



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Tuesday, April 15, 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 15, 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: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

Unanimous consent for Tributes to exceed 20 minutes

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

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

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

In remembrance of Dave Stockdale

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak today about Dave Stockdale.

Dave passed away on New Year's Day, leaving behind a legacy that spans decades of service to his community as an educator, a tireless advocate for youth sports, and a steadfast political leader.

He first worked as a teacher in northern Alberta where he met his wife, Val. A teacher by profession, Dave believed deeply in the power of education to change lives. He taught across various schools in Whitehorse and beyond before retiring in 1995. Notably, he revamped the Polar Games in the 1970s, turning it into a cherished annual event for elementary school students across the territory. This is just one example of how Dave took on responsibilities not for accolades but to ensure that children had the opportunities they deserved.

Dave's deep love for sports led him to play, coach, and promote numerous activities, with a particular focus on soccer and table tennis. He became a driving force behind Yukon Table Tennis, taking on roles from player to coach to administrator. His contributions helped grow the sport in the Yukon, earning him the 2001 Administrator of the Year Award. It wasn't just about playing or coaching for Dave; it was about

building community. His commitment to table tennis was so strong that he successfully campaigned to have it reinstated in the Arctic Winter Games after it was removed.

In soccer, Dave's legacy is just as profound. In 1971, he organized an elementary school soccer league that marked the beginning of a long career advocating for the sport. He served as the president of the Yukon Soccer Association from 1997 to 2004 and worked to help lay the foundation for soccer to thrive in the region. His contributions were recognized when he was inducted into the Yukon Sports Hall of Fame in 1987, a testament to his years of volunteer work and dedication.

As much as Dave was known for his sports involvement, his role as a city councillor is perhaps one of the most enduring legacies. In 1983, Dave was elected to the Whitehorse City Council for the first time. Over the course of 30 years, he was re-elected 11 times, becoming one of the longest serving politicians in Yukon history. His dedication to his constituents was unwavering and he worked tirelessly to ensure that the city was a better place for all. Dave was a politician who embodied integrity in every decision he made, never one to shy away from speaking his mind. He was steadfast in his convictions even when the file was contentious or the path ahead uncertain.

His tough exterior often masked a deep compassion. Those who knew him saw a leader who cared profoundly about people and the impact of his work. Behind closed doors, his kindness, loyalty, and quiet acts of generosity left a lasting impression. His work with organizations like the Whitehorse Food Bank, the Salvation Army Christmas kettle fundraiser, and numerous other causes speaks to his deep sense of responsibility to the community.

He was the recipient of many awards, including the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, the Commissioner's Award, and most recently, the Order of Yukon in 2024.

As we remember Dave today, we do so with gratitude. We are thankful for his years of service, his love for the community, and the example he set for all of us. His legacy is one of kindness, service, and commitment — a legacy that will never be forgotten.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Dave Stockdale, who passed on January 1, 2025, and I am honoured to do so.

From England, he arrived in Canada on August 17, 1965. Perhaps that was the sign that Dave was predestined to come to the Yukon on a day we as Yukoners know very well. His first school posting was at the Alberta First Nation reserve called Chard. In 1966, he met Val, and in 1967, with a trip up the Alaska Highway, he knew that Yukon was calling — a job at F.H. Collins for two years as the physical education teacher then followed by Clinton Creek, Takhini Elementary, Jack Hulland Elementary, Whitehorse Elementary, and finally retired from Elijah Smith Elementary.

Table tennis and minor soccer were his passions. He has touched many students' lives — a teacher who definitely made a difference. On his passing, Crystal Birmingham, who was

coached by Mr. Stockdale, wrote a long tribute. This is just a portion: “What Mr. Stockdale gave me was direction when I was 13, pride in a sport I have loved my entire life, leadership skills, life long friendships and incredible memories involving trips, practices, get togethers, games, scrimmages, bus rides, plane rides, car road trips.”

In 1968, he began the Polar Games as a competitive high school event, although it began to dissolve in 1975. The games were changed to junior high students, but with extracurricular sports, that too did not work.

For many years, the games changed to a fun opportunity for grades 5 and 6 Yukon students to team up with other students from other schools. Now, grade 6 students from throughout the territory come to compete.

I came to curl during the original Polar Games. It was a big adventure.

He also was instrumental in the Juneau Exchange for soccer, alternating years between the two cities for youth to have a new experience. His efforts and passion took sports to a new level for Yukon youth.

Another Dave idea — the Rendezvous Fun Fair, a fundraiser for his sports endeavours. It was held at the Whitehorse Elementary School for 25 years. Many kids and parents looked forward to the fun and games. It was a highlight of the Rendezvous.

In 1983, he decided to throw his name in the hat for city council. Over 30 years of service gave Dave the title of the longest serving politician in Yukon. He was controversial, frank, and not afraid to ask tough questions.

Dave said — and I quote: “I wasn’t sure I wanted to spend my Monday nights hearing about garbage and dogs, but he convinced me” — referring to someone who encouraged him to run. He found that it was more than garbage and dogs.

He was instrumental in the starting of the food bank and introduced the parking meter food for fines to assist them during the Christmas season.

His accolades are far too many to list in this tribute. I’ll name a few: induction into the Sports Hall of Fame; a Paul Harris Fellowship Award from the Rotary Club; the Queen’s Golden Jubilee Medal; Commissioner’s Award; the Hanseatic Award from AYC; and the Order of Yukon.

A teacher, sports advocate, table tennis player, soccer player, volunteer, organizer, or city councillor — Dave was a force full of positive ideas and bringing them to fruition.

Our sincere condolences to his wife, Val, and their children, Ashley, Jonathan, and Courtney, and all the family.

I leave with a few lines from Robert Service’s *The End of the Trail* — quote:

Life, you’ve been wonderful to me,
But fleetest foot must fail;
The hour must come when all will see
The last lap of the trail.

Rest in peace, Mr. Stockdale.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to a truly lovely human.

I first met Mr. Stockdale when I was a kid attending Whitehorse Elementary. He was the gym teacher, and he was a big deal. Things that made him cool were his accent and his always-cool shorts. I have very fond memories of things like dodgeball, trying to learn how to climb up the ropes, but my best elementary gym stories revolve around aerobics. I’m happy to be corrected, but I’m confident that his outfits consisted of coloured golf shirts, shorts that in hindsight were probably the rage in table tennis, and a headband. He played cool music while he led school-wide aerobics classes. I still remember the side leans, hip out, and reach to the side.

As an energetic small human with next to no coordination, when I started to play soccer, I still remember him yelling: “No, Katie, the other way.” As I got older, Courtney and I were often on the same team, and he still yelled from the sidelines but maybe with more exasperation. Mr. Stockdale remained “Mr. Stockdale” well into my 30s, and it wasn’t until after I got elected that I nearly — nearly — acquiesced to calling him “Dave”, but honestly, that never really stuck, because I had far too much respect for him to easily call him “Dave”.

Mr. Stockdale didn’t just suggest; he led by example. He was Yukon’s longest serving politician; he spent an entire generation on the Whitehorse City Council, a role he took seriously. He won 11 consecutive elections. He wasn’t afraid to ask questions or change his mind when he learned a better way forward. He believed deeply in social justice and was an active champion of the Whitehorse Food Bank. I’m not sure if he was part of the group who spearheaded the Green Apple campaign, but he sure as heck promoted it — that was the drive for folks to commit to donating \$500 a year — and because of him, the food bank is my charity of choice.

It wasn’t until Mr. Stockdale started to slow down that I really got to know him. I had been elected for a fair number of years by this point, and the first time that I was invited to his basement office — and I really want to call it a “lair”, because I think he had most of his favourite things nearby. The TV with some sort of news program playing, books, photos, correspondence — there was a lot to look at.

Anyway, the reason that I was invited over the first time was to help him in an official capacity with his pension application in England for the few short years that he taught there. I brought with me a business card and a letter attesting that he was who he said he was on official letterhead. He said that it wasn’t much, but it was his and he was going to get it. I stayed way longer than I had planned because Mr. Stockdale was an excellent storyteller. I learned a lot about him on those visits, including his deep love for his family — Val, his love of nearly three decades, and his kids and their families and their extended families and the people who were close to him, and he was proud of them all. Mr. Stockdale talked about oral recordings that he was making for his family, and I can only imagine the gems that he has left behind.

He would call me periodically with thoughts on what I had said and what I should say in the future — questions about

positions that I had taken — but it was always done so directly, often with humour and always with care.

Mr. Stockdale made an impact on the Whitehorse we now know, the sporting community, the generation of kids he taught, and more. I know that he made an impact on me. Lessons that I took away from Mr. Stockdale — read and live by *The Wealthy Barber*, invest your time and energy in community, love your family, stick to your guns, but don't be so stubborn that you can't change your mind.

So, to his wife, Val, his family, his friends, and the community, we are sorry for your loss and so grateful for the time that he shared with the community that he loved.

Applause

In remembrance of Mike Gau

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, it is my sad and profound privilege to rise today to celebrate the life of Mike Gau. Maybe you knew him through hockey or growing up in Whitehorse or his work with the city or with his impeccable fashion sense.

I got to know Mike about 15 years ago or so. I was working on a climate change strategy for Whitehorse and I was invited to co-locate in the old blue building alongside the planning department. Mike was positive and bright and capable. He really cared about the city. Through him, I came to appreciate planning as a profession. Mike turned me into an advocate for roundabouts — who knew? Mike and that planning and sustainability department were the folks who inspired me to run for city council a couple of years later. When I was on council, Mike was a director. He was so great to work with.

During my time as councillor and later as minister, I deeply appreciated and respected Mike Gau. I thought of him as a colleague and a role model.

If you are one of those folks who work at or represent a municipality, First Nation, or community, you are connected to colleagues across the Yukon. At workshops, conferences, and meetings, you unite in the shared work of improving the lives of the people we serve. So, when we lose someone like Mike, we all see it and we all feel it.

As a long-time employee of the City of Whitehorse, Mike helped to champion Shipyards Park, the revitalization of Whitehorse's riverfront, and roundabouts.

Mike had a close-up view of the major changes that arrived in the Yukon these past few decades: the establishment of First Nation self-government, a steep spike in the capital's population, and the development of brand new Whitehorse neighbourhoods. Everyone living in Whitehorse has had their lives improved by Mike's work.

His sensible methods made progress possible, and his vision and outlook made success real. He left us too soon.

He made an oversized and lasting contribution to the Yukon's development, but I think he will be remembered for his sense of humour, his passion for hockey, and his caring nature. Mike was an all-round decent person. During the Southern Lakes 2021 flood, Mike and I found ourselves volunteering together one day, rushing to move stuff out of a resident's flooding basement. All day long, we busted our

humps. What I remember most is Mike smiling the whole time. He was a friend, and for everyone who knew him, we miss him dearly.

To Mandi, the kids, Mike's folks, we know he loved you deeply, and our hearts go out to you.

Applause

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to and celebrate the life of Mike Gau. I met Gauser a little more than 15 years ago, and over the years, I got to know him. I felt I had a pretty good measure of the man, but at his celebration of life a few weeks ago, I was frankly blown away by the stories, the memories, and the observations that were made about Mike from all the various parts of his life — from his friends growing up, his hockey buddies, his colleagues at the city, his peers in the planning field, and, of course, from his family and close friends.

As unique as they all were, it was wonderful to hear where they all overlapped and some of the characteristics and traits that made Mike special, whether it was on the ice or at a city council meeting. To begin with, there were wonderful stories from some of his oldest friends who all shared memories and stories of Gauser growing up here in Whitehorse all the way back to kindergarten. There were too many stories to repeat today, Mr. Speaker, but I have to note my delight in learning about the nickname Michael Michael Motorcycle. I really wish I had known that one sooner.

As a kid, Mike was always involved in sports — soccer, softball, fastball — but chief among them was obviously hockey. To a man, all of those who spoke about Mike's time playing hockey, all the way from peewees to old-timers, they remarked on his leadership.

Colin Nash said that he was a true leader, an amazing teammate who always put the success of the team before any individual accomplishment. Jeff Frizzell echoed that, saying that he was named captain not because he was the best individual player but because of his strong character and leadership skills.

Another important part of his life was his long career at the City of Whitehorse. After his passing, both current and former mayors and municipal leaders weighed in about his contribution to this city and its development over the years, but I think it's worth noting the impact he made on the colleagues with whom he worked the closest. While everyone has noted his dedication to improving the city, I thought it was telling that his long-time colleague Lindsay Schneider noted that what made Mike special was not just his professional skills and leadership but the warmth of his friendship and how he made those around him feel valued and appreciated. I would also be remiss if I didn't mention that Lindsay and several others commented that Mike always knew the value of dressing well and looking sharp.

For those in the planning world, Mike's loss is also a deep one. Several of his colleagues spoke not only of his skills as a planner but the fact that he had been an important mentor and leader to so many of the folks in that field.

