regulatory review associated with the permitting regime includes additional technical requirements relating to the protection of land and water. Upon receipt of the application, departmental officials review all required documentation, including construction plans, siting information, and hydrogeological assessments.

Construction plans must include berm dimensions, treatment area dimensions, and liner type and construction. Site information must include site grade, distance to surface water, distance to residences, and distance from a 25-year flood plain. The hydrogeological assessment must assess groundwater depth, groundwater flow direction, groundwater travel time to any nearby water body and wells, as well as aquifer depth, type, and distribution.

An additional third-party review of the hydrogeological assessment would be conducted at the expense of the proponent. This review would confirm that the assessment was accurate and conducted as per the industry's best practices.

Permit conditions for land treatment facilities vary based on facility construction, YESAB decision document conditions, and site-specific factors such as nearby human and environmental receptors. The proponents would be required to adhere to the *Contaminated Sites Regulation*, land treatment facility guidelines and protocols, and YESAB decision document recommendations.

If issued, the *Environment Act* permit would contain terms and conditions intended to reduce potential environmental risks and impacts and protect the land and water. This may include requirements for dust control, groundwater monitoring, and requirements regarding handling and movement of contaminated material to and from the site.

A land treatment facility must be inspected every two weeks to ensure all the infrastructure is functioning as it should. All records regarding treatment material origin, contaminants present, contaminants treatments, and volumes must be recorded and reported annually. Groundwater monitoring wells must be sampled regularly and all analytical data recorded and reported.

If contamination is detected in the groundwater monitoring wells, a permitted facility would be required to prepare and implement an adaptive management plan to ensure contamination is contained. An adaptive management plan may also be developed to address risks such as spills and compromised liners.

Prior to closure, the permit holder must provide a decommissioning plan that adheres to Department of Environment protocols. The facility must then be decommissioned and proof provided that no contamination remains on-site.

In addition, other potential restrictions or conditions would include: a stockpile height restriction; a requirement to establish wind barriers and manage stockpile height to reduce the chance that contaminated dust would blow; a tree buffer — a requirement to keep a 30-metre tree buffer around the land treatment facility; community engagement — a requirement to provide biannual information bulletins to nearby residents on groundwater monitoring, soil/water contamination, spills, and seasonal work plans; and there would also be a complaint process — a requirement for a plan for landowners to submit complaints and ensure responses are communicated.

The following mitigation will also help to prevent groundwater contamination by ensuring that the land treatment facility has double-lined sumps to collect runoff, regular water sampling for contaminants of concern, and down-gradient groundwater monitoring wells to detect potential contamination to implement mitigative management measures as per an adaptive management plan. This may also include additional monitoring or treatment wells and groundwater treatment programs and, as well, an annual liner inspection.

There is a lot of material there, I would concede. It's quite a comprehensive process, in my view.

Mr. Istchenko: The minister talked about the hydrological assessment, the groundwater depth, groundwater flow direction, travel, nearby water bodies and wells, aquifers — stuff like this. It also talked about a third-party review of the hydrological assessment, and he mentioned “best practices” in there. So, based on those comments, I do have a follow-up — couple of questions here: When will this drilling work take place to assess groundwater? When is it going to be conducted, and how will the information gathered in this process be communicated with the public? How can members of the public be assured that the hydrological assessment and the measures put in place to protect our groundwater are working?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I just wanted to take this opportunity to provide some of the background information that was asked at a prior Committee of the Whole mains debate for Environment. I will be brief, but I just want to put it on the record, and then I should be able to get the information with respect to when the drilling will occur and how it will be communicated to the general public.

Just briefly, I want to take a moment today to present some information on wildlife surveys in response to the Member for Kluane’s question during the last debate on the Department of Environment budget. In 2024-25, the Department of Environment invested over \$2.4 million in wildlife surveys across the Yukon, which included: moose surveys in the Aishihik and Tatchun areas; capturing and collaring of caribou in various locations across the Yukon; thinhorn sheep surveys in the Arkell and Pilot Mountain areas as well as in Donjek, Tombstone, and Caribou Mountain; elk and deer surveys in the Takhini Valley, Braeburn, and along the Alaska Highway; and fish surveys in the Hyland River, Haggart Creek, Marsh Lake, Lake Laberge, Pine Lake, Teslin Lake, Louise Lake, and Little Atlin Lake.

This year, the Department of Environment is planning to invest over \$2.6 million in wildlife surveys across the Yukon, which will include: a winter survey of Aishihik moose; a grizzly bear census in a yet to be determined area; capturing and collaring of caribou in various locations; thinhorn sheep surveys in the Kluane region and southwest Yukon; elk and deer surveys in the Takhini Valley, Braeburn, and along the Alaska Highway; and fish surveys in Hyland River, Haggart Creek, Southern Lakes, Dezadeash, Pine Lake, Mayo Lake, Neskatahin Lake, Lubbock River, and Little Atlin Lake.

In addition to the survey work and data gathered for these species, the department is also planning to invest a further \$1.4 million into data collection and survey work for cumulative-effects assessment and other species monitoring and wildlife habitat and vegetation monitoring. The Department of Environment will continue to support evidence-based conservation and help ensure that communities, Indigenous partners, and governments have the information that they need to make responsible and informed decisions about land and wildlife stewardship in the Yukon.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide that update to the House. Specifically with respect to the land treatment facility proposed at Mackintosh gravel pit and the questions from the Member for Kluane with respect to drilling and

communications strategy, a drilling program will only commence after a permit has been received by the Department of Environment, and I am advised that the permit has not yet been submitted.

The proponent conducts their own drilling. There is a requirement to provide biannual information bulletins to nearby residents on groundwater monitoring, soil and water contamination, spills, and seasonal workplans. The Department of Environment expects standard requirements for a hydrogeological assessment, which includes a minimum of at least three wells. Mapping of groundwater flow, direction, and speed — these types of assessments are standard for any activity that could affect groundwater.

Mr. Istchenko: I asked about when the actual drilling was going to be and the consultation. I also asked about the measures put in place, and the minister said that there will be reporting biannually.

I am going to continue on with that. The government regulates and monitors land treatment facilities. I have a couple of questions when it comes to that. I want to know how local residents can access this information rather than six months after they have done the drilling, which would be the first biannual one.

They are concerned right now about what the findings are, so it would be nice for the residents to be able to see the initial drill results right away before the proponent starts taking material in there.