Mr. Speaker, finally, Mike was a deeply devoted family man. He had a large blended family whom he was truly proud of and devoted to. As much as he loved hockey and the city that he grew up and lived in his whole life, the love, devotion, and dedication he showed to his wife, Randi, and his children showed where his heart truly belonged.

Mike's loss is a difficult one for many, but his legacy of commitment and dedication to this city and to his friends and family is something to be proud of. So, on behalf of my colleagues, to his wife, kids, parents, friends, and family, we offer our condolences for the loss of Mike and a life truly well-lived.

Applause

Ms. White: I stand on behalf of the NDP to add our thanks for the life of Mike Gau. For Mike, family and friends were absolutely everything. To those who knew him well, Mike was incredibly kind, generous, loyal, thoughtful, silly, and always there if you needed him. He often put himself last to ensure that everyone around him was taken care of. He had an innate ability to find a positive in any situation. He always met challenges with humour and a mischievous gleam in his eye. At 50, he still had a purely playful side to him.

Mike delighted in things around him, like folks properly merging onto the Riverdale bridge. He was known to sassily congratulate those in his life who successfully accomplished this task with praise of how smart they were. And despite any outward appearance, Mike had a very soft side with a very big heart, and he was a safe spot to land. For this, his friends and loved ones always wanted to protect him and his beautiful heart.

There is no way to know what life holds in store for any of us. Mike's first marriage gifted him two beautiful kids, Emma and Ryan, and I don't think that he would have guessed that he would be part of a real-life Brady Bunch, but that is what happened when he met Mandi and her four kids — Sidney, Alex, Cooper, and Jack.

This love story alone is one that makes your heart sing. Friends had been scheming to introduce the two for ages; then they found each other on their own, and it was perfect. Their very own Brady Bunch — six kids ranging in age from 11 to 21. For the last five years, Mandi and Mike were inseparable. They found love in each other and they rejoiced in their blended family. Sundays were the best days. No matter what they were doing, whether it was them doing chores or household tasks, attending any of the many ice times at the rink, it didn't matter, because they spent Sundays together. Mike and Mandi were happy, and we wish that everyone could find that happiness.

Mike's sudden passing was shocking and gut-wrenching, and I cannot begin to imagine how profoundly his loss is felt. We share deep sorrow for those who are hurting. To all of those grieving, hold on to your memories of Mike with the same love that you used in making them. Mike's heart and voice made the world a better place through every conversation he had, every joke he made, and every tear that he cried. His empathy for everyone around him and his dedication to uplifting others made a difference.

To tell it today, we celebrate his beautiful life.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Dixon: I have for tabling a letter dated April 4, 2025 addressed to the Minister of Education from a local childcare centre.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have for tabling a legislative return in response to Written Question No. 57 in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

PETITIONS

Petition No. 30

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, today I have for tabling the following petition that reads:

This petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT the proposed location of the land treatment facility toxic waste dump at Bear Creek needs to be reconsidered and proper community consultation needs to take place to determine the suitability of an alternative location;

THAT all residents in the Bear Creek-Nygren Subdivision and many other Yukoners have publicly expressed concerns about the proposed location at Bear Creek and would like the location to be moved out of the Alsek Valley;

THAT the current approved location for toxic waste dumping is known for wildlife movement and is a high-value wildlife area that borders a nationally protected park;

THAT the currently selected location is near residential dwellings and could lead to the loss of property value, contamination of air and water, and the loss of quiet enjoyment; and

THAT any new location should take into consideration the environmental and social factors affecting community members, including impacts on wildlife, air quality, water pollution, and proximity to residential areas.

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Yukon to select a different location for the toxic waste dump.

Speaker: Are there any further 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 welcomes over 350 participants from across northern Canada to the Yukon for the inaugural Tri-

territorial Health and Social Professionals Conference, an initiative under Yukon's *Health Human Resources Strategy*, to collaborate on health system transformation, share promising practices, and explore innovative strategies to improve care for northern communities.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consult with the Whitehorse Fire Fighters Association, the Yukon Employees' Union, the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs, and wildland firefighters on appropriate amendments to the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act* to provide wildland firefighters eligibility under the presumptive cancers listed for firefighters.

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

THAT this House urges the federal government to change the rules for the travel deduction portion of the northern residents deduction, which currently provides people who live in communities like Watson Lake with a smaller maximum deduction than others who live in communities with regularly scheduled air service.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to cover the cost of the respiratory syncytial virus vaccine for people who are pregnant.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Residential lot development

Ms. Clarke: Salamat, Mr. Speaker. One of the biggest drivers of the cost of housing in the Yukon is the lack of residential lots. We have heard from home builders who are concerned about the access to residential lots both now and into the future. In the past, the government has been slow to release lots, and last year, they released lots that were not even finished, and those who purchased them needed to wait for months to access them.

Can the minister tell us when the next land lottery in Whitehorse will be? How many lots will they release?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will work to get the timing. I understood that it is this summer.

I will also note for Yukoners that when there was an issue with those who were successful in the lottery getting access, we waived some of the fees; I think it was the interest charges. So, we made sure to ensure that those who were successful in the lottery were not out, but I will note while I'm up on my feet that as we looked back over the past five years, we noted that we have now released 1,000 lots over the past five years, and the lion's share of those are in Whistle Bend but not all of them, of course.

Our projection is, with the release this year both in Whitehorse and across our other communities, that we are on track going forward to meet our commitment of 1,000 lots post the last election. I'll get the details for the member opposite regarding the numbers of lots and the timing for this summer in Whistle Bend.

Ms. Clarke: Another concern that I hear from home builders who work and live in Whistle Bend is that the Yukon government releases multi-family lots by maximum bid as opposed to by lottery. That means that builders are forced to bid the highest possible amount they can in order to be successful in obtaining a multi-family residential lot. In turn, this means that the government is ensuring that the maximum possible price is paid for these lots, which, of course, simply drives the price up as well.

Why does the government continue to release multi-family lots by bid instead of by lottery?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I can't help but reflect on the fact that Whistle Bend was planned out by the city, and I just acknowledge that today because we just had the tribute for Mike Gau. The planning work is done by the city, and I think Whistle Bend was always meant to have a range of single-family lots, townhouse lots, multi-family lots — a real range. I think it was in part to create greater density.

The way in which these lots are done, I'm pretty sure, in terms of the residential is that we are bound by — I think it's an order-in-council. I will check to see what the underpinning rationale is around multi-family lots, but generally speaking, I think that they have been extremely successful in providing additional homes.

Remember, one multi-family lot counts as one lot, but, of course, it supplies so many units for Whistle Bend, for Whitehorse, and for the Yukon.

Ms. Clarke: The policy of land lottery is controlled by Yukon government, but I'll move on.

I have previously asked the Minister of Community Services about phases 10 and 11 of Whistle Bend, and he dodged the question every time, so I will try again today. According to the minister's briefing notes from the fall of 2023, the design of phases 10 and 11 was scheduled for tendering in 2024. A more recent note from last fall says that it was pushed to 2025. When I asked about this project before, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources told the Legislature that this project had been delayed until 2026.

I would like to ask about these delays. What caused these multiple delays in tendering of the design for phases 10 and 11, and now that there have been significant delays, when can we expect to see the residential lots from phases 10 and 11 be released?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, as my good colleague just mentioned, we have built 1,000 lots in the city and across the territory over the last several years, and that lot development is going to continue until next year and beyond because of the work we have done. We inherited a shortage of lots in the territory — a lack of planning. We're spending more money every year on lot development in the territory than the previous government spent in four years. We're spending more

in one year than the previous government developed in four years. That's why we were facing such a critical shortage of lots. We didn't have a lot surplus.

Since then, the territory has been growing because we have so much development and employment here in the territory that the economy is booming and we have people moving here. We're trying to keep up with that development as well.

So, Whistle Bend is booming; Whitehorse is booming; we're building lots in Watson Lake; we're building lots in Haines Junction; we're building lots in Teslin — across the territory, we're seeing lot development.

Mr. Speaker, in Whistle Bend, again, we have lots coming out this year. We're also moving ahead with Range Point just up the road from Whistle Bend.

There will be lots of lots for Yukoners going forward. We're going to continue that good work on behalf of Yukoners.

We're working with the City of Whitehorse on phases 10 and 11 in Whistle Bend. I just had a meeting with the Mayor of Whitehorse last Friday on this very subject.

More to come, Mr. Speaker.

Question re: Property title transfers

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, recently, there have been a number of changes within the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources lands branch that have been negatively impacting home builders and therefore the continued supply of affordable housing in Yukon.

One specific change that has been made relates to a policy decision made by the lands branch that they will no longer release title transfer documents until a lot has been fully paid out and the building complete. This means that the developer has to front the cash to pay out the lot 30 days before closing. This additional red tape creates cost and administrative burden on home builders that ultimately gets passed on to the price of the home.

Can the minister explain why this change was made by the lands branch? Will he consider reverting back to the previous policy?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we're doing right now is successor lands legislation. They are just getting ready to release a "what we heard" document, so it should be out soon for all Yukoners — but the members opposite as well.

What I can say under that work is that we are certainly reviewing all policies and programs under lands to make sure that they work well. In particular because of all the pressure that is coming around land development, it is important to keep working on this, to work with the city, to work with the private developers, and to work with Yukoners who are looking to see these processes work well.

So, we did some updates to the land lottery system.

The specific question that the member opposite is asking about — I'll go back and check in with the department to get a specific answer. But generally speaking, are we willing to continue to work to improve this? Absolutely.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the minister, this has nothing to do with the successor resource

legislation or the lands act; this is a policy decision that was made within the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources within the last year that is causing serious issues for home builders. It's causing increased costs for the transfer of title for home builders when they buy a lot. What they have identified to the minister and to the department previously is that this is increasing the cost of homes, it's adding red tape for home builders, and it's creating issues for the home-building industry here in Whitehorse.

Will the minister explain why that change was made, and if he doesn't know, will he commit to reversing the policy immediately until such a time that he can be briefed and go back to getting homes built for Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I absolutely will ask the department to give me the information. I will not commit to reversing things until I have had that briefing and understand what the concerns are. I think that it is true that the department has worked or the branch has worked very specifically to support continuing movement in homes here in the Yukon.

By the way, I think that over the past year we have had the highest number of housing starts of any year here in the Yukon. That is at the same time as all the other pressures that continue to exist around permits, inspections, and all those challenges. The lands branch truly cares about this issue, and I will make sure to get the specific answer.

In general, what I am saying is that the lands branch is working right now around the fundamental piece of legislation that all of this derives from. With that work and the renewal of that piece of legislation, we will look at all of the programs, including these ones. We are always willing to continue to see improvement and work with the department toward that.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, well, it's a policy change that has significant implications for the industry, so I'm surprised that the minister wouldn't know about it. But I will ask a question now about something that he does know about because he has talked about it already, and that is a change the Liberal government recently made to the land lottery system.

In November, the minister announced changes to the land lottery system that were intended to meet the requirement of the confidence and supply agreement to reform that system. One of the particularly concerning changes that were announced was that successful land lottery candidates can only reapply after five years. This means that if a small- or mid-sized home builder was successful in getting a lot, they would be ineligible for the lottery for five years. This makes no sense to the industry that builds and supplies the vast majority of homes in the Yukon.

Why would the government make this change that will simply make it harder for Yukon home builders to get access to lots to build homes on?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, in my last answer, I just said that we are continuing to work on continuous improvement. There is a challenge around lots because, under the Yukon Party, they didn't invest in land development — or they did, but it was so modest that there was this pause in lots being developed. At that time when we came into government, we decided to triple the amount of investment. Now I think it is

quadruple the amount of investment, and we are investing heavily in land development.

As that work is being done, it's really there to try to get to the point where we have — the lottery was originally intended to be for Yukon individuals, not for home builders, but it has become a system that's used by the home builders. We still need to make sure that we are supporting those home builders to build homes. By the way, when they build those homes, they are selling them to Yukoners, to Whitehorse residents, so the system is working to move ahead.

There always was this intention to seek to improve that system. I did sit down with some of the home builders and talk about these changes, and the one that they flagged for me was the time that someone had to sit out after they had been successful, and I said to them: Let's continue to work with the lands branch and the city to make this system work for the long term.

Question re: Old Crow road maintenance equipment

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Old Crow residents are concerned about road maintenance in our community. It is essential that a loader and grader are available and in working order to ensure that citizens can safely navigate the community, attend work and school, and access medical care and emergency services. Roads also need to be cleared so that the water and septic truck can access homes and businesses. If this doesn't happen, people are left without water.

The loader in Old Crow has been unusable and in need of replacement since at least 2021, and now, four years later, the issues are still not fully addressed. Since 2021, the NDP has been raising this concern in the House and in letters to the minister.

Why have there been so many delays for these repairs?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question of the member opposite. I know that we have had meetings with the member for Old Crow with respect to the maintenance issues that arise in Old Crow over the course of the last four years, and they may include the grader and other equipment that is there. We certainly have worked toward solutions over the course of those four years.

If issues have arisen again — they have been brought to my attention — I will certainly follow up and endeavour to problem-solve this. I'm certainly aware of the concerns that Old Crow residents will have with respect to their infrastructure. As I have been since 2021, I'm certainly prepared to meet with the member opposite and to hear her concerns and to try to problem-solve as best as possible.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon NDP has written many letters to this government since 2021 regarding issues with the loader and grader. We have raised this question in the House.

We have also had a meeting with the ministers of Highways and Public Works and of Community Services. In all communications and during the meeting, the government expressed support and made promises to resolve the issues. The minister's letter to me dated April 7, 2025 indicated that the

department was not able to establish a contract for repairs and scheduled mechanical support of equipment in Old Crow. The letter also stated that a mechanical contractor will be sent to Old Crow every six to eight weeks for servicing and repairs, but that is a very long time to wait.

What is being done to ensure that equipment repair and maintenance services are available to the community of Old Crow so that there are no interruptions in road maintenance?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Once again, I would just emphasize that my door is open with respect to maintenance issues with respect to Old Crow.

If there has been recent correspondence and that response has not been satisfactory, I am certainly prepared to continue to meet. As I have indicated to the member opposite, I am prepared to continue with those discussions. If there are maintenance issues in Old Crow, I am always prepared to consider solutions with the Department of Highways and Public Works and with the Department of Community Services.

As I said, to my recollection, there have been in-person meetings when issues have arisen and we have had tried to problem-solve. If that problem-solving hasn't met expectations in the recent past, I am prepared to redouble our efforts and exhort the Department of Highways and Public Works to meet the expectations in Old Crow.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, the community of Old Crow needs a new loader. The current loader has been in disrepair for so long that it can no longer be fixed or used. This means that there needs to be a plan to get a new loader to the community, which would require the government to build an ice road.

Old Crow residents would like to hear what the plans are to bring a new loader to the community. Can the government outline how it intends to get a new loader up to the community and when?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, yes, we will deal with the issue of the loader, but the member opposite will also know that over the course of the last four years there have been two seasons when there have been ice roads at great expense, but they have provided incredible service to Old Crow.

Since July 2024, Old Crow has had their own health and wellness centre as well as a tenplex to support service delivery and housing needs in the community. The tenplex was substantially complete in 2024 and the health and wellness centre was substantially complete in May 2024. The Government of Yukon and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation are excited to see these two beautiful facilities constructed in the Yukon's only fly-in community. Construction between March of 2021 and May of 2024 enabled the Vuntut Gwitchin community to benefit from \$13.67 million in employment training and business opportunities related to these projects.

The member opposite will know, as I indicated, that there were two seasons of ice roads. There were many, many flights of Hercules aircraft that went from Fairbanks to Old Crow to enable all of these infrastructure projects to occur at this same time. This government has focused on Old Crow infrastructure needs over the course of the last four years approaching \$100 million.

Question re: Disaster financial assistance program

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, in 2023, the Association of Yukon Communities passed a resolution at their AGM calling for a disaster financial assistance program to help municipalities respond to natural disasters. Last year, the minister told us that the updates on this program would be available in 2025.

So, can the minister provide us an update on this work, please?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, we are currently continuing to work with the federal government on melding the federal disaster assistance with Yukon disaster financial assistance. I know how important this is to AYC and to everybody.

We have seen a great increase in the number of fires and floods in the territory largely because of the amount of pollution we are pumping into the atmosphere and the effects that pollution that humanity is pumping into the atmosphere is having on the planet. This is really the cost of climate change writ large, and that financial and personal cost is apparent in the Yukon.

Much of Canada experienced unprecedented natural disasters in 2024. Of course, we lost towns — Jasper — and our thoughts go out to everyone impacted by wildfires and flood events.

The territorial disaster financial assistance program was put into place in the spring 2024 to support recovery from natural disasters. The program outlines how the Yukon government provides financial supports for emergency disaster recovery, and this will ensure that resources get to Yukoners when they need it most.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the very end was an update or not, but I don't think I got one.

One aspect of this disaster financial assistance program that many municipalities were hoping to see was that the new program would allow municipalities to undertake long-term mitigation projects to protect community infrastructure from natural disasters. Each community has different ideas about what is needed in their area, but to date, they don't have the funding to invest.

Is allowing municipalities to use this fund to construct or plan long-term mitigative measures something that the minister is considering?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, what I am considering — what this government is considering — in changes to such programs is not going to be announced during Question Period on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. That is not the way it operates. I will work with municipalities as they are going forward.

As I said, we have a disaster financial assistance program that we launched in the territory in 2024. This is to deal with the pollution that society is throwing up in the air. We are seeing more disasters these days. We put more money in there. That is money that Yukoners are paying, really, to subsidize the pollution that we are throwing up into the atmosphere.

We are working now with the federal government, of course, to update and mesh our plan with the federal program.

There has been a lot of action happening at the federal level. I am sure that the members opposite know that we are currently in an election campaign. We have had lots of issues dealt with at the federal level. We are still working with the federal government on melding our two financial plans so that they work well together. We are also doing a lot of work on flood mapping and other tools that Yukoners can use to anticipate where they might have problems. We are going to continue that work to support Yukoners through many of the crises that we are seeing not only in the Yukon but across North America.

Question re: Yukon River crossing at Dawson City

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, on October 15 last year, I asked about the *George Black* ferry in Dawson and whether the government was considering replacing or refurbishing the ferry. In response, the minister said this — and I quote: “The department is exploring these options, and I expect to see the recommendation this fall.” He said that once he had the recommendations, he would be in a position to communicate them publicly.

Can he tell us what the department recommended and what decision has been taken?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the member opposite. Just briefly for Yukoners — I will get to the response — with respect to the *George Black* ferry, Highways and Public Works has been working, among other parties, with Canada Border Services Agency to coordinate the *George Black* ferry launch to align with the opening timeline of the Little Gold border crossing as we have done in previous years. Thanks to our skilled crews, ferry operations ran smoothly throughout the 2024 season, which officially closed on October 15, 2024.

The *George Black* ferry typically launches for the season by the May long weekend and is operational until Thanksgiving. Once the temperatures begin to drop below freezing, of course, the fire suppression equipment on the ferry begins to ice up, hindering its ability to function well.

With respect to the member opposite's question, Highways and Public Works has been working to identify and evaluate options for replacing the *George Black* ferry. In 2024, the Government of Yukon released a summary of its Dawson-Yukon River crossing public engagement. The department is exploring these options and I will be in a position to announce the decision very shortly.

Ms. Van Bibber: Well, Mr. Speaker, we didn't hear an answer.

The minister said last year that the decision would be made by now. It is also notable that we didn't see any money in the budget for this project. Can the minister tell us what the comparative costs are for each option so that Yukoners can know what's at stake with this decision?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I will note that there is money in the capital budget in outgoing years for the likely replacement of the *George Black* ferry. Of course, there will still always be discussions with respect to a more permanent link of the Yukon River at Dawson, but in the interim, it is much more likely that there will have to be redundancy and that the

George Black ferry will have to be replaced in outgoing years, and this government, in its capital plan — which the members opposite are probably not very familiar with having a capital plan — will be seriously looking into replacing the *George Black* ferry, which has been in operation since 1967. So, we are in the process of notifying stakeholders and should be in a position to move forward with that project shortly.

Question re: Placer mining

Mr. Kent: I want to follow up on an issue that I raised at the beginning of this Sitting. It's in relation to the regulatory and assessment process for the placer mining industry.

As we mentioned in early March in a letter to the government, the Klondike Placer Miners' Association, or KPMA, pointed out a sizable regulatory backlog affecting licence renewal applications. According to that letter — I'll quote: "If placer licenses expire while under regulatory review, due only to the fault of processing timelines, it will lead to business closures, employee layoffs, and widespread economic decline."

At the time, the minister said — and I'll quote again: "The department has been working to address this." So, my question for the minister is: What has been done to address this important issue since we raised it and the KPMA raised it at the start of this Sitting?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There are a couple of ways — and I'm sure that we're going to get multiple questions, so I will start with the work that is happening internally to Energy, Mines and Resources.

The deputy minister put a team on this and began to get the decision documents moving. That work is underway, and I think to the — I would have to check on the exact numbers to date, but I think that, over the past couple of weeks, we have had 10 or 11 of those decision documents moved ahead. That issue also needs to be followed up with work that happens externally around what is happening with the Water Board. Then, as well, there is a thread of this where the department is working to resolve this problem so that it doesn't reappear every decade, which is what has been happening.

I know that the department has been meeting fairly regularly with the Klondike Placer Miners' Association; I have met with them a couple of times in the past couple of weeks. It's sort of a full-focused effort to unlock the backlog.

Mr. Kent: Here is another quote from the KPMA's letter sent to the minister — quote: "Despite the KPMA raising this concern for some time with government and regulators alike, the backlog continues and is getting worse." They go on to point out — I will quote again: "This backlog can and should have been anticipated — it occurs cyclically..."

The minister at the time when I asked this question claimed that the surge was anticipated by his government. So, Mr. Speaker, this is serious, as the ability of many Yukoners to provide for their families is at stake because of these delays.

My question is: If it was anticipated and work was underway on it, why are we seeing a situation where so many placer miners are facing closure because of issues beyond their control?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It has been anticipated. I met with KPMA last summer, and the department had already been advising me on the wave of renewals that is coming our way. Let's also acknowledge that we had the Victoria Gold mine catastrophe. That put pressure on the whole of the system. I think that one of the things that we have to understand is that, when KPMA came to us, they talked about approaches that had been used in the last go-around in the previous decade. We couldn't find evidence of that on our side of it. If the members know of those examples, please, by all means, let us know.

It is a challenge — I will say that flat out. The department is putting a lot of resources on it to seek to address it, but I won't sugar-coat it. There is a wave of renewals that is coming, because I think, over a couple of years, more than 200 renewals are due, so that's pressure on a system that already is feeling pressure.

Mr. Kent: The KPMA sent this very strongly worded letter to the minister in late February of this year. The minister claims that he first found out about it last summer, but that's a long delay without taking any action. In their letter, what they suggested is that executive action be taken to prevent an economic collapse in the industry.

On March 13 in the House, the Premier said that he was meeting with the KPMA on March 17 to discuss the issue of the backlog, so can the Premier tell us what actions have been implemented since that March 17 meeting to deal with the regulatory delays facing the placer mining industry?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, our teams have been flat out. We have had Executive Council staff working across the lines with the Water Board. We have offered more support for the Water Board both for their legal and policy folks. We have had Energy, Mines and Resources going to meetings and reviewing the decision documents. They have actually moved through most of the ones that were there in the fall. We then had — within the YESAB process as well, again, supporting where we can.

Went back — there was a comment made by the Yukon Party that is actually not accurate that they had used a particular policy tool that does not exist. That was not what happened 10 years ago, so we were actually using the legal framework that is in front of us. We have been back and forth I think this week looking at other potential policy tools that have not been used before but we think may be available to us.

Remember, we did have a number of applications coming. Not all of them had been received. At the time of this conversation, there were 11 decision documents that we were waiting on. It's important to note that we still have to make sure that we do the consultation that is required. I think the Yukon Party would agree with that. In some cases, we were not getting a response from other levels of government. We now have moved forward, and it's the same work that has been done by the Water Board.

Actually, there has been a tremendous amount of work, because we understand the importance of that industry.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Introduction of visitors outside of the usual proceedings.

Visitors introduced

Notice of opposition private members' business

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, April 16, 2025. They are Motion No. 1261, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South, and Motion No. 1116, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, April 16, 2025. It is Bill No. 310, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 48: *Early Learning and Child Care Act* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 48, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McLean.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 48, entitled *Early Learning and Child Care Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 48, entitled *Early Learning and Child Care Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to speak again today on Bill No. 48, entitled *Early Learning and Child Care Act*. This bill is important to our government and a significant shift in how the Yukon will govern early learning and childcare. It will replace the *Child Care Act* that came into force in 1990. Like similar Canadian legislation in its era, it focused on health and safety of children in custodial care.

In the more than three decades since the act came into force, experts in early learning across Canada have increasingly recognized that children require much more than an emphasis on health and safety and custodial care. They need high-quality, varied, and nurturing early learning experiences that help them to develop and grow. This new bill will embed the principles of quality, affordability, inclusivity, and accessibility in the Yukon's early learning and childcare legislation. It better reflects the realities and support needed by Yukon families in the early learning and childcare sector.

In 2021, transfer of early learning and childcare from the Department of Health and Social Services to the Department of Education reflected the recommendation outlined in *Putting People First — The final report of the comprehensive review of Yukon's health and social programs and services*. The

recommendation read — quote: “Coordinate early learning services at all levels to ensure the child is put at the centre by moving early learning to the Department of Education.”

The intent was to align all early learning programs and services under one department, enabling more effective planning and decision-making. Including early learning with the Department of Education reflects the national best practices. The integration of early learning and childcare programs from K to 12 and adult education has successfully contributed to creating a seamless learning continuum from cradle to grave, supporting lifelong learners.