The other thing is that, when it comes to the material that goes into the land treatment facility, it’s tested first to ensure that there is no contamination beyond hydrocarbons. Can the minister confirm that? Also, how was this testing done and with what frequency, and is there any oversight by the government on this testing? Is there anyone there from the government who inspects that they are actually doing the tests before the material actually goes to the land treatment facility?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will provide some of the background that I believe I provided before with respect to the duty to inspect, and I will try to get the answer with respect to the receiving and making public the drill results and the issue of hydrocarbons — to ensure that all that is being processed or being treated at the facility is only hydrocarbons.

The *Environment Act*, with respect to the facility, would contain terms and conditions intended to reduce potential environmental risks and impacts and to protect the land and water. This could include requirements for dust control, groundwater monitoring, and requirements regarding handling and movement of contaminated material to and from the site.

A land treatment facility must be inspected every two weeks to ensure that all of the infrastructure is functioning as it should. All records regarding treatment material origin, contaminants present, and contaminant treatment and volumes must be recorded. Groundwater monitoring wells must be sampled regularly and all analytical data recorded and reported.

If contamination is detected in the groundwater monitoring wells, a permitted facility would be required to prepare and implement an adaptive management plan to ensure that contamination is contained. An adaptive management plan may

also be developed to address risk such as spills or compromised liners.

As I indicated previously, prior to closure — which is really not the topic of conversation right now — the permit holder must provide a decommissioning plan that adheres to the Department of Environment's protocols. The facility must then be decommissioned and proof provided that no contamination remains at the site.

When the hydrogeological report has been received and reviewed by Environment, it can be shared with the public. Department officials would be happy to share this report with the public.

The relocation of contaminated soil requires a permit from the Department of Environment. Every permit requires testing of the material for hydrocarbons before it is relocated. The results of testing are reviewed by department officials before a permit is issued.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that. I still didn't really get an answer on whether any of the inspectors from the department actually — randomly or whatever — inspect the material. They put in for a permit that they're going to move X material from this location to that location and they start moving it, but who inspects that material to make sure?

I know that they're supposed to provide a document with all the soils they moved and the tests, but who is ensuring that those tests aren't just — you know, fill out the paperwork after — and not actually regulated by the department or someone at the department — like, the health inspector will go by and randomly inspect a job site or WCB does. It's left open.

While I ask about that, one of the big concerns too is how often the actual site itself is inspected. The minister did talk a little bit about communication and how — the residents. I just want to know if the minister or the department actually has a spokesperson for those local residents whom this information can be communicated to. For example, the stuff that I'm asking on behalf of my constituents — or that the proponent who is doing that can regularly — more than twice a year — pass information on. Because I know they capture that information — businesses do when they provide it to the government — that they can also provide that they're doing their due diligence. The question, I guess, is: How often will the actual facility itself be inspected?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I believe that I have some of the answers. If follow-up is ultimately required, I can certainly endeavour to provide that follow-up to the member opposite.

The final question that the member asked is with respect to a type of spokesperson for constituents to contact — or I suppose an employee of the Department of Environment. I absolutely understand that Haines Junction residents would want to be able to contact someone fairly readily.

With respect to the inspecting, the proponent must inspect their own facility biweekly. Inspectors from the department inspect sites based on a risk-informed approach to all activities. If a permit is issued, the proponent must submit annual reports detailing operations and environmental monitoring, install and monitor groundwater wells to track contamination, test sump water regularly for hydrocarbons, conduct regular site

inspections, and provide updates to regulators and the public, and — as I indicated — conduct facility inspections every two weeks. In addition, as mentioned, the Government of Yukon compliance officers will conduct compliance inspections and environmental monitoring, and compliance inspectors use their discretion to inspect the requirements of relocation permits, which is — the member indicated — with respect to the soil that would have hydrocarbons therein.

Just for the record — and I did say this, did provide this response when we were last in Committee of the Whole — but just for the record, the Department of Environment's mission is to contribute to a healthy, sustainable, and prosperous future through environmental stewardship and the effective management of Yukon's natural resources. There are seven commercial land treatment facilities in the Yukon, including two in Whitehorse. There is no facility in western Yukon as yet. Development of a facility near Haines Junction may reduce the cost of remediation of contaminated sites in this region.

With respect to contact, if the public has questions, they can contact Environmental Compliance and Inspections at 667-5683.

Mr. Istchenko: For the minister, another concern in the specific case to the proposed LTF in my riding — one constituent asked this question of me, so I'll put it to the minister: Why would the government allow this type of facility to be developed in such a windy area and so close to a residential area bordering on the Kluane National Park?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As the member opposite well knows, this is not a Government of Yukon project; therefore, the location for the project was not chosen by the Government of Yukon. However, what we know is that the proponent, Castle Rock Enterprises, evaluated alternative sites and determined that this location best met logistical and economical factors while allowing for necessary mitigation measures.

The site was moved further from residential areas during the assessment to reduce potential risks in order to meet a minimum setback of 500 metres from the nearest residential property. In order to address concerns about wind and air, there are mitigations outlined in the decision document that would include: a four-metre high berm around the facility and the stockpiles must not exceed that berm height; a wind-break apparatus on the upwind side of the facility; geo cloth barriers on perimeter fencing; soil moisture management to prevent dust and airborne particles; the orientation of the facility is oriented in order to reduce wind-funnelling; and I think as I indicated in a prior response, there is also a 30-metre tree buffer around the facility.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that.

Has any government funding gone into this project? If so, how much?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The information I have this afternoon is that there has been no funding from the Yukon government for this project.

Mr. Istchenko: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for that.

Another question was put to me by a constituent. In the view of the government, is this project consistent with some of

the policies in other levels of government, like the local First Nations, regarding this area? My constituent understood that this area was deemed to be of high value for wildlife and wondered if other levels of government were concerned about that.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: If I could just have clarification from the member opposite for the final part of that question — was it high value for wildlife? Was that the final question?

Mr. Istchenko: Yes, for wildlife. That's a wildlife corridor, and it's right next to a national park.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I can see whether I can get a more fulsome response with respect to that specific question with respect to wildlife. Here we go. YESAB has assessed the impacts of this project and found that they can be mitigated with conditions. The Department of Environment has accepted the recommendation, but the issuance of the permit is a separate decision that would ensure environmental protection.

During YESAB's public comment period, over 50 public comments were submitted, along with input from local businesses, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Parks Canada, and various government departments. The final project approval incorporated conditions addressing key concerns raised during that consultation. During the YESAB public comment period, the project proposal changed, including apparently relocating the site more than 800 metres from the nearest residential property, adding an additional groundwater monitoring well, improving monitoring and the containment of sump water, adding wind mitigations including windbreaks, and reorienting the facility.

The Department of Environment strives to ensure the stewardship of wildlife and their habitats through responsible and sustainable co-management approaches that are informed by scientific, local, and traditional knowledge. If monitoring indicates a significant risk to public health or the environment, the facility may be required to pause operations until corrective actions are taken. The Government of Yukon retains the authority to enforce compliance.

Among other stakeholders, of course, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations was consulted on this project and did not address any particular concerns with respect to the area as a high-value wilderness corridor, but as I indicated, I can likely get more information specific to that. Public concerns were addressed in the public comment period.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister.

A few miles away from the proposed area is where the old headquarters of Kluane National Park is. Way back in the day, it was an experimental farm. So, Parks has been there for years and Parks is looking at selling that — I believe that it is an 81-acre parcel of land that has a bunch of test wells for contaminated sites on there. My understanding is that this is where the first material will come from.

So, I'm wondering if the minister would know if Parks Canada was aware that this material would be going to the proposed location for the land treatment facility.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I know in this business that one doesn't want to assume anything, except I would just reiterate

that Parks Canada was involved in the YESAB public comment period and provided feedback.

I can certainly get back to the member opposite to definitively confirm that they are aware that some of the material from the old experimental farm — whether it is likely to be used — there is a possibility of it being relocated to this land treatment facility.

Yes, like I said, I'm not going to assume anything except to say that any relocation material from a Parks Canada site needs to be authorized specifically by Parks Canada, but like I said, my information is that Parks Canada was involved in the public comment period with respect to the proposed Mackintosh gravel pit land treatment facility.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that.

In concluding on this proposed location of the land treatment facility, a lot of these questions I ask on behalf of my constituents, because I have also found that, as an MLA, you have to work for your constituents and this stuff has to be brought forward. I would hope that when the minister gets back to me with a response on some of the stuff he has committed to here today, he will get back to me with a little more definite — the data that is being captured and all the information that they have to provide on how it's going to be communicated to the residents in a timely manner. For something with so many comments — over 50 comments — and a lot of them were not very positive comments that went through YESAB — I think it's the due diligence of the government to make sure that the residents in the local area are communicated with, maybe more often than would normally happen when there are no concerns, but there are a lot of concerns. They should get this information so they can take it and do as they wish.

I will leave the land treatment facility, because I do have many other questions. I will switch over to wildlife again here. I want to talk a little bit about the Southern Lakes moose. I know that it has been a long-standing initiative of the department and there was consultation with the affected First Nations last year. Following this consultation, there was a commitment to the Southern Lakes moose action plan. Can the minister tell me what the status of this plan is?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the questions from the member opposite with respect to the land treatment facility in his constituency. My officials have his final questions and we will make best efforts to get back to him. We absolutely understand that there are constituents and residents of the beautiful Kluane country who want to be adequately informed and communicated with. We certainly respect that.

With respect to moose management in the Southern Lakes, moose populations have increased in size in the Whitehorse-Southern Lakes area following collective conservation actions to support their recovery. Licensed harvest has been restricted in these areas for the past 35 years — a long time — following the implementation of a permit hunt authorization system in 1989. The allocation of 11 permits across three moose management units — Fish Lake, Mount Lorne, and the Wheaton River — were established in 1998 and remain in place today. Survey results in these three moose management units

from 2021 confirm a significant increase in the numbers of moose, which can support an increased licensed harvest.

Following consultation with affected First Nations, renewable resources councils, and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, I am pleased to announce the addition of eight moose permits in the Southern Lakes region. The Fish Lake and Mount Lorne moose management units will each see four new permits. The Wheaton River moose management unit allocation will remain unchanged at four. The additional moose permit opportunities are well within sustainable harvest guidelines in order to ensure long-term stability of the moose populations.

Some game management subzones will be excluded from the increase in permits where there are concerns with increased land use and recreation impacts to wildlife in general largely owing to easy access and off-road vehicle use and some localized hunting pressure from various users.

The Department of Environment will continue to look for opportunities to increase hunting opportunities where and when possible. Ongoing populations surveys will provide additional data to assess trends in the moose population and ensure sustainable hunting opportunities. The success of this management change will be tracked through regular monitoring of moose population demographics and harvest data.

Kudos to the work that has been done by the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, Taku River Tlingit First Nation, Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council, and the Department of Environment, as this has been a very lengthy recovery process. At this point, it appears to be a good news story.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that.

One of the oldest industries in the Yukon is trapping. I just spent last Friday, actually, at Muskrat Camp out at Kloo Lake skinning rats and hanging out with the kids. I know that in my riding, trapping is huge and there are a lot of people out there. I'm so impressed with the riding and how the community members take their kids out. The Junior Ranger program takes the kids out — the First Nations, the school.

When it comes to trapping, I had asked the minister last year to take action to expedite the permitting process for trapline cabins and for land applications. These cabins are crucial components to the trapping industry, of course, providing much-needed support to the trappers who rely on them. I'm just wondering: What work has been done on that to make it easier, faster, and more efficient?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I will see whether I can get a specific answer to that question.

While I am on my feet, I just wanted to give some additional information with respect to moose management in Southern Lakes. The co-management group continues to meet to address action items from the plan, most recently on April 1. We are making good progress on a number of items, including discussions on off-road vehicle management and public education. The next meeting is an on-the-land gathering on June 6. The action plan is a work plan for the co-management

partners to collaborate on a wide variety of initiatives to ensure the long-term sustainability of moose in the Southern Lakes.

With respect to trapping, first of all, I would commend or congratulate Kluane First Nation and Chief Dickson — who I had the opportunity to meet recently on a few files — but where Kluane First Nation received a permit to trap in the Kluane Game Sanctuary. I think that's 80 — maybe I'm mistaken — but it might be 80 years in the making. I know that Kluane First Nation was quite excited about that development.

I will also commend the member opposite; it sounds like he had a great weekend trapping. But specifically with respect to cabins, trapping licences and concessions are separate from land management, such as leasings for trapping cabins, which fall under the purview of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Energy, Mines and Resources has a lands policy for trapping and outfitting land leases which speaks to these applications. Environment is working with Energy, Mines and Resources lands branch to support applications of trappers for leases to support their trapping activities. As the member opposite indicated, trapping is one of the Yukon's oldest industries and does play an important role in the territory. Traditionally, it was practised by First Nations to provide food, clothing, and material for trade. The trapping industry in the Yukon and elsewhere is undergoing changes due to the industry's economic markets. We continue to support the Yukon Trappers Association, which provides a collective voice for trappers.

But I take the member's point that what he's looking for is expediting of the approval of trappers' cabins. I can undertake, certainly, to speak with EMR as to where we are on that file and can advocate as appropriate to encourage trapping in the territory.

Mr. Istchenko: I look forward to getting that information back from the minister.

The Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, as we all know, has four strategic goals. One is facilitating bringing the *Wildlife Act* into conformity with the *Umbrella Final Agreement*; two is to complete a moose conservation management plan; three, review and improve the regulation change process; and four is to develop a habitat protection strategy.

I just want to see if I can get an update from the minister on how that work is coming along.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am advised that Environment is not involved with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board as it pertains to habitat plan work or with respect to the moose/ungulate working group.

We are, however, involved in fish and wildlife regulation change and the *Wildlife Act* change. I will start with the fish and wildlife regulation change process.

Government of Yukon and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board work collaboratively to manage and conserve the territory's fish and wildlife. This work ensures that populations remain healthy and resilient and can continue to be sustainably harvested for generations to come. This includes working together to engage with the public on how the territory's fish and wildlife regulations are working for them

and to ensure that the Yukon's regulatory framework for the conservation and management of fish and wildlife remains current and relevant. Our shared approach for fish and wildlife regulation changes is to ensure that it is cost-effective, timely, and avoids duplicating efforts.

In December of 2024, the Yukon government and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board jointly announced the launch of a revised and improved process for amending fish and wildlife regulations. The announcement represented the resumption of a long-standing and ongoing collaborative process between the Yukon government and the board that had been on pause since the 2019 regulation change cycle.

The revised regulation change process places an emphasis on ensuring that Yukon First Nations and transboundary Indigenous governments and groups are properly and adequately consulted. It also recognizes the interests and authorities of non-*Umbrella Final Agreement* co-management partners. The revised process better aligns with the Yukon's land claim agreements, clarifies roles and responsibilities, improves transparency, and streamlines the regulation change process. It will also provide greater clarity to Yukoners of when and how regulations changes are identified and put forward for review and consideration.

Proposals are now being accepted throughout the year using a rolling intake process, where previously, they were only accepted every two years. Public call-outs will be done twice a year, and public engagement will occur every two years, similar to the previous process. On March 3, 2025, the joint Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and Government of Yukon regulation change process review committee — that would be quite the acronym — sent correspondence to co-management partners and public interest groups reminding them that the fish and wildlife proposal intake is open and encouraging them to submit. We also worked with the board to place ads on social media platforms advertising that the intake period is open and that the cut-off for the 2025-26 regulation change cycle closes on May 1, 2025.

If Yukoners are interested in submitting fish and wildlife regulation change proposals, they are encouraged to visit the regulations change page on the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board website to get a proposal form and find out how to submit it. The Department of Environment is committed to ensuring public participation in decisions when it comes to fish and wildlife matters. The Department of Environment encourages all Yukoners to voice their opinions and make their concerns heard during the public engagement on any new or amended fish and wildlife regulations. That's fish and wildlife regulations.

We also continue to work collaboratively to advance the protection of biodiversity with Yukon First Nations, the Inuvialuit, Indigenous groups, wildlife co-management boards and councils, interest groups, and other governments. This work includes developing species-specific conservation and management plans for wildlife and habitat to guide how the Yukon's northern ecosystem is managed.

For example, in 2019, the Department of Environment released the Yukon's first conservation plan for grizzly bears in collaboration with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and in 2024, we released an updated conservation plan for the Aishihik wood bison, which I think I discussed in some detail when we last met for this debate. We are also currently implementing the wetlands stewardship policy, which will improve our knowledge of the Yukon's wetlands, manage and minimize our impacts on wetlands, and protect the most important wetlands while promoting paths toward responsible and sustainable resource development and land use activities.

In 2022, we signed the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement*, which supports our efforts to monitor and conserve Yukon's unique biodiversity, advance land use planning, increase Indigenous leadership in conservation, and support the protection and conservation of species, lands, and water. These initiatives will help inform protected area planning, identify species that require additional monitoring or support, and improve our efforts to conserve Yukon's biodiversity.

It is my understanding that the board has expanded their strategic goal to develop a moose management plan into a more comprehensive ungulate working group to develop holistic recommendations for ungulate management in the Yukon. We are offering our ongoing support of department staff toward the next steps in the creation of an ungulate management framework. So, I guess we are somewhat involved. This is great value in creating a practical, flexible, and community-tailored resource to guide the sustainable management of ungulate populations in Yukon.

We commend the board's commitment to working collaboratively with local communities and integrating a range of conservation tools and strategies. Department of Environment officials will contribute to this initiative by sharing technical expertise and local knowledge to help shape a framework that reflects the values, priorities, and unique needs of Yukon's diverse regions.

I probably didn't quite answer all of the questions, but I am also probably almost out of time.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-2026*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Istchenko: I am going to switch gears here. I have a few — the most popular question — campgrounds. We have some campground questions.

I just want to ask about the campsite reservation system. Can the minister give me an update on how the first year went, and has any work been done to ensure that the annual camping

permit that the holders get will be able to be used to book the sites on this new system?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am excited to report on Yukon campgrounds in general and certainly the reservation system, which has gone well.

I will get to the last question, but the answer to that is also yes, but I will get to that with respect to the annual pass.

Yukon campgrounds continue to be popular with both Yukoners and visitors to the territory. Through our engagement with Yukoners on the 2020 *Yukon Parks Strategy*, we have heard that many survey respondents were in favour of testing out a reservation system or service at territorial campgrounds. Last year, the Department of Environment launched an online campground reservation service pilot project, meeting our commitment in the *Yukon Parks Strategy*. This camping season, the service will continue to be available at four of the territory's most popular campgrounds to help improve fair access to these campsites and allow campers to better plan their camping trips.

The online reservation service for frontcountry campgrounds will remain available at Wolf Creek, Marsh Lake, Pine Lake, and Tombstone Mountain campgrounds. Half of the campsites at each of these four frontcountry campgrounds are available for reservations. The remainder continue to operate on a first-come, first-served basis. Annual campground permit holders can now reserve campsites at participating frontcountry campgrounds at no additional cost by calling 867-667-5648 from Monday to Friday between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. In total, this means that 103 of approximately 1,100 frontcountry campsites across the territory will be available for reservations. In 2024, 5,819 reservations were made, accounting for 7,948 nights of camping at the four campgrounds in the pilot project.

With respect to the feedback, a post-camping survey for the first year of the reservation service pilot project showed that campers overall had a 91-percent favourable experience.

Following the completion of the 2025 camping season, the Government of Yukon will evaluate the online campground reservation system in Yukon territorial parks, one of the issues that was of concern to Yukoners and may have been of concern to the Ombudsman.

The campground reservation service pilot project provides a new way to ensure a positive camping experience for campers. After the first year of the pilot project, Yukon Parks noticed a marked decrease in site-saving behaviour at participating campgrounds. In the 2023 camping seasons, 15 campsite evictions were issued by park rangers due to site-saving or unoccupied site violations. In the 2024 camping season, when four of the Yukon's most popular campgrounds had a reservation service in place, only three evictions were issued due to site-saving.