To further quote the *Putting People First* report — quote: “One of the goals of community wellness is to improve the environment we live in. In turn, this makes it easier for people to make healthier decisions, and creates networks of social supports that can influence our behaviour in a positive way ... A key to achieving this is to increase the focus on early learning supports. What children learn from birth to age of eight, and how they learn it, directly contributes to their overarching health and emotional development into adulthood. That is why creating the best possible environment for children to develop in, including positive parenting tools and supports, is essential...”

Again, we cannot overstate how crucial high-quality early learning and childcare is in shaping the future of Yukon children. These opportunities lay the foundation for better outcomes, fostering their growth, success, and well-being for years to come. Additionally, their families benefit from a strong early learning and childcare system.

In April 2021, we introduced a universal childcare program, significantly reducing out-of-pocket monthly fees by up to \$700 per month per child. The introduction of universal childcare in Yukon put more disposable income into the hands of families and created more choices for primary caregivers who may want to work outside of their home or pursue education.

To further support this sector, we have provided additional funding to operators to reduce their operational and administrative costs while enhancing the delivery of high-quality programming. Early childhood educators also benefited from this initiative, receiving substantial wage increases through a new wage scale. They gained access to new opportunities for professional development, educational upgrading, and cultural resource funding, further strengthening their ability to provide exceptional care and learning experiences for Yukon children. This has helped to professionalize and economically enhance an important sector that employs many women, young workers, and newcomers to Canada.

As of March 2025, the Yukon has 79 licensed early learning and childcare programs representing 2,353 licensed spaces, an increase of 26 percent since the implementation of universal childcare. There are currently over 500 early learning childhood educators directly working in licensed early learning and childcare programs in the Yukon and supported by the mandatory wage grid.

If passed, the wage grid will become a part of legislation and not simply a requirement in funding agreements. Increasing access to affordable, high-quality early learning opportunities continues to ease the financial burden for Yukon families and other caregivers and, most importantly, helps support Yukon children to have the best possible start in their lives. Investing in early learning is essential to providing high-quality environments and experiences that nurture children's development and contribute to building a happier, healthier society for the future.

The results are exponential when preschool-aged children have access to high-quality early learning and childcare. It's in these early years that the youngest learners develop vital physical, cognitive, and social skills needed to set them on a path to a successful and healthy future.

As our understanding of early learning has grown over the past 30 years, now is the time for our laws to reflect this knowledge while remaining adaptable to meet the evolving needs of early learning and childcare in the future. We have sought feedback from anyone and everyone who may be impacted by this legislation.

As you heard during Committee of the Whole, we engaged with Yukon First Nation governments, the Child Care Board, families, early childhood educators, program providers, and others to make this happen. We have considered the feedback that we have received and applied it to the bill before us today. We believe that this legislation shows what can happen when we listen carefully and make changes based on engagement and feedback.

Additionally, the future regulations under the new act will be drafted to reflect the input received during our engagement process. The proposed changes are supported by national best practices, extensive research, and feedback from engagement conducted over three months in 2024 and previous engagements on early learning and childcare. We heard clearly from the engagement participants that the *Child Care Act* needed to be modernized. The changes included in Bill No. 48 reflect the shift in early learning and childcare philosophy from one based primarily on health and safety to one focused on early learning.

Let me remind you what they are. This act enshrines the requirements to work collaboratively with Yukon First Nation governments and emphasizes the importance of reconciliation and partnerships in the provision of early learning childcare services across the Yukon. This means that the Department of Education will collaborate with Yukon First Nations on the early learning and childcare framework. The work to develop the framework may take some time to ensure that it is done in the right way, but it remains a priority.

A strong emphasis is placed on early learning education, including the requirement for an early learning framework that will leave space for recognition of Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, being, and doing. This act also allows the director of the Early Learning and Child Care branch to waive the requirement to follow the approved framework in developing an early learning plan in cases where it may be necessary. Some examples of cases where this could occur include if a program

needs more support to get the work completed or if a Yukon First Nation wants to develop their own framework. The early learning plans will ensure that licensed childcare providers develop inclusion policies, codes of conduct, and safety plans, all of which support quality childcare in the Yukon.

This new legislation will expand the definition of "school-aged" to include children enrolled in kindergarten, which adds capacity in programs by reducing the number of educators needed to supervise this after-school group. Licensed providers had indicated their frustration in having to include these children in a preschool group.

This bill also recognizes early childhood educators for their key role in supporting Yukon children for success in school and life. The language used in the bill recognizes the professionalism of the sector and enshrines this through the early childhood educator certification process. To ensure transparency and accountability, the Minister of Education will be required to table an annual report in the Legislative Assembly on the actions taken to support and promote a quality early learning and childcare system that is affordable, inclusive, and accessible.

Focusing on early learning and national benchmarks of quality will help improve outcomes for Yukon's children. This work complements the Department of Education's work such as reimagining inclusive and special education and the integrated outcome strategy for Yukon learners.

This act will also help support commitments and obligations in truth and reconciliation's calls to action and the Yukon's missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit+ people strategy and implementation plan and the *LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan*.

We will keep collaborating with First Nation governments, stakeholders, and Yukoners to bring Yukon's vision of early learning and childcare to life.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the questions that we received about this bill in Committee of the Whole and the opportunity to provide those answers and more clarity to Yukoners and to the members opposite.

We heard about the need to elevate programs through an inspection process. I wish to assure members that all inspection forms will be updated once the new act comes into force to reflect the principles of quality, accessibility, inclusivity, and affordability.

Further, the Early Learning and Child Care branch takes a whole-team approach toward supporting and elevating providers in the delivery of childcare. I want to recognize the work that the inspectors do each day to ensure that the health and safety of all children are upheld in childcare centres across this territory. Professional development and mentorship will be provided to the inspectors during the transition to ensure that they are equipped with the tools to implement the new legislation and regulations.

We also heard that there may be barriers to reporting complaints. Our introduction of a new complaint process will ensure a formal complaint mechanism that balances the protection and privacy of complainants with other fair process considerations.

We will continue to expect that all public servants perform their role in a responsible manner in the alignment with the *Values and Ethics Code*.

I also want to thank the members for their discussion with the membership of the Child Care Board. We have responded to concerns from the Child Care Board about ensuring that enough members are appointed in order to carry out their necessary work.

In May 2021, the *Child Care Act* was amended to transfer early learning and childcare responsibilities to the Department of Education. At that time, I committed in this Assembly to modernize the *Child Care Act* in collaboration with First Nation governments and the Child Care Board, stakeholders, and interested Yukoners in a thoughtful way where all views would be considered. We are following through on that promise.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to shaping this legislation: those who worked tirelessly on the bill and all who played a role in developing and implementing the affordable early learning and childcare program for the Yukon. I would like to emphasize that the Yukon government believes that all families should have access to affordable, high-quality early learning and childcare opportunities.

Children deserve optimal environments for learning and development in their early years. This bill recognizes that comprehensive childcare services are supportive of healthy families, healthy communities, and a healthy economy. We are looking forward to beginning work on the regulations and will further define how this bill will be implemented. We also look forward to working with stakeholders and Yukoners to bring Yukon's vision of early learning and childcare to life.

Once this act passes, we will reach out to our partners to begin discussions on the development of an early learning framework as well as next steps on the regulations. We will also work to support the transition of all licensed programs to transition to the requirements of the new act, and we hope to receive support from the members opposite to ensure that Bill No. 48 passes, providing Yukoners with the most modern early learning and childcare legislation in Canada.

I also want to — I know that one of our previous staff members of the Department of Education has recently retired, Clara Northcott. I know that she is carefully watching — from her place of vacation right now — this bill as it moves through the process today. I'm thankful for all of her hard work and for her many, many years of dedication to this territory through Justice, Health and Social Services, and then to end in the Department of Education where she was able to, you know, look at the most upstream with our youngest Yukoners. So, I'm thankful for all of you who put your time and effort into this work. It is historical and it's, you know, working in a good way for the right reasons, so thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to hearing final comments from my colleagues.

Mr. Dixon: I'm pleased to rise today at third reading to speak to Bill No. 48, the *Early Learning and Child Care Act*.

We will be supporting the act at third reading and look forward to voting later today. I'll be fairly brief, but I wanted to make a few comments first.

First, I wanted to take the opportunity to thank all of those early learning and childcare community members who took the time to reach out to me and provide feedback and input through the course of the debate on this bill. A number of folks — from early childhood educators themselves to those who run childcare centres to those who are familiar with programs or are retired — have been quite generous with me in providing feedback and thoughtful commentary on the bill that has informed the debate and the discussion that we've had so far.

I also wanted to make a special note to thank the current Child Care Board for their work as well. I know that their submission of a letter to the minister was instrumental in making an amendment to this bill. So, I want to thank the current board.

As well, I think it's worth noting that I would like to thank the previous boards as well. The child care boards over the last number of years have provided their annual reports, which always provide an opportunity for legislators and those interested in the early learning and childcare field to hear the feedback of some of the most respected voices in the childcare field through the Child Care Board. So, those recommendations that come to us each and every year are very valuable, and I look forward to what lies ahead for the Child Care Board.

I want to thank the minister and her team for putting together the bill. I appreciate the work that was done and the conversations that we had throughout the course of Committee of the Whole. The minister demonstrated some flexibility and willingness to make amendments to the bill to, in my view, improve the act and be responsive to the concerns that were raised by me and my colleague the MLA for Takhini-Kopper King.

For those watching with interest, the bill is certainly an important step toward where we would like to see things go, but as we've talked about in Committee of the Whole, the bill won't come into force until a number of regulations are approved. Many of the more substantive pieces of the bill will actually be dealt with in future through regulation. So, whether that's the establishment of the early learning framework itself or the registrar of ECEs or any of the continuing education requirements or different levels for ECEs, those are all things that will come in the future with the development of regulations.

What we were able to glean from our debate and discussion on the bill so far is that it sounds like that regulatory development will take some time. It could be a number of years still, and we will be watching with interest to see how that regulatory development goes, and I know that those in the field will be watching with interest as well.

Of course, the minister is committed and I am sure that the government is committed as well to thoroughly engaging on the development of those regulations and ensuring that the voices of early learning and childcare experts, ECEs who work in the field, and those who operate centres will be heard.

I did want to, as well, take a moment to thank those childcare centres that have written to the minister over the past few weeks to express concerns that they have around the funding model that is currently being employed with the government in this program. I know that the minister is working on a response, I'm sure, and I look forward to seeing that response to ensure that the future of childcare programs in the territory is a strong one. The concerns that have been raised by letters — I believe at least five childcare centres now have written to the minister expressing their concern about what they call the “precarious state of childcare” given the current funding regime created by the government.

With that, Mr. Speaker, like I said, I look forward to seeing the bill pass, but the hard work will begin now for the Yukon government to develop regulations. I look forward to voting in favour of this bill today but know that there is a lot of hard work ahead still.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I too rise today in support of the *Early Learning and Child Care Act* and, of course, thank the folks in the gallery who have put so much time, energy, and effort behind it. It is a far cry from where we were before and a far cry from where I have been advocating from since I was first elected in 2011.

I appreciate the efforts behind this legislation and its intentions, and I particularly want to talk about quality, because the reason why I was asking about inspectors is that this has to do with quality, and quality requires — I don't want to say “checklists”, but there are certain things that we need to make sure of when we define “quality”, as in: How do we check for quality? I will put out the pitch here that there was some really fantastic work done by Partners for Children with funding that they got from the federal government to work on modules — checklists, if you will — on how to elevate and raise quality, which is why I was talking about the difference between inspecting and elevating and auditing and those kinds of things. I will just put the pitch here that there have been some pretty incredible tools created here in the territory to raise to ensure that these early learning centres are able to meet that request for quality.

A couple of things I really appreciate — I appreciated the 10-year review clause. Having been here for a long time, I know as an opposition member that having those review clauses in legislation are really important. It also gives an opportunity to make sure that things are on track, so I do really appreciate the review clause. I appreciated the willingness of the minister and her officials to reach out to the Yukon Child Care Board around the minimum number of folks on that board. I appreciate that there was the amendment to seven. I also appreciate the change in the language between “behaviour management” and “behaviour guidance”. I would never pretend to be an expert, but I had lots of folks whom I would consider experts in the field reach out about both of those things, and I'm happy to see them reflected here.

Like my colleague, I realize that a lot of what we are waiting for will be developed in regulations, so I wish those folks doing the hard work of regulatory work — and all of those

whom they will be engaging with, all of the professionals across the field and across the territory — just encouraging them to make sure that, when the opportunity arises to engage on the creation of those regulations, that they participate. I know that the officials are willing to hear, and we have seen that with the changes that we have here.