Reducing user conflicts is an objective of the reservation service pilot project, and the *Yukon Parks Strategy* aims to improve fair access to campsites by decreasing site-saving.

A shout-out to all the Yukon park rangers for the great work that they do across the territory over the course of the summer and to all Yukon Parks staff as we implement this and a lot of other great innovations.

Mr. Istchenko: So, the press release stated that the Government of Yukon enhanced the protection and user experience at Yukon Parks with new regulations. So, I have some questions about that.

One of the first key updates is formalizing quiet hours at campgrounds from 11:00 to 7:00 to help ensure restful nights for all visitors. So, between those hours — I'm trying to grasp. I understand, you know, if it's cold weather — fall and in the spring — or if you get rain and it's eight degrees out there and everybody's soaking wet or cold, you need to run your furnace in your motorhome or your travel trailer, which means you will have to run a generator at night — or if you have a newborn baby or a situation like that or senior citizens who require sleep apnea stuff, but a lot of it is there is no power at the campsites, so they run generators.

I am curious how this is going to be monitored. What happens? Basically, what are the fines for that? Is there someone on call at all hours who drives around? It seems like it is going to be a bit cumbersome, so if the minister could just give me a bit more detail on that.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As the member opposite indicated, updates to the Parks regulations include refinements and clarification to existing regulations that are intended to improve the user experience. These include: formalizing quiet hours at campgrounds from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.; regulating drone usage; prioritizing the use of accessible campsites; formalizing policies for responsible firewood use; clarifying activities that require a park permit; addressing concerns about campsite occupancy and ensuring fair access to Yukon campgrounds; formalizing land use zones to support the implementation of park management plans; requiring pets to be leashed in campgrounds, day use areas, and park trails to ensure the safety of both pets and wildlife; and clarifying designated areas for off-road vehicles and snowmobiles.

These efforts will improve park management in collaboration with Indigenous partners, promote responsible behaviour, and enhance park user experience across the territory.

In response to the member opposite's question, this summer, Yukon Parks will prioritize an education-first approach to enforcement of the new regulations focused on helping the public to understand and comply with the new regulations. In addition, accessible information to help visitors understand the new regulations will be available on yukon.ca, social media, and on-site signage. The changes aim to better protect the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Yukon parks while fostering a welcoming, peaceful environment for all park users and promoting safety and enjoyment for everyone who enjoys camping, hiking, and outdoor activities. Yukon Parks will continue to emphasize education and awareness, encouraging users to respect park guidelines and the natural environment. This helps to ensure that everyone can enjoy the beauty and safety of our parks for generations to come.

Modernizing regulations under the *Parks and Land Certainty Act* is identified as one of the strategy priorities to effectively manage the Yukon's systems of parks. Over 1,400 individuals provided feedback to the public survey and, overall,

there was significant support for all of the proposed regulations. My officials can assist me, but I believe that the notes were that something like three or four tickets were issued — actual tickets were issued — in the summer of 2024. So, certainly, our park rangers and our Conservation Officer Services branch do engage in education first and, of course, over the course of the summer of 2025, it will be an education process for all Yukoners. But to emphasize to Yukoners who might be listening today, this summer is absolutely education first with respect to the new regulations, but overall, it is going to result in a better campground experience for a significant majority of Yukoners.

Mr. Istchenko: I didn't get an answer, so I'll just make it a really simple one: Between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., will occupants of the campground be allowed to run generators?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: During the engagement that involved 1,400 persons, quiet hours were a high priority for Yukoners. No restrictions are made on furnace use — only restrictions on gas-powered generators. Permits can be given to run gas-powered generators for special circumstances and there are exceptions for those who have medical needs.

The regulations are meant to help officers have tools to address conflicts. Situations like the member opposite described are, we hope, very unlikely to result in conflict. Quiet hours are in place to help ensure a peaceful environment for all visitors. While enforcement will be carried out as needed, the primary focus will be on educating visitors about the new rule and encouraging compliance for a more enjoyable park experience.

Subject to the limitations or the exceptions which I pointed out in my most recent response, fuel-powered generators can only be run in a campground from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. As I indicated, exceptions may be made by a park officer to provide power for medical equipment.

Mr. Istchenko: So, I do see busy park enforcement coming up in this next year. You say “educating”, but I guess my question on that is: Will there be Parks staff monitoring this from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. in all of our campgrounds? If so, have we had to increase the FTEs within the department to accommodate this? I will just give you a question here: At 2:00 a.m. when a trailer door gets banged on by a park enforcement officer and it wakes a little sleeping baby up because a generator is running to keep the baby warm, what's that person going to do when the mom is not very happy?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yukon Parks continues to prioritize an education-first approach to enforcement focusing on helping the public understand and comply with regulations. This approach will remain in place this summer.

There are no plans to hire additional park officers specifically to enforce the new regulations; however, the updated Parks general regulation equips existing officers with enhanced tools to better manage park activities. This will help ensure the protection of parks and maintain a safe, respectful environment for all users.

While education remains the priority, the new regulations are enforceable and enforcement actions may be taken if

necessary. I am advised that, generally speaking, it's complaint-based; it's not active policing or active enforcement of the rules. I am sure that the hardworking Yukon Parks staff has received comments and can consider all manner of potential challenging fact patterns, but those are hypotheticals. I have a great deal of confidence in our campground hosts, our park rangers, and the Conservation Officer Services branch to discharge their duties with a great deal of professionalism and discretion.

Mr. Istchenko: The only other one in the key updates that I have a question about — and then I have some end comments on this — is formalizing policies for responsible firewood use. Can the minister explain to me — I am having a hard time grasping whether you are only allowed to use one stick at a time or two — or how is this going to be enforced? I understand that it is going to be education first, but when people are sitting around the campfire —

Can you just elaborate on this a little bit, please?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As the member opposite well knows, Yukon is one of two jurisdictions in Canada that still offers free firewood at its campgrounds. By providing free firewood, we are helping to ensure that camping in the Yukon is more affordable and accessible. In 2024, the Government of Yukon spent \$776,450 to provide over 1,397 cords of firewood to campers in the territory.

Where possible, Yukon Parks purchases its wood from local suppliers, fuelling both campfires across the territory and our local economy. Providing free firewood in campgrounds helps to prevent timber cutting in the parks and the use of deadfall for campfires, which protects the ecological integrity, natural beauty, and privacy of some of the most beautiful campsites in the country.