I am excited to participate in voting this through and in the next chapter of early learning in the territory. We've come really far. I believe that we have some distance to go, but I'm happy to help us get here. We look forward to the vote this afternoon. I thank the minister for bringing it forward, I thank her officials for the heavy lifting, and, of course, thank all those within the industry who continue to nurture young learners and turn them into the young people and adults of the future.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues from the Official Opposition and the New Democratic Party — Third Party — for their comments today and for their indicated support for this bill at third reading. I just want to make a few comments. I note the concerns that were raised around the time that it will take to develop regulations. I shared during Committee of the Whole or second reading that my mandate letter — we definitely had this as part of our platform in 2021 that we would review the *Child Care Act*, and my mandate letter stated that in 2021 and continues to state that I do a review of the act.

I certainly worked with my colleagues at the Cabinet Committee on Legislation to elevate this to where we are today to ensure that we actually did the review, as it was decided by all of us at the table to not only make amendments but to actually write a new piece of legislation that will eventually repeal the old act. I just want to make that point, because we are fulfilling my mandate letter today, but we are going beyond that, so the work that is before us now is to put our focus on regulations. I'm really looking forward to that work and I know that our team is anxious and working on it already, I'm sure, to scope out what that will look like. I am really looking forward to working with all of our partners, as I have stated many times during this debate.

In terms of the funding that was raised in the letters that were received and by the leader of the opposition and — certainly, we are working on a thoughtful and thorough response to those letters. The funding — we, as I have said many times, moved into early learning childcare, universal childcare, in April 2021. Later that year, in July 2021, we entered into an agreement with Canada, continuing to support the development and expansion of Yukon's universal childcare system and early learning educator work for its development.

In February 2025, we were able to extend the current *Canada-Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Agreement* and the current *Canada-Yukon Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*, securing an additional five years of funding — approximately \$74.4 million — from the

Government of Canada. These agreements will run until fiscal year-end of 2030-31. It does include a three-percent funding escalator beginning in the fiscal year of 2027. Work is now underway to develop an action plan to determine allocation of that funding that aligns with existing priorities and targets.

I also think that it's important to state that our government continues to invest in early learning childcare to the tune of 70 percent of our — this year — \$46 million that we are investing in early learning and childcare. That's a significant investment. That is how we've been able to get where we are today. We recognize that unforeseen inflation has resulted in financial pressures with some program operators. The Early Learning and Child Care branch is reviewing the funding model to identify any changes needed to alleviate financial pressures for operators. In the short term, the branch is also reviewing what operating expenses are deemed eligible for inclusion in the operational funding model in order to provide additional financial support to operators.

I just felt that it was important to state those other aspects of this, as there were direct questions posed today in third reading.

Again, I want to thank everyone for their support and I want to make a special thank you to our former Minister of Education for all of her hard work in terms of helping to move this shift in early learning childcare to where it is today. This is definitely a team effort. I again thank everyone who has contributed. Thank you again to the members opposite for their support in third reading today.

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 third reading of Bill No. 48 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 48 has passed this House.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 50, entitled *Inclusive Yukon Families Act*.

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. 50: *Inclusive Yukon Families Act* — continued

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 50, entitled *Inclusive Yukon Families Act*.

Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Madam Chair, I just want to welcome back Assistant Deputy Minister Jen Gehmair and Caitlin Kerwin from our policy development and lead work for Bill No. 50, *Inclusive Yukon Families Act*, and I look forward to further questions and debate.

MLA Tredger: I have one letter that I neglected to read into the record when we were debating this yesterday, so I'm going to read the letter and that will be the end of my questions for general debate. I'll save the rest of my comments for line-by-line debate.

This letter which was sent to the minister — sorry — I just want to add that the minister said that she didn't receive all of the letters that I read into the record yesterday, and that's correct. Some of them were sent only to me to be shared this way. The one that I'm about to read — I know that she did receive it. So, this letter-writer wrote:

“Dear Minister McPhee,

“I am writing to express my concern about one part of the proposed *Inclusive Families Act*, specifically the change that would require parents to disclose whether they contributed

reproductive material to the conception of their child in order to get a birth certificate for their child.

“I believe many families who conceived their children with the help of a donor will find this requirement invasive and frightening, particularly for queer and trans families who will be disproportionately affected. I am worried that non-biological parents will feel alienated and invalidated by the process. I worry about what could happen with this data in the future. We are in a time when queer and trans rights are being rolled back across the world. It is not unimaginable that there could be a future homophobic and transphobic government who could use this information in a way that would be dangerous for families.

“I understand that the goal is to protect the rights of the child to have information about their genetic history. I have been told that the MLA for Whitehorse Centre is planning to move an amendment to make it optional for parents to include this information at the time of registering the birth. I believe this is a good compromise that allows parents to document genetic information if they feel comfortable doing so. It would also mean that parents who do not feel comfortable formally documenting their biological relationships could still get a birth certificate for their child. I urge you to support the amendment.

“The *Inclusive Families Act* is an exciting and much needed step forward for the Yukon. I hope that you will consider the change so that the act can be a law that we will all celebrate, and will have a wholly positive impact for queer and trans families.”

That is the end of the letter and the end of my comments for general debate.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Madam Chair, I thank the member opposite for that contribution. I want to note only that the section that is being referred to with respect to recording the contribution by parents, if that information is known to them, of the reproductive material and whether they contributed any such material to the creation of that child is in absolutely no way designed or included here to alienate anyone.

In fact, the parents would have the obligation to record that information for their children. It’s not about alienating parents; it’s not even really about parents. I appreciate the letters, comments, and extensive questions that we had yesterday with respect to fully fleshing out the concerns. I do respect all of those concerns, but there are choices to be made as we modernize the language being used and as we remove assumptions that have been made for many, many years with respect to a child’s biological and genetic history.

I believe we have an obligation for those children — of all families — and the children who will be conceived by many, many different kinds of families in the territory, pursuant to the miracles of medical science going forward, and that we have a responsibility to those children to provide them with as much information about their background as possible. It is the responsibility that is included here in this legislation by way of that section. It is designed to protect children and children’s rights, and while I truly appreciate that parents could find this a difficult task to carry out, it is not designed to impact them in any way other than to protect the rights of their children.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 50, entitled *Inclusive Yukon Families Act*?

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

MLA Tredger: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem clauses 1 through 50 of Bill No. 50, entitled *Inclusive Yukon Families Act*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming clauses 1 through 50 of Bill No. 50 read and agreed to

Chair: The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem clauses 1 through 50 of Bill No. 50, entitled *Inclusive Yukon Families Act*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 through 50 deemed read and agreed to

Chair: Is there any debate on clause 51?

On Clause 51

MLA Tredger: We had extensive debate on this clause, and I don’t think it will come as a surprise to anyone that I am going to move an amendment to this clause.

Amendment proposed

MLA Tredger: I move:

THAT Bill No. 50, entitled *Inclusive Yukon Families Act*, be amended in clause 51 at page 18:

(a) by replacing in the text of the new paragraph 5(b) of the *Vital Statistic Act*, as enacted by that clause, the expression “including” with the expression “who may indicate”; and

(b) by replacing in the text of the new paragraph 5(c) of the *Vital Statistics Act*, as enacted by that clause, the expression “whose” with the expression “who may indicate”.

Chair: Order. The amendment is in order. However, there is an incorrect reference to the page number.

I understand the member would like a brief recess.

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 clause-by-clause consideration of Bill No. 50. We are currently on the amendment to clause 51.

Is there any further debate?

MLA Tredger: I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to withdraw the amendment that I just moved in order to replace it with a corrected amendment.

Unanimous consent re withdrawing amendment to clause 51

Chair: The Member for Whitehorse Centre has requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to withdraw their amendment in order to replace it with a corrected amendment.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Amendment to Clause 51 withdrawn

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is clause-by-clause consideration of Bill No. 50, entitled *Inclusive Yukon Families Act*.

We are currently on clause 51.

Amendment proposed

MLA Tredger: I move:

THAT Bill No. 50, entitled *Inclusive Yukon Families Act*, be amended in clause 51 at page 19 and 20 by, in subclause (b), replacing the expression “including” with the expression “who may indicate”.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre:

THAT Bill No. 50, entitled *Inclusive Yukon Families Act*, be amended in clause 51 at page 19 and 20 by, in subclause (b), replacing the expression “including” with the expression “who may indicate”.

MLA Tredger: I want to start by thanking the Committee for their patience with the process of this amendment.

A little background — this mirrors the original amendment that I had drafted, and that wording was shared with both of the other parties. At that time, the Minister of Justice suggested alternative wording that she felt would more accurately convey my intent; however, when I moved that wording a few moments ago, it was immediately pointed out by the Clerks that there were problems with that. So, I have gone back to the original wording that I drafted, which I think clearly conveys my intent, which is that, when registering the birth of their children, parents would have the choice to indicate whether or not they had contributed reproductive material to the conception of their child. That is, they could choose to indicate — they could choose whether they wanted to share with the government whether they had or had not been the genetic provider of material for their child’s conception.

We have had quite a bit of debate about that yesterday and a little bit earlier today. I just want to recap this provision,

because as it stands, all parents registering their children would be required to disclose that information. This is something that is not done in any other jurisdiction in Canada.

I am not opposed to us leading, but I do think we need to be very cautious if we are starting new ways of doing things that have never been done anywhere else in Canada.

I was extremely concerned yesterday to learn that, when it comes to this provision of the act, no one with lived experience was consulted by the government; no organizations or experts who represent members of the queer and trans community who will be disproportionately affected were consulted.

I attempted to fill some parts of this gap in the government’s oversight yesterday, and today I have presented letters from five different people with lived experience of this subject. These letter-writers wrote honest, vulnerable letters, and they poured out their heart, hopes, and their fears and the stories of those families to this Legislature all in an attempt to convey the harm that this provision in the act will cause them.

In answer, the minister said — quote: “... I don’t agree that this bill is discriminatory.” She’s not the one who will be discriminated against. The letter-writers have talked about the harm it will cause them. When you are putting forward a bill that will cause people harm and disproportionately cause harm to a marginalized community, I don’t know what else to call that besides “discrimination”.

I often feel the burden of being the only trans and queer member of this Legislature and trying to provide the context of that community as we make these decisions. There are a few pieces of context that I want to add to this discussion. The first is that, to be a queer or trans person building a family is almost universally to experience other people asking invasive questions about your family, asking invasive questions about everything from the method you used to conceive your children to who was involved; it is to experience other people feeling entitled to your genetic information.

These questions typically have a subtext of: But who are the real parents? I personally have experienced that; I imagine most of the letter-writers have experienced that.

So, that’s the context in which parents will be filling out the form as proposed by the government.

I also want to provide some historical context. I’ll speak to the last century in which queer and trans families have resiliently and stubbornly built families despite the best efforts of many governments. They have navigated hostile legal systems, they have endured unimaginable heartbreak, and they have persisted and succeeded in building their families in creative and persistent ways.

We’re at a relatively new time in history where this government wants to help them to build their families, but they don’t want to help them enough to listen to their voices or to seek them out. They do not want to listen to them about which parts of their proposal will help them and which will not.

There is often not a lot of trust between the queer and trans community and government, and that is not helped when, a few short years ago, this government said that they strived in their 2SLGBTQIA+ action report — they said they strived to follow the slogan of “Nothing about us without us”. It does not build

trust to see that slogan discarded as soon as it is inconvenient. We have often seen that the Liberals love to be the champions of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community but only on their terms and not on the terms of the community.

Another piece of context that I want to give — and this is hard to talk about. In the current times we live in, I don't know if I can adequately convey the true terror that I see in my community. I hear from people who are trying to figure out how to put in place the paperwork that would allow them to flee the country if they need to. I see conversations and debates asking the questions: How can we best protect ourselves into the future? Is it by arming ourselves? Is it by creating networks of resistance? Is it by engaging in politics or is it acting outside of it? People are terrified — truly, truly terrified.

That is why so many of the letter-writers raise this point that — it's not that they think that this government is going to use this information in a way that is dangerous to them, but they are very justifiably worried that a future government could. The minister said in response to these concerns that she shares their horror at what is happening in the United States, and that's nice but not very meaningful if she's not willing to take the actions that would keep people safe — that people are telling her would keep them safe.

I'm hoping that those pieces of context can help to explain the intensity of feeling around this amendment, and there are just a couple more points that I didn't cover in the general discussion that I would like to talk about.

I have been primarily sharing perspectives and concerns from the queer and trans community, but they are not the only people who will be affected by this provision of the act. I'm thinking of heterosexual couples who conceive using donors. Their voices and perspectives are not being considered as part of this decision-making on this clause because no one has asked them. No one has asked them for letters of support or letters against. No one has gone to them about this clause and asked: How would it affect you?

So, I can only speculate, but I would guess that most of those couples have used a donor because of infertility. Often, infertility is a deeply long, complex, and painful journey, and at the end of that journey, these people will have no choice but to disclose that journey to this government — and for what? Unless the parents voluntarily disclose information about who the child is related to, all that the child can learn from this provision is that it's not their parents.