I encourage campers in the territory to be mindful of their firewood consumption, exercise safe campfire practices, and ensure that your campfire is out when you leave your campsite. I think the — if an official can help me with the notes here, but I believe that the main area where there could be education or guidance or even ultimately enforcement is to keep the level of fire inside the metal firepit — that it not exceed the top of the pit. I think that is perhaps one of the changes.

What I would say is — I have the guidance here; thank you, Madam Chair. Campfires are one of the things that we love about camping. Yes, we do. We are asking campers to use firewood responsibly and sustainably. Please keep your campsite stockpile smaller than the standard fire ring. Save your campfire for when you are ready to enjoy it. Fires and flames should not be larger than the fire ring, and remember to extinguish unattended fires.

So, during COVID and coming out of COVID, as all Yukoners who have woodstoves know, the cost of a cord of wood has almost doubled. It has close to doubled. I know that Yukoners are probably paying something approaching \$500 for split — for a cord — no? Less?

Anyway, in Whitehorse, I think the experience of perhaps me and of friends and colleagues in Riverdale is that it's in that range of \$500. Maybe you get a slightly better deal and it's \$425, \$450, or something of that nature. Of course, if you get

eight-foot lengths or 12-foot lengths, it's going to be significantly less. All to say that this, of course, impacted on the Department of Environment starting in fiscal 2021-22 and certainly going into 2022-23 so that the budget for firewood has likely pretty close to doubled for the Department of Environment as well.

So, I certainly recognize that this an amazing service and a much-appreciated service that Yukoners have, but that is a significant cost of operation for all Yukon campgrounds, and that expense has exacerbated and increased significantly over the course of the last four years.

I have more information on fires. Anyway, there are similar guidelines that I just indicated on the record. You have my comments with respect to responsible fire use and also my observations: In the time that I have had the honour and privilege of being the Minister of Environment and, by virtue of this, minister of Yukon Parks, the cost of supplying all parks has likely doubled in the last three or four fiscal years.

So, we're just asking Yukoners to be reasonable with their use so that this, I would say, incredible service can continue.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that. I would add that the price of firewood has gone up, but a lot of it is due to issues within this Liberal government on how they administer permits and things like that.

My final comments, I guess, would be on that. One of the things that I really think a lot of is our campgrounds and those people who work in our campgrounds — the attendants and the hard work that they do. They are the first face a lot of times for people who go to a campground and see someone there. They are ambassadors for the Yukon. I get concerned when I see some of the stuff in here — that it might put undue stress on them — and maybe sometimes rules and regulations aren't quite right for them and then they get a hard time from people. It doesn't make their days very good. The good thing about regulations is that this is what the Legislature is for. We can change regulations anytime we want if things don't seem to work out when we make changes.

My last question for the day before I turn it over to the Third Party is about *Our Clean Future*. *Our Clean Future* states that the government will get 4,800 zero-emission vehicles on the roads by 2030. Further, at least 50 percent of all new light-duty cars purchased each year by the Government of Yukon will be zero-emission vehicles. So, 50 percent of the government's light-duty cars purchased — actually, I will save that for my end question.

When it comes to the 4,800 zero-emission vehicles — and then last year, I asked about emission targets for the mining sector and its proposed 45-percent reduction per unit of mining material produced in 2035. I know that public consultation was done and there's a report and all the rest of this stuff.

But in light of changes that we have seen with tariffs and everything else when it comes to electric vehicles and everything else that's going on in the world, does the minister actually think that any of these targets are even close to being achievable? Is the minister or this government looking at opening up or bringing *Our Clean Future* back and actually

changing the targets to make them more attainable for Yukoners?

I want to thank the staff who are here today and everyone else. This is my last question.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, as always, for the questions from the Member for Kluane.

I guess I will be relatively brief on this but to say that I think that Yukoners — and by extension Canadians ultimately — and our children and ultimately our grandchildren do want us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions demonstrably. I understand that there is an active discussion happening about Canada's energy security — whether it's through LNG or through oil and that it's so-called "ethically sourced" and we can be part of the solution internationally. I mean, I accept those as being possible policy options for a future federal government — I get it — but I do believe that Yukoners still want us to be inspirational and aspirational for the next generation. We have done really very well in some areas with respect to transportation. We do have 600 zero-emission vehicles that are registered in the territory, and now it's currently approximately 10 percent of the YG light-duty fleet, which is, I would say, quite impressive. I recognize that there is room to go.

One rebate that likely, from a national perspective, is absolutely off the charts is the e-bike rebate for Yukoners. Individuals and families have absolutely adopted that with an incredible amount of vigour. My notes indicate that, as of recently, there have been 1,500 rebates issued for electric bikes. I see this in the amazing community of Riverdale, where I have lived now for 33 years. When I see families, moms and dads with cargo bikes with their kids, sometimes two kids — sometimes two kids, one with legs to one side and one with legs to the other side — travelling in from Riverdale to downtown to do errands, it is absolutely inspirational. I know that it is the possible second vehicle that you could be substituting for short distances in the Yukon.

Kudos to Yukoners who have availed themselves of the e-bike rebates. As I said, I advertised that this was going to be a short answer, and I will bring it to a close — but to say that the ambition for 2030 is absolutely significant and, of course, we need more hydro, we need more wind turbines, and we need more green energy, so that becomes an issue.

But Yukoners are prepared to be part of the solution, and *Our Clean Future* — introduced by the former Premier and now Minister of Finance and the team in 2020 — is still a solid road map with 130-plus markers that it is important to hold this government's and future governments' feet to the fire. I know that the Member for Whitehorse Centre certainly does that when we have our budget debates, which is great.

I think that the short answer for the Member for Kluane is — absolutely, keep the aspirational targets. As I said, our kids, our grandkids, expect us to be inspirational and aspirational. There is only one planet, so we should be continuing to proceed with the road map of *Our Clean Future*, and having plug-in electric, completely electric vehicles, electric bikes, and, of course, all of the other things that we are doing are part of that road map.

I will leave the mining intensity targets to my very able colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources for a future day.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the officials for being here and to those listening in and helping from behind the scenes. I am excited to pick up where I left off with the minister the last time I was up on Environment.

We had been talking about extended producer responsibility, and he had told the House that three stewardship plans have been approved. Then he said that the targets for those plans aren't set yet, so the targets of how much of the type of material that they are trying to recycle — how much of that needs to be recovered. I am not sure whether the plan is for the targets to be measured in percentages or perhaps tonnes are to be shipped out of the Yukon, which is how I have seen it presented in the annual recycling reports.

I was wondering if the minister could tell me a bit more about the process of setting those targets. If the plan is already approved, how are the targets going to be decided upon by the minister and the PRO? I can't remember what that stands for at this exact moment; I think it is the producer recycling organization. For example, what happens if the minister and the PRO disagree on what the target should be? How would that be resolved?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As I mentioned during the last budget debate, greater clarity around the available volumes and current collection performance by material type is needed to inform target setting. We commit to working with PROs to establish robust baseline rates through data collection and reporting that will occur during stewardship planning years 1 to 3.

Targets for years 4 and 5 will be developed based on the past three years of recovery data, with a goal of year-over-year performance improvement. The data collected in performance against targets will be reported in the applicable annual reports.

Collection targets are being developed as we speak with producer responsibility organizations based on the amount of recyclable products supplied into the Yukon. As the department evaluates this data, we will work with the producer responsibility organizations to establish baseline levels of recycling that will occur during years 1 to 3 of the stewardship plan.

As a regulator, the department has the final say about what the targets would be. However, officials are taking a collaborative approach, particularly because this is the first territorial EPR program. The Government of Yukon will ensure accountability through regular reporting from the PRO, ensuring that targets are met and any shortfalls are addressed.

MLA Tredger: It sounds like the data that are missing is information about how much is coming into the Yukon of these different materials, because the recycling report already has how much are already being recycled by tonnage. So, are the final targets going to be a percentage of the amount coming in that needs to be recycled, or what form will those targets take?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will endeavour to get the data that is being requested by the member opposite this afternoon, but if not, I will have to return to the member. I just wanted to put on

the record, which I think I did last time, and advise Yukoners this afternoon that, as of April 7, three producer responsibility organizations have submitted stewardship plans. The call to recycle plan starting on June 24 focuses on the recycling of batteries in the Yukon. The interchange recycling stewardship plan starting on August 1 focuses on the recycling and safe disposal of products like lubricating oil, diesel exhaust fluid, antifreeze, and automotive containers up to 55 litres. The program for packaging and paper products will be operated by Circular Materials and will launch on November 1, 2025.

The collection rate will be one of the important targets set and will be measured as a percentage of Yukoners who have access to recycling service. Rates of recycling will also be an important target measured as a percentage of total material sold into the Yukon. The Department of Environment may also develop other targets such as rate of awareness for the program among the public. So, there is still work to be done with regard to the data that the member opposite is requesting. I understand that those discussions continue.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that; it is really helpful.

One of the hopes for EPR — extended producer responsibility — is that by making the producers responsible for the recycling of the material, it will actually cause changes further up the chain of production. If they're responsible for the recycling, maybe they will actually just create less in the first place. How will that be captured in the targets?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Just briefly — and I couldn't agree more with the member opposite — yes, the extended producer responsibility is designed to incent different behaviours by the big companies and big suppliers in Canada like Canadian Tire, Walmart, or Costco — which, of course, we don't have — and other big businesses in town. But as I said in previous answers in the mains — or maybe it was in the supplementaries; I do not recall — some of these programs have been in place going back to starting in Ontario in 2002 and in British Columbia in 2014, and now they are either completely implemented or are about to be implemented across all provinces in Canada. So, that process of coming up with alternative packaging methods — more streamlined, lighter, less costly — that process has been ongoing since 2002 but is obviously being pursued more aggressively as more provinces have signed on.

Extended producer responsibility is intended to shift the cost of recycling and waste management from the taxpayer to the producer of the waste. It reduces the amount of diversion credits that the Yukon will have to pay each year. Diversion credits are the current tool for encouraging the recycling of non-refundable materials. The Yukon government spends close to \$2 million a year on diversion credits, which represents approximately 40 percent of Yukon's direct waste-diversion-related spending. Extended producer responsibility will also ensure the stability of Yukon's waste management system and the recycling systems into the future.

Targets will be set for recycling in the Yukon only; however, the Department of Environment is also measuring the waste-diversion rates. As I indicated, extended producer responsibility encourages design of packaging that makes

recycling easier and cheaper. When this occurs, we will see our rates of diversion in landfills go up over time. As I did indicate, we are certainly — we are the first territory to adopt extended producer responsibility, but we will be the 11th Canadian jurisdiction. So, we are not going to be reinventing the wheel, and I would think that a lot of these — the big box stores, the large automotive suppliers, and the other big Canadian businesses are in the process of sorting out their supply chains and their packaging already, and we will be in the process of piggybacking on that innovation.

MLA Tredger: Of the three stewardship plans that have already been approved, do the three include curbside collection and in which communities?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Just to be clear, the call to recycle plan is starting June 24 and focuses on the recycling of batteries. That would not be curbside, and interchange recycling that is scheduled to start August 1 focuses on the recycling and safe disposal of products like lubricating oil, diesel exhaust fluid, antifreeze, and automotive containers up to 55 litres — that is not going to be curbside either. The one that will likely involve curbside is circular materials, and the plan is for paper and packaging to be included in curbside collection in Whitehorse, Teslin, and Haines Junction.

But I guess, on a positive note, the other programs for batteries, waste, automotive, and hazardous products, which I've just outlined, include depots where residents can drop off materials at no cost.

So, that's exciting news.

MLA Tredger: I want to ask for clarification. The minister said that the plan for circular materials, which is paper and packaging, would likely include curbside recycling, but the plan has already been approved, if I understand correctly. Could he clarify whether it does or doesn't include curbside recycling?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: My notes indicate that it includes — yes, it includes curbside collection.

Of course, curbside collection is not — although, firstly, kudos to the discussions had by the Minister of Community Services with the City of Whitehorse. It was a long time coming to get curbside collection across the finish line, and we now have it. However, it only covers — I'll get the exact number — but I think it only covers about 8,000 households. So, of course, there will have to be processes for paper and other packaging to be dropped off by Yukoners who do not benefit right now from the blue box curbside collection and the tough yellow plastic bags that are collected at the curbside.

But, yes — so, yes. I misspoke — it wasn't "likely"; it does include curbside collections.

MLA Tredger: Thank you for that clarification. So, if I understand correctly, the stewardship plans aren't going to have targets that the PROs are expected to meet until years 4 and 5, which I think would be 2028 and 2029. That concerns me a little bit, because the Yukon government has committed to a target of, according to *Our Clean Future*, increasing the amount of waste diverted from the landfill per person to 40 percent by 2025, which, of course, is by the end of this year.

According to the latest data that I have access to, which is the recycling report from 2023 and was published in 2024, numbers for 2021 through 2023 were 26 percent, 30 percent, and 28 percent. I am wondering if the minister is expecting to meet that target of 40-percent diversion by 2025.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Extended producer responsibility stabilizes waste diversion in the Yukon while ensuring that these hard-to-handle materials are managed responsibly and that recycling is treated as an essential service. It is our intention to meet the waste-diversion target outlined, recognizing that it is ambitious. We know that this is important to Yukoners. They want to see a robust recycling and waste-diversion system in place.