Requiring parents to say that they are not genetically related to their children will not give their children information about their genetic disorders or health conditions that they may have. It will not give them access to lineage rights. It will not connect them to any aspect of their personal, cultural, or social information related to their genetic connections. It will only tell them that they are or are not genetically related to their parents — nothing more. That is not worth it.

I ask all members of this Assembly to support this amendment.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This is a deeply felt concern by the member opposite; it is clear to see this. We absolutely respect the deeply shared concerns provided in the letters that were

written either to me or to the member opposite, but I need to correct a few things. I appreciate the intensity of the submission, so I'm not saying that there is anything wrong with any of this, but this is not about, as the member opposite just said, sharing information with government; this provision is about recording that information for children.

This information is, of course, collected and held by government — Vital Statistics — like many, many other vital information for our society and community, but this is a provision that is not used in other places because other jurisdictions in this country have not yet moved to the non-gender-specific language that we have included here in this bill. With great responsibilities, it is important that when you make this leadership move and you confer with your community and a commitment has been made by this government to make sure that we are making non-gender-specific language and programs that are important to create a more inclusive and diverse community, there comes responsibilities with that. The responsibilities are a balance that is required here by this legislation, as we discussed at length yesterday, to protect the rights of the children.

I stand by my comments yesterday. This is not designed to discriminate against anyone. It's designed to protect the information for children who are born of the medical science that is available to us for all kinds of families who wish to use reproductive processes to create and grow their families. That is something that is very strongly supported in this bill coming forward.

The social context is extremely important here. I absolutely feel for those parents and individuals who have taken the time to write to me or to the member opposite, and I very much appreciate their concerns. This is not to be personal. While we all come to this Legislative Assembly with personal experiences, please don't discount my personal experiences or anyone else's personal experiences because they don't seem to be the same kinds of personal experiences as any one of the others of us, because nobody knows what is happening in another person's life or what their experiences are.

My job here, Madam Chair, is to pass a bill that is balanced and that protects the rights of the children as well as takes us a very long way down the road of appreciating new, modern, inclusive families here in the territory. I do appreciate the intensity of the member opposite's feelings. It is incredibly important that we recognize that the information that will be collected on behalf of children in this context is, in fact, protected. That information is not available to government generally. It is not available to individuals who might be seeking that information.

It is incredibly important that we support the rights of the child to have access to their information by enabling the registration of that information related to the child's genetic connection as part of the birth registration when it is available. It is critical information that a child may want to access whether they know it as a child or a little human or whether or not that ever becomes an issue for them or is something that they want to know. It is part of their personal history — their personal history, not the parents' — the children's. It is important for

them to be able to inquire about medical conditions or to potentially claim heritage or other lineage rights.

We do understand that there might be some questions from Yukoners — and the member opposite has eloquently put those forward — about those who use assisted reproductive technologies, but that is for all families. I also very much appreciate the impact — disproportionate, perhaps — on the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and I appreciate that being part of our discussion here.

I too want to reassure the members of this Legislative Assembly that the information is never available to the public. It is included as part of the statement used to register the birth of any child and it won't appear on a birth certificate or on any public-facing document that is used to access other government services or identification. This information will be available to the child who has become an adult upon request.

The rationale for including this requirement stems from responses which have not exactly been accurately reflected here in our conversation by the member opposite — but responses to our engagement showed that 65 percent of the respondents felt strongly that children should have the right to know their biological background, 19 percent of the respondents felt neutral to this particular sentiment, and only 16 disagreed. We did a public survey; 70 percent of those individuals who responded to that survey self-identified as members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. I don't think that is known. I think that is an important factor.

Additionally, a copy of the birth registration may only be used for a reason deemed satisfactory to the registrar or upon a court order. It is important to note that this information is secured by professionals. To address the issue and strengthen the protection of personal information, we plan to set parameters on the regulations under the *Vital Statistics Act* and to limit who may access that information.

I think it is incredibly important to note that this is respective of all kinds of parents who conceive with medical assistance, and they will not be asked to provide this information for any reason but for their children.

Ms. White: I am going to wade into something that I have very little personal experience about, as do many of us in this Chamber. But I think that it is important to note right now that, regardless of what the design or the intention behind the design, there will be consequences and they will disproportionately affect the queer and trans community.

I pulled up the “what we heard” document, and I am looking for the question — what was asked — but I am not confident that the question was asked in such a way that would highlight the vulnerability.

I think the real concern is — it is not fear of the current government. It's fear of the unknown and what could happen. I don't think that anybody could look at what's happening in the United States right now for trans folk and say: Ah, we saw this coming. No one could have said that.

So, when we're talking about the requirement of folks to have to share the genetic reproductive material that was included in the conception of a child — rightfully so, it's making people feel vulnerable, and rightfully so, it feels very

personal. Again, it's consequences — we hear often in this Chamber when we are having conversations whether consequences are intended or unintended. So, when we look at what is happening south of the border, we recognize that this is a big deal, and this is about the future.

I appreciate the minister said: Well, you know, we're first — we're going first; we're leading. But I don't think that this is an area where we need to lead. I think that there is an opportunity right now with the amendment brought forward by my colleague to have the opt-in ability to identify, and I can appreciate when the minister says that it's not going to be available to government generally, but for the trans community — and the United States of America right now where birth certificates and drivers' licences don't necessarily match — they are feeling that real fear of the information that government holds.

So, what we're talking about right now is — we're not talking about right now; we're talking about the future. How do we protect folks in the future? I appreciate the things the minister has said and it's about children and it's about them being adults and being able to ask the question, but right now, my concern is around those children's families.

When we talk about information collected and held by government — again, I don't think anyone could have anticipated what is happening in the United States where social security information that is supposed to be held in confidence by government is being used and being weaponized. When we have seen a movement across the country against trans Canadians — whether we talk about the 1 Million March for Children, whether we talk about the rally that was held outside this building, whether we talk about people who refuse to use pronouns — it is happening in this country, and that is something that we should consider when we talk about this — is that there are going to be real consequences whether intended or not. And when we hear someone like the MLA for Whitehorse Centre share their story — which is deeply personal — and they share the stories of other people — which are deeply personal — and they're talking about the real fear that they have, I think we need to listen.

We spend a lot of time in this Chamber, and we talk about things that we are experts in; we talk about things that we are not; we talk about hearing from community members; we talk about being influenced by communities who have more experience. We saw it yesterday with amendments to the *Early Learning and Child Care Act*. We have seen it in amendments to other pieces of legislation where we recognize that someone knew more than we did. I think that, when we look at this clause, there is a whole legion of people in the territory right now who we don't know that they had fertility problems or that they needed a donor because they never had to disclose that — but that will change.

When we heard the stories that were shared yesterday about families and about what those families look like and how they were created, that no longer is going to be a story for the family to share; it's going to be what the government is asking of them. When the Yukon NDP talked about the importance of the fertility tax credit, it was because people were sharing their

really hard stories about conceiving families. This is going to affect all those folks in the future going forward.

So, what we are asking right now is that we use the precautionary principle here and move cautiously forward. Instead of being first in the country of insisting that folks “shall” register that information, the language that we currently see in clause 51, what we’re asking for is that parents have the ability to say “who may indicate.” What we are asking is that we recognize that we are in a good spot right now in the Yukon and Canada, but we realize that we have no control over the future. We don’t know what’s going to happen in five years, and we don’t know what’s going to happen in 10 years.

When we look at other issues that have been discussed in this Chamber by different elected people, we can see the path that has been different. We can see the path in this makeup right now which is different from what used to exist. We now talk about things like overdose and death due to toxic drug supply. We talk about it now comfortably. We have talked about things like access to abortion in a way that wasn’t discussed — couldn’t be discussed — here in 2012. So, we have to recognize that what we are asking for right now is to put in measures of protection. We are asking that, when we look at this, we recognize that folks outside of ourselves will be deeply affected by this, that those folks right now are looking at what’s happening in the United States with fear and trepidation and that they can see that dialogue happening here, that they can see that movement rising here.

So, when I think about the amendment that has been brought forward by my colleague and I recognize the place it’s coming from and I recognize the absolute courage it takes to have the conversation about how it affects them as an individual in their own family, understanding that many families are being asked those questions already by people who don’t understand the harm that they’re doing, it’s one of the things that we’re looking to address here.

So, I’ll be supporting this amendment. I’ll be standing with my colleague, I’ll be standing with the queer and trans community, I’ll be standing with the community that has accessed fertility support, and I hope that others stand with us.

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, I’ll take a moment to weigh in on this. I have listened carefully to the debate today as well as in previous days of general debate on this bill, and I have heard the arguments on both sides. I think that the MLA for Whitehorse Centre has brought forward, earnestly, an issue that they have heard from the community that is significant. I think that they have heard concerns that have been raised by the queer and trans community who have legitimate concerns about feelings about the bill and this particular provision.

That being said, the minister I think has also made a clear point that there is a matter of children’s rights at play here as well. As part of the way that I help navigate this, I called the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate earlier today and had a brief discussion with her about that. I’m convinced as well, based on that conversation and the minister’s comments both today and in previous days, that there is an issue here in relation to the rights of children. So, it puts us in a difficult position to weigh those.

But based on the balance of what I’ve heard, I want to say that I certainly appreciate where the MLA for Whitehorse Centre is coming from on this. I appreciate the bringing forward of the letters and reading them into the record and the legitimate concerns that are expressed therein.

But ultimately, I think that the wisest course of action is to maintain the bill in its current form, and I won’t support the amendment today. I would, however, encourage the minister to proactively reach out to both the queer and trans community to consult about this issue that has been raised. I would also encourage her to reach out directly to the Child and Youth Advocate to consult specifically about this matter and to come back to the House in the future with either a future amendment or a future discussion about this issue, because I do think that there is a legitimate issue being discussed here today, and it is difficult to weigh that without the benefit of having a proper amount of consultation either from the Child and Youth Advocate by way of a child-rights impact assessment or otherwise.

With that, Madam Chair, I will conclude my comments and note that I appreciate the Member for Whitehorse Centre bringing this forward. I explained my views on this to them earlier, and I would encourage the minister to make a commitment to bringing this forward in the future after an appropriate consultation with both those affected as well as the Child and Youth Advocate.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you to everyone who has weighed in on this difficult matter. It is difficult because it is a balance, and we have great responsibilities here in this Legislative Assembly when we are making laws to strike a balance, and sometimes, almost always, that includes difficult choices.

I just wanted to note that I appreciate the comments from the Leader of the Official Opposition. We mentioned this yesterday, but it might not have been available to everyone. I have reached out to the Child and Youth Advocate with respect to the specifics of the wording of section 51 as it sits in the bill and noted her comments — that she appreciated the protection of the children’s rights that were noted there and that she thought that we should be careful when we are dealing with regulations with respect to this matter and have places for this information to be — perhaps on a different page on the forms — that she would be working with us to help develop regulations, and that was a suggestion that we were very pleased to accept at the Department of Health and Social Services.

Second lastly, I note that in the letters we have seen and the stories that we have heard — they are all so heartfelt. We appreciate that all of those individuals have said that this is information that will be — that they will share this with their children, but not every family will do that.

We literally have spent 50 or 100 years hiding information from adopted children, and the heartache and pain that has caused many families is something that we must learn from. So, given the opportunity to protect children’s rights in this way — that this information be recorded on their behalf and that this be the responsibility of lawmakers in a modern world to proceed

with legislation that changes the way that we talk about families provides an opportunity for us to really move forward in a way in which inclusive Yukon families are at the heart of this legislation.

I appreciate everyone's comments, and I would like to thank each and every individual who brought forward their stories through the member opposite and the heartfelt chance that they have taken to provide that information to her and to me in some letters, and that has certainly made the impact of the work that we are doing here understood by all.

Ms. White: The one thing that I want to highlight is children from adopted families. Their parents won't be ferreted out in the future. We won't see what is happening south of the border in the same case in the same way as the example that the minister just used as what we're trying to talk about. I appreciate the harm that has been caused. We are talking about a different situation and a different demographic; we're talking about different risks and different causes, and that is of concern, which is why I think that the amendment is so important.

Chair: Is there any further debate on the amendment?

Shall the amendment carry?

Some Hon. Members: Count.

Count

Chair: A count has been called.

Bells

Chair: All those in favour, please rise.

Members rise

Chair: All those opposed, please rise.

Members rise

Chair: The results are two yea, 15 nay.

Amendment to Clause 51 negatived

Chair: Is there any further debate on clause 51?

Clause 51 agreed to

On Clause 52

Clause 52 agreed to

On Clause 53

Hon. Ms. McPhee: There has been identified an error with respect to the drafting in section 53. The members opposite, I understand, have been advised of this.

I have also noted that an amendment will be appropriately necessary to correct the wording of section 53.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I move:

THAT Bill No. 50, entitled *Inclusive Yukon Families Act*, be amended by replacing clause 53 at page 20 with the following:

“Section 7 amended

“The following subsection is added after subsection 7(1):

“(1.01) If the registrar receives information satisfactory to the registrar that includes the particulars of a person who is not the parent of a child and whose reproductive material was involved in the conception of the child, but who did not sign

the statement referred to in subsection (1), the registrar shall include particulars of the person in the registration of birth of the child.”

Chair: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South:

THAT Bill No. 50, entitled *Inclusive Yukon Families Act*, be amended by replacing clause 53 at page 20 with the following:

“Section 7 amended

“The following subsection is added after subsection 7(1):

“(1.01) If the registrar receives information satisfactory to the registrar that includes the particulars of a person who is not the parent of a child and whose reproductive material was involved in the conception of the child, but who did not sign the statement referred to in subsection (1), the registrar shall include particulars of the person in the registration of birth of the child.”

Is there any debate on the amendment?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: First, let me bring to the Legislative Assembly my profound apologies on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice, who discovered this error following the bill having been presented.

The intent of subsection 7(1.01) is to provide the registrar with the authority to record particulars of gamete donors on a birth registration in cases where the donor is incapacitated or deceased and cannot sign the statement. The extent of the registrar's discretion will be outlined in regulation.

We will be developing with further engagement, and the proposed revised wording of paragraph (1.01) under section 53 of the bill provides greater clarity regarding the conditions under which the registrar is able to record the information of a gamete donor. The intention is clear that it is only in very specific cases of incapacitation or a gamete donor being deceased, but that information is known and is presented to the registrar to be included in a registration of birth to provide a greater picture for the child. I note that the clarity that is provided here replaces the entirety of the wording of section 53 with the wording that is presented on the amendment to provide that greater clarity and to provide the correct references to each of the sections with respect to that section.

MLA Tredger: When I read this amendment, it seems to me — it says: “... if the registrar receives information satisfactory to the registrar ...” It doesn't, to the best of my knowledge, dictate what form that information needs to take. So, it doesn't necessarily need to be through the birth registration. Could someone send a statement to the registrar after the parents have submitted the birth registration and say: I would like to be included? Would the parents have to consent to that? It is not implied to me here.

Can the minister clarify?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yes, this is an enabling section that would allow additional information — two requirements there somehow presented to the registrar, ultimately satisfactory to the registrar, with no doubt a very high bar. Regulations will

direct what sort of information, what the circumstances would need to be, and who would need to consent. It's a very good question as to whether parents would need to consent. That makes some sense, but all of which is to be determined in specific regulations to enable this section, and it is anticipatory in that it is a method following birth registration where additional information might be included.

MLA Tredger: I have to say that I am quite shocked, because I asked rather extensively yesterday if information about a donor could be included without the parents' consent and was repeatedly — repeatedly — assured by the minister that it could not. I can think of a lot of situations where it would be pretty problematic to have someone be able to provide information on the birth registration without the consent of the parents. The first one that comes to mind — someone is sexually assaulted, conceives a child, decides to keep the child, does not, for obvious reasons, put forward the name of their assaulter on the birth registration. Could that person then write in and demand to be included in the birth registration?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The government house amendment is a corrective amendment to remove the reference to section 7.01 of the *Vital Statistics Act* in subsection 7(1), because it is incorrectly included there in the bill that is before us.

One criterium of bringing forward this amendment — one purpose — is to correct that by removing that reference, because it is incorrect, by adjusting the wording of the added subsection 7(1.01) to the *Vital Statistics Act* as proposed in Bill No. 50 to provide greater clarity regarding the conditions under which the registrar is able to record the information of a gamete donor.

The wording of section 53 has always been in the bill and available to those observing the bill. I have been clear with our apology about it being incorrect. The same rationale applies to revised wording in the government house amendment. This amendment is to provide the authority to the registrar to include information about the child's genetics should the donor be unable to sign the statement — for instance, in the case of their death or their incapacity to sign the statement.

MLA Tredger: I didn't actually get an answer to my question. In the case where a child is conceived through sexual assault, could the person who assaulted the parent submit to the registrar to have their information included in the birth record?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is always complicated to answer questions or to address them if they are speculative, but I feel confident in saying no.

MLA Tredger: Can the minister point me to the part of this clause that gives her confidence in saying no?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This clause, Madam Chair, is quite specific. The amendment is to provide the authority to the registrar to include information about the child's genetics should the donor be unable to sign the statement at the time of the birth registration. We know through other provisions in this act that allow parents and/or gamete donors, if they all agree, to be included in a child's birth registration, but should a donor be unable to sign the statement, such as in the case of their death or their incapacity to sign this statement, that information could

be included if it was appropriately presented to the registrar and satisfactory to the registrar that it was accurate and should be included, presumably with the parents' knowledge and support, because that's exactly how a birth registration would be done if the gamete donor was able to sign.

MLA Tredger: I am reading the amendment, and I can't help but notice that it does not say "unable". It says that "... a person who is not the parent of the child and whose reproductive material was involved in the conception of the child, but who did not sign the statement referred to..." So, "did not sign". There are a lot of reasons why someone may not sign; for example, the parents might not ask them to sign or give them the opportunity to sign.

It seems to me that this person would still be covered under this subsection. Can the minister explain to me how that's not the case?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As I've said, the details will be included in regulation. The intention is clear, and it is on the record in this debate. It is intended for a very narrow purpose. It is intended for the registrar to have the ability to interact, to impact the birth registration in this way if it is satisfactory to them and if it meets all the requirements that will be set out in regulation, where we will enter engagement — extensive — for the purpose of making sure that this is a very narrow opportunity.

MLA Tredger: The situation as I understand it is that we have an amendment that says one thing and the minister says: Well, it's not actually intended to do all of the things that are implied in the amendments; it's intended for a narrower subset of those and it's on the record, so we just need to trust that is going to happen.

I have to say that I need some time to consult with my team, and I'm going to ask for a recess.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is clause-by-clause consideration of Bill No. 50. We are currently on the amendment to clause 53.

Is there any further debate?

MLA Tredger: I appreciate the Committee taking that recess. During that time, I consulted with my team. The amendment to this clause is, in our view, significant and will take some time to consider and more time than can be afforded in a recess.

In order to give everyone in this House time to consider that amendment and to figure out a way forward, I move that the Chair report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, 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 10 minutes.

Recess

Deputy Chair (MLA Tredger): Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

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

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*.

Public Service Commission

Deputy Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would like to welcome the Public Service Commissioner, Meagan Lang, to the Legislative Assembly. It's my honour to be here to present the Public Service Commission's budget estimates for 2025-26.

It is fortuitous that we are up here today in the Public Service Commission, because today is Jacquie Van Marck's last day in the Public Service Commission. She has been working up there for so many years — 18 years in government but three years with the Public Service Commission. Because I won't be able to go upstairs and see her in the hallway during her last minutes, we just want to wish her, on behalf of the whole Legislative Assembly, a great retirement. I was told by the Sergeant-at-Arms that she is going to Mexico, so I will have to wait until she gets back before I get to thank her again for her service. I know that she's listening in right now and we just want to say: Thank you, Jacquie, and we're very jealous.

With that, I will start on the budget items for today. For the Public Service Commission, the total estimated budget for 2025-26, including capital expenditures, is approximately \$59.5 million, representing an increase of \$5.9 million, or approximately 11 percent, from the previous year's restated main estimates.

Of this total, \$59.4 million is allocated to the operation and maintenance budget, while \$63,000 is earmarked for capital expenditures. The primary driver of the O&M budget increase is an adjustment to the corporate fund for Employee Future Benefits, the largest line item in the Public Service Commission's budget. This fund accounts for both current year costs and changes to future liabilities for post-employment and pre-retirement obligations. Adjustments to this corporate fund are determined annually through an actuarial review. Following the most recent actuarial review in June 2024 — which assessed factors such as accumulated service, wage rates, extended health premiums, interest rates, and demographic trends affecting retirement — the employee future benefits estimate is increased by approximately \$4.9 million. This is

largely due to an increase in extended health premium rates, which took effect in April 2024.

Other budget increases include: \$174,000 to cover a 1.5-percent salary increase for section M positions — that is managers, legal officers, and deputy ministers — and that was effective January 1, 2025; and \$830,000 for workers' compensation premium expenses, another corporate line item that is estimated to increase in line with total insurable payroll across government.

Total recoveries for 2025-26 are projected to rise by \$16,000, bringing the total to \$335,000. These recoveries reflect centralized services provided by the Public Service Commission to Crown corporations, including human resource planning and shared services. The increase aligns the budget with existing service-level agreements.

The capital budget of \$63,000 that I mentioned is allocated for equipment replacements and upgrades consistent with last year's allocation and based on anticipated need for the upcoming fiscal year.

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the Public Service Commission's 2025-26 operation and maintenance and capital main budget estimates. It is an absolute privilege and I welcome questions through you from the members opposite.

Mr. Dixon: It was around this time last year that an issue arose in the media and the Legislature around the increases to the premiums for the extended health care insurance plan that affected a number of current and retired employees.

In the media, there were some retired folks talking about those premiums going up by over 50 percent. Can the minister tell us what the increase was for this year? As a result of the dramatic increases last year, did the Public Service Commission notice the removal of any retired folks from the plan? Did they drop out of the plan because of that significant premium increase that occurred last year, and if so, how many?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will begin by saying that I am very proud to say that the Government of Yukon offers one of the most comprehensive benefit packages in the country. For the 2025 plan year, there will be no increase to extended health premiums. As the member opposite correctly identified, since last year when there was a significant rate increase for extended health premiums, claim usage and costs have stabilized, which have been supported by a decline in out-of-country claims and an increased availability of biosimilar drugs for high-cost specialty treatments.

However, effective April 1, 2025, monthly premium rates for long-term disabilities, life insurance, and dental benefits will be adjusted, and they will be adjusted to reflect increased usage and rising claim costs. There will be no rate increase for the retiree plan for 2025, and our plan offers retirees, as people in the Assembly know, the same extended health care coverage as employees. This is a rare benefit in Canada and sets us apart from many other jurisdictions where retirees either receive no coverage or pay a significantly higher share of costs.

Mr. Dixon: So, I had asked the minister if they had noticed or tracked any reduction in the number of retired

members who dropped out of the plan because of the increases and, if so, how many.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Not that we have a correlation between the data and the rationale as to why folks leave a plan — between April and May of 2024, there were 49 retirees choosing to opt out of the benefits plan, so as of now, 1,893 retirees remain enrolled in the retiree extended health care plan.

Mr. Dixon: I thank the minister for that.

I would like to move on to some questions about section M. Section M is the conditions of employment for managers, legal officers, and deputy ministers, so it applies to those employees of the public service who are not covered by the YEU under the normal system.

The minister's briefing notes from the fall indicated that a comprehensive review of section M was completed in August of last year. Can the minister tell us what changes resulted following that comprehensive review? Can he provide an explanation for why that comprehensive review was conducted?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite mentioned that there was a review. I could add as well that section M is to be reviewed every three years, so that is why it was reviewed, with resulting recommendations being made to the Public Service Commissioner. Management Board is also sometimes involved with approving conditions if they have a financial impact to them.

Policies that managers should pay particular attention to but are not limited to in the conversations are things like conflict-of-interest-related policies, respectful workplace policies, and also corporate health and safety policies.

Mr. Dixon: I would like to hone in on the specific aspect of section M with regard to performance pay. The performance pay is conducted annually for employees who fall under section M, and that performance pay is meant to supplement their annual salary. So, there is a chart that provides guidance for the annual increase as a result of that performance pay. It's on page 12 of the section and document that is dated August 2024. It includes a range of zero percent for employees who are deemed to be below expectations based on their performance review to the highest level, which, of course, is outstanding contribution, which allows a performance award eligibility of five to six percent.

Is the range from zero to six percent, including four different categories, something that was changed in the recent review? If not, when was the current range of performance award eligibility percentages established?

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, yeah, changes have been made. It has been my experience that, every year, we get suggestions to tweak things along the way to make sure that we're following inside of certain parameters that make more sense each year. For example, the change this year is the addition of a category.

So, what you would have seen before was three categories: below expectations, solid contribution, and outstanding contribution. The range was from zero to seven percent.

We then added another section here — contributing — so, below expectations, contributing, solid contribution, outstanding contribution. The range went from zero to seven

percent to zero to six percent. As I recall off the top of my head, not necessarily from the department here, the changes were based upon looking at what was awarded in the previous year and the range that was indicative of that award.

Mr. Dixon: Can the minister tell us how many employees fall under section M? How many — the number? Can the minister tell us how many employees fall under section M?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will get that information very quickly. I don't have it right here, but I will get it in the next couple of minutes.

Mr. Dixon: Does the department track the number who receive each different category? For instance, if there are 1,000 employees, do 250 get below expectations, 250 get contributing, and so on? Does the PSC track that?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The nature of these awards is by department. If the question is: Does the Public Service Commission take in that data? — no. Could they? They could if that was requested. It would be another task that is not necessarily something that they do, but it's something we might consider.