Waste diversion is broader than just recycling; it requires effort from all levels, including reuse, composting, changing buying habits, and other means. We are all still ambitiously hoping to meet the target, so the reveal codes on that is that it is an all-of-Yukon approach. It's not just YG or the Department of Environment or the Department of Community Services. It's going to be the City of Whitehorse, it's going to be the various communities, and it's going to be outreach.

I think that the blue bin is an absolutely fantastic start, but getting the word out and stabilizing waste diversion through extended responsibility — I think that communication will be incredibly important over the course of 2025.

You have heard from me and probably the Minister of Community Services and probably the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, but it's something like 560 or 570 kilograms of waste generated per person — per Yukoner — every year. So, yes, we can do better. The Department of Environment has a role to play, other departments in YG have a role to play, and other levels of government have roles to play as well.

What the member is getting at is that the 40 percent by the end of 2025 is an ambitious target. Granted — it's an ambitious target. But certainly, I commend the team who have shepherded extended producer responsibility to this point, recognizing that there are still negotiations and discussions that have to take place, but we're getting there.

There was a time that the then-Minister of Community Services had to sell the concept of having a surcharge on automotive tires and for there to be surcharges on electronics, and he received a lot of blow-back four or five years ago, but he was strong in that regard, and now it is accepted as being part of the accepted recycling stream. I have every level of confidence in the extended producer responsibility. Because we are not reinventing the wheel, it will also become part of our common thinking with respect to waste diversion, and it is certainly super important to have the hazardous goods in a loop and taken care of so that they are not dumped hazardedly — not in the appropriate manner.

Yes, a lot of great work to be done — excited about extended producer responsibility, recognizing that the responsibility for waste diversion is every Yukoner's responsibility.

MLA Tredger: I think that the point I am trying to get at isn't about the targets being ambitious but the need for accountability on work toward those targets. I understand that there is a rule for everyone in the Yukon, but it is this government that committed to those targets. What I am really trying to understand is: What work has been done to move us toward those targets, and has that been enough?

I want to fit one more topic in before the end of the day, if possible — totally different side of the Department of Environment. I want to talk about the report that came out of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans federally. On October 24, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans released a report entitled *Challenges to the Sustainability of the Yukon Salmon Stocks*. I had asked about it in October in the Sitting, and at that time, it had just come out, and the minister said that they were working on it, which I thought was fair. Now that there have been several months to work on it, I'm wondering: Is there going to be a formal response from the Yukon government to that report?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Government of Yukon is aware of the report from the federal Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans regarding the challenges to the sustainability of Yukon River salmon stocks. The report echoes the priorities that we have identified in discussions with the salmon recovery partners through the Yukon River Panel and joint salmon rebuilding committee.

We welcome the recommendations of the federal government to strengthen its collaboration with other levels of government and across jurisdictions, particularly Alaska and the United States, and increase its support of locally led salmon recovery efforts informed by traditional and local knowledge.

I would like to thank the committee and the organizations and individuals who participated as witnesses, drafted and submitted briefs, or otherwise contributed to this report's drafting and publication. The Yukon government remains committed to working with Yukon First Nations and the Government of Canada to rebuild salmon stocks in the territory.

The member opposite will likely know this, but just for the record, toward the end of the day here — as in previous years, the 2024 chinook and chum salmon returns to the Yukon were low; just over 24,000 Yukon River chinook entered Canada, meeting the pre-season forecast of 19,000 to 28,000. However, the 2023 numbers were approximately 15,304. So, that was the first year of the seven-year agreement to have Indigenous harvest in Alaska curtailed.

So, the goal for the seven-year moratorium is 71,000 Canadian-origin chinook to reach the international border. Last year, we were at 24,000, which, of course, is still exceedingly low, but it went from 15,000 to 24,000.

With respect to the Yukon fish ladder, as of September 7, 2024, there were 355 chinook registered versus 132 in 2023 — so, once again, showing some cause for optimism. Obviously, it's not the 1,000, or 1,500, or 2,000 that I know people have seen — I've seen — in Riverdale, so there is still a lot of work to be done.

Currently, all public and commercial fishing for chinook and chum salmon continues to be closed in the Yukon. The

department is collaborating with Yukon First Nations and Fisheries and Oceans Canada to develop a Yukon River chinook salmon rebuilding plan, which is the moratorium. These conversations are ongoing, with a focus on restoring Yukon stocks, protecting critical habitat, and working to determine the viability of conservation hatcheries.

A shout-out to my counterpart in Alaska, Commissioner Vincent-Lang, who was a strong advocate and who I know received strong push-back from Alaskan Indigenous communities. I'm actually meeting with him tomorrow morning to talk about this and probably a few other matters, because I believe he's attending the Yukon River salmon subcommittee in Dawson shortly.

So, in any event, kudos to Alaska for being a strong partner in trying to rebuild this sacred species in the Yukon River.

MLA Tredger: So, is the minister planning to give a formal response to this report? By my counting, there are five different recommendations that are specifically for the Yukon government either in collaboration with another level of government — though at least one is solely for the Yukon government. Is he planning a formal response to those five recommendations?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will take that question under advisement. The information I have so far is that the report is a report for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, not the Government of Yukon. The department will, at this juncture, not be providing a formal response; rather, we will continue to work with our partners to address the recommendations within. The report does echo the priorities that we have identified in discussions with salmon recovery partners through the Yukon River Panel and the joint salmon rebuilding committee, some of which I pointed out in my prior answer.

MLA Tredger: Yes, the report is directed toward the department of Fisheries and Oceans, but some of the recommendations are specifically for the Yukon government. I will ask about them then since there is not going to be a formal report. I won't have time to get through them all today, but I will start with the first one, which is recommendation 9 from the report: "The Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada should develop a water management strategy for the Yukon River to address low water levels and that impact on salmon spawning areas." I am wondering if the government has started work on that or plans to start work on that or is not planning to follow that recommendation.

I anticipate that we won't have enough time to get into that today, so in a moment, I will move progress and that's where I will pick up when we come back to Environment.

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

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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 Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 49, *Technical Amendments (Estates, unclaimed bodies and related matters) Act (2025)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report from the 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

The House adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

The following legislative return was tabled April 8, 2025:

35-1-168

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 53, Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 216, *Third Appropriation Act 2024-25* — Eagle Gold mine procurement (Streicker)

The following documents were filed April 8, 2025:

35-1-323

Building a resilient and renewable energy future — Yukon Energy's Road Map to 2050 (Streicker)

35-1-324

Building a Resilient and Renewable Energy Future: Chapter 1 — a reliable and robust grid reinforcing our foundation (Streicker)