Mr. Dixon: I guess I will get to the point, which is that we hear that there are inconsistencies with the application of the performance pay across departments, that some departments are more lenient and lucrative with their awarding of performance pay, where other departments are not. I am just wondering if the Public Service Commission looks at averages across departments, and how do they determine that there is consistency applied across all departments?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It's a good question. We'll start with the fact that a lot of other jurisdictions don't even give these types of bonuses. We have seen this change happen — you know, from the first years that I was in the Premier's role and moving forward, we have done different iterations of how these are awarded with the ultimate goal of accomplishing what the member opposite is driving at, which is to make sure that we can get this as fair as possible.

What I see from my chair, either as the Minister of Finance and also as the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, is a couple of different departments working in tandem to make sure that we are trying to smooth out that differential that the member opposite brings up.

Mr. Dixon: If the department is able to provide some data around tracking of those numbers, I would appreciate that. The minister indicated that he doesn't have that at his fingertips, and I understand that, but perhaps we could get that at a later date.

I would also like to note that a similar concern has been raised about the extra hours reward, which is another part of section M. So, the extra hours reward is meant for managers who are rewarded for work exceeding the regular hours worked. Now, managers, of course, already have a manager's leave, but this extra hours reward is meant to go beyond that. Again, we have heard indications from folks in the government that the extra hours reward is applied very inconsistently from department to department — that some departments apply it very easily and some do not. Oftentimes, it's driven by a

department's budgetary requirements internally. So, if a department — a smaller department that is tighter on cash is less likely to apply extra hours rewards to their section M employees.

What I'm looking for from the minister today is simply an explanation of how they can enforce — how the Public Service Commission can enforce that from their corporate level and ensure that there is consistency applied across the departments so that there is a fairness for employees regardless of which department they work in.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Extra hours reward — this is a new initiative that has come out of our government. You know, we hear a lot of stories of very dedicated public servants who work tirelessly and work evenings and weekends. We see certain things happening whether it be global pandemics or you name it.

The decision here was to have a lump sum payment provided to eligible managers to reward those managers who have worked hours that far exceed their regular hours of work and well beyond — above and beyond — the 75 hours provided for the management leave. This reward process and timeline align with the annual PDP process. Although not tied to a performance pay necessarily, a management performance will be considered, but the eligibility is very specific on this. It is the first year, and it is going to be reviewed by the core agencies — the deputy ministers of those core agencies — but this eligibility — the reward is applicable to appointed managers who have worked a minimum is six months in a management position during the performance year.

The award is calculated at three percent of the manager's substantive salary as of May 31 of that review year. All managers are eligible to be considered regardless of where the manager's salary is within that salary range, and the reward is limited to situations requiring the manager to work hours that far exceed the regular hours of work.

Such situations will include things like emergency situations — floods, fires, evacuations, health emergencies, supporting recovery efforts, safety preparedness, 24/7 operational support, government initiatives, and prolonged situations with increased work demands that are time sensitive or special designated projects or negotiations where time constraints are significant.

The deputy ministers are excluded from receiving this reward.

Deputy Chair, as you can see by the very nature of the qualifications, not all departments would necessarily be equally as responsible for things like floods and fires or emergency preparedness.

Again, as this is the first year that we have been doing this, we will be reviewing the intake and the application.

Mr. Dixon: So, did the extra hours reward come about as a result of the comprehensive review that was conducted last year and came into force in August 2024?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, it did.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that it is a new measure. But again, for the same reason as I said about the performance pay, I guess I would urge the minister to ensure that they track

closely the application of that extra hours reward and ensure that it is applied consistently across departments. Obviously, different departments have different requirements based on the type of work, but we do hear some early concerns about discrepancies and disparities between departments.

I will leave it there for now. If the minister is able to provide any data that tracks the application of either performance pay, extra hours rewards, or anything else as well as the top-line number of section M employees, I will appreciate that at a future date or at later time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I thank the member opposite for his questions. There are 580 employees under section M.

Ms. White: I, of course, thank the minister and his official here today. I will start by saying that we had an excellent briefing, which answered a lot of my questions. I am cognizant of the amount of time we have left in this Sitting, so it's going to be a lightning round with an anticipated clearing of the budget before we hit 5:25. I am warning Hansard that you might have to slow me down.

I really wanted to talk about major games leave. I was surprised to know that the Yukon government had a major games policy. I say this because it is not easy to find. It's not advertised. It's not out front and centre. The reason why I want to bring this up first is that we are hosting the Arctic Winter Games 2026. They have started the volunteer drive right now. When I was at the inaugural kickoff, two businesses came forward saying that they were going to make sure that their employees could volunteer, and I thought, "How fantastic." Then I was so surprised when I asked during the briefing — because it turns out that the Yukon government has the ability as well, but they don't talk about it.

Are there any plans for this to be promoted within the Yukon government knowing that we are the largest employer in the territory and could fill up all those volunteer positions in a short amount of time? Are there any thoughts to promoting the major games participation policy ahead of the 2026 Arctic Winter Games?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Let's start the promoting right here, right now, but I will say that, yes, there is a plan, for sure. Just for folks who don't know, the Government of Yukon is very proud to sponsor events like the 2026 Arctic Winter Games. The hardest thing I ever did as a Premier was to cancel the games. I might just get emotional even thinking about it right now.

I am so stoked to see that the games are back and that the athletes, volunteers, parents, and community have something to celebrate. Athletic excellence is absolutely a source of inspiration and pride in our community, and it's definitely something that we want to participate in more fulsomely this time.

The major games participation policy applies to all employees hired under the *Public Service Act* and the *Education Act*. If you are a Team Yukon athlete, coach, mission staff, member of the cultural contingent, or an official referee, you may apply for leave without loss of pay during those games. When Yukon is hosting major games, volunteers

obviously play a lot of leading roles and they also may apply for that leave in that volunteer capacity.

The Government of Yukon encourages the participation of employees in the games, at games activities, and with respect to operation requirements and ongoing service delivery, so this is an excellent opportunity for folks to still volunteer even though they have obligations at work. We will have more to say on our website very soon.

Ms. White: I am looking forward to that, and hopefully, it will be front and centre and easy to find and not by the word search through the searching mechanism.

One of the things that I really appreciate about the major games — the minister just talked about — is the pride we take in sportsmanship and all those things. But when I look at the policy, it talks about participation in the Arctic Winter Games, the Canada Games, the North American Indigenous Games, the Special Olympics, and the Western Canada Summer Games. The reason why I wanted to read those out is because there is one missing, in my mind, which is the Canada 55+ Games. I will highlight that not everyone who works for Yukon government retires at 55 and not everyone who participates in the Canada 55+ Games is 75.

I think that there is a real opportunity to allow the public service members who are interested in sport and who are interested in competing in the Canada 55+ Games an opportunity to participate. I'll note that those games didn't start until 1996, and the first time Yukon sent a contingent was in 2007, and I know it has increased in popularity since then. So, I wanted to know if there was a willingness from the minister and his department to include the Canada 55+ Games in the list of activities or games that could be included.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As far as I can garner from just looking at the information we have in here, it doesn't include those games that are outside of Yukon necessarily, but this policy is up for review, and if we were to change the policy, then there would be a process for that, but it is definitely something worth considering, and I will investigate with our next bilateral and we will put it on the agenda to see if there is a — because I believe the review hasn't happened in over a decade. So, yes, it's a good policy. I don't know the pros or cons right now about why it doesn't include these other games, but we'll find out and we'll put on the next bilateral, and I think it's a good suggestion by the member opposite.

Ms. White: It looks like last time it was reviewed — it was revised — was June 28, 2011, so more than ten years — closer to 20 at this point. I look forward to that.

One of the things that I thought was important in the briefing is we talked about the number of employees who were on secondment, and I was wondering if the minister could roll us through that. The reason why I think this is important — taking experts and folks out of the public service who know what they are doing, who are great leaders within their fields, and allowing them to go work in other organizations to help elevate or train within those organizations I think is really important. I think the number of the secondments we have right now and across the breadth of where they are I think is really important, so if the minister wants to walk us through where

those folks are right now, I think that would be a lovely thing to do.

Hon. Mr. Silver: So as of April 10 of this year, there are 54 secondments in effective — effectively involved in other governments, government agencies, or First Nation organizations. So, of the 54, there are 37 Government of Yukon staff who are on secondment with various Yukon governments, Yukon First Nation governments, or First Nation organizations.

We have one employee from a First Nation organization on a secondment with our government; two Government of Yukon employees are on secondment to the federal government; two Government of Yukon employees are on secondment to Yukon University; two Government of Yukon employees are on secondment to the City of Whitehorse; three Yukon government employees are on secondment to the Yukon Hospital Corporation; and seven Outside employees are seconded with the Government of Yukon.

Ms. White: How does an employee go about seeking secondment? What are the steps that are required? How does an organization, for example, request an employee for secondment?

Hon. Mr. Silver: That answer would be complicated all day long as far as all the different ways. I will just ask for a nod or a shake of the head if there is a specific incident that the member opposite is looking for. Just in general policy — okay, thank you.

In my experience, it could be a plethora of different methodologies. You could, as an employee, make a suggestion because you know that there have been initiatives. A good example would be the co-governance on education that we are moving forward with the First Nation governments on. There could be opportunities in there, and if somebody made a suggestion to their supervisor, that is one thing. Certain agencies would be the ones who would go to the Public Service Commission and say: We think that there is an opportunity to second.

It could be a suggestion from an AYC gathering. It could be from the Yukon Forum. There could be a whole bunch of — or even federal interactions as well. I have pushed for some secondments outside of our government on regulatory processes over the years where the pandemic kind of kiboshed that, but now we are seeing some more initiatives on internal trade conversations — re-firing those conversations with the federal government — and there could be secondment opportunities therein as well. But to say that there is a one-size-fits-all reason or rationale between a multitude of governments working with the Yukon government as to how we second wouldn't be a paraphrased policy.

Ms. White: I appreciate that answer from the minister and appreciate that altogether.

Can the minister give me right now the current employee count? I recognize that it's counted or calculated differently within the Public Service Commission than in Finance, but maybe if he can walk us through those two differences and the number of employees.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'll give you the number from the Public Service Commission's perspective, because I would have to be in another department to give you theirs.

In the 2024 calendar year, the Government of Yukon workforce consisted of approximately 5,535 full-time equivalents. We always use the acronym FTEs. They're more than just acronyms; they're people. This reflects the actual hours worked, so that's the main difference, right? This would be based on hours worked. This represents an increase of nearly 220 FTEs, representing approximately a four-percent increase compared to the previous calendar year. The increase in FTEs is primarily attributed to improving health care and education services, reflecting the government's commitment to enhancing and expanding services for the Yukon. You know, in a nutshell, the Public Service Commission looks on hours worked as opposed to actual people in seats.

Ms. White: I appreciate that from the minister, and I am fiercely proud of that increase in numbers in Education and will totally defend them fiercely to the end. So, I am okay with that increase.

Could the minister please, like, walk me through the differences between auxiliary on call and casual, and then can he let me know how many auxiliary-on-call employees the Yukon government employs and how many casuals?

Hon. Mr. Silver: "Auxiliary-on-call employees" — very vital to the government's performance and workforce, contributing to the delivery of our public service by filling in for absentee employees due to illness or leave — basic definition. They also provide coverage during peak periods and special projects.

Now, auxiliary-on-call employees are members of the Yukon Employees' Union and their terms and conditions of employment are outlined in the collective agreement. While some of these terms and conditions align with those of regular employees, they are also tailored to accommodate the unique role that the auxiliary-on-call employees play within the organization.

Casual employees are not public servants, and there is a policy set out in terms and positions for those folks.

The Public Service Commission actively monitors the use of auxiliary-on-call employees across Government of Yukon and maintains open, ongoing dialogue with the Yukon Employees' Union to ensure their appropriate use.

As far as numbers — I just was confirming that our numbers matched up here. In 2024, we have 801 auxiliaries on call. Now, if you go back to 2021, that number was 862. So, it's less now — 61 fewer auxiliaries on call.

I think the other number is for casual. So, the number of casual employees is also less in 2024 than it was in 2021. The trend, as I'm looking, has gone down every year. I might as well just give you all those numbers.

So, auxiliaries on call — in 2021, 862; in 2022, same number — 862; in 2023, 821; and in 2024, 801.

Casual — in 2021, it was 296; in 2022, it was 234; in 2023, it was 205; and in 2024, it was 197.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission?

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

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$59,435,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$63,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$59,498,000 agreed to

Public Service Commission agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

MLA Tredger: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 50, entitled *Inclusive Yukon Families Act*, and directed me to report progress.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-2026*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

The following legislative return was tabled April 15, 2025:

35-1-169

Response to Written Question No. 57 re: *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* funding (McLean)

The following document was filed April 15, 2025:

35-1-326

Issues surrounding the long-term viability of early learning and child care programs in Yukon, letter re (dated April 4, 2025) from Joy Agus, Operator, Grow with Joy Limited, to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education (Dixon)