



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, April 16, 2025 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2025 Spring Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Wednesday, April 16, 2025 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**Withdrawal of motions**

**Speaker:** The Chair wishes to inform the House that the motion the Leader of the Official Opposition gave notice of yesterday, Motion No. 1264, was not placed on the Notice Paper, as the subject matter of the motion has already been decided by the House.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

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

**Speaker:** Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of Dawson City International Short Film Festival**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Dawson City International Short Film Festival. Hosted by the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture, the film festival is 26 this year. Every year is amazing and every year it seems to grow.

Interwoven into the community's spring calendar, it wouldn't be a complete Easter weekend in Dawson City without this annual gathering. Each year, Dawsonites and guests from across Canada's north are enticed to take in the event and all the creative filmmaking that it showcases. I'm sorry that I am not going to be there this year. I love this festival.

Additionally, the event's placement over Easter helps usher in the spring season and a beautiful time of year to take in all that Dawson City has to offer. I want to congratulate all of the talented filmmakers who will be showcasing their work at this year's festival. The festival, of course, wouldn't be possible without all of the excellent work of the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture. The Dawson City International Short Film Festival has entertained northerners for over a quarter century and continues to bring us together in support of local filmmakers.

The festival also offers meet and greets, filmmaking challenges, youth screenings, and awards alongside a multitude of workshops and master classes for up-and-coming filmmakers to learn and hone their craft.

Once again, I congratulate and thank KIAC, the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture, and Dawson City for all their work

to build up this event throughout its history. I encourage all film enthusiasts to check out this year's festival and enjoy the wide variety of entertainment that it provides.

I just want to make a comment, Mr. Speaker. Last year, there was this great film that my wife and I loved called *À mort le Bikini!* or the *Death to the Bikini!* It was a Québec film about a young 10-year-old girl whose parents were forcing her to have to wear a bikini top when she went to the waterslide park. She really, as a tomboy, didn't want to get there. So, all of her young friends who were boys decided to put on bikinis in support and to be allies to her. It was a really great little film.

Mr. Speaker, as we look forward to the festival this weekend, today also marks National Canadian Film Day. Since 2014, this annual day of recognition has encouraged Canadians to celebrate our stories and the many excellent filmmakers who represent our cultures, diverse experiences, and multitude of perspectives.

As part of this celebration, there are screenings at the Yukon Theatre from April 11 to 17 of two Yukon films — *Northlore* on Saturday and *A Fistful of Vodka* — along with some Canadian classics and recent films. Please check out *Northlore*; it is a great film.

This time of year marks an exciting period for taking in local film, and I hope all Yukoners will take this occasion to support our territory's artists through National Canadian Film Day and the Dawson City International Short Film Festival.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the annual Dawson City International Short Film Festival.

Since 2000, the festival has been held each year over Easter weekend. This year from April 17 to 20, Dawson City will host many artists and show films that will be a treat to view. Films from across Canada and other countries will be shown throughout the days and evenings. Now, said films must be 30 minutes or less, have not been previously submitted, filmed after January 1, 2024 to be included, and, if not in English, must be subtitled.

There is a plethora of subjects, and being a competitive film fest, it brings together artists, filmmakers, producers, and all sorts of interested folk to make the event a success.

Another feature is that filmmakers have an opportunity to apply for residency status where they have a chance to participate and present their films in special screenings and talks. Information is on the KIAC webpage.

The festival trailer by Cud Eastbound and the poster featuring the MITY Award by Jake Armstrong are both outstanding. I also learned that "MITY" means "made in the Yukon" — simple and effective. There is swag for sale; there are food and snacks to buy; there will be an opening reception with food and music; and the Perogie Street Fest has become a staple and a fun part of the weekend.

Last year, a snowstorm drove the event inside, but if anything, Dawson City is adaptable and has the ability to roll with what happens in real time. Let's hope that the weather cooperates this year.

After sunset, on the wall of the KIAC building on Princess Street — on that side — there will be film projections for everyone to see — how innovative.

For those attending, the weekend promises to be as great as advertised. Dawson knows how to make sure that their guests are treated well, and there is always something to keep you busy and entertained.

Remember, volunteers are always needed for the many crews. Sign up and get in on the action.

Good luck to all of the entries on winning a much-acclaimed award for their hard work and participation. Thank you to all of the sponsors, the staff and volunteers, the filmmakers, producers, actors, and all who make this film festival a winner.

*Applause*

**MLA Tredger:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to add our voices to recognizing the wonder that is the Dawson City International Short Film Festival.

There is something uniquely delightful about watching a tight, elegant short that is exactly the length it needs to be. They're digestible; they challenge us; they leave us enchanted; they make us think.

Since 2000, Dawson City has hosted film enthusiasts and showcased creative filmmakers, both local and from across the world, to celebrate the best short films on offer. It's a weekend jam-packed with interactive activities, workshops, and, of course, short films. So, we thank everyone who works so hard to make this festival memorable.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre My Big Bougie Beaded Earrings exhibit**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the My Big Bougie Beaded Earrings exhibit showing now at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre. Curated by KDFN citizen Teagan Vallevand, this exhibition is a bold celebration of Indigenous artistry and self-expression using statement earrings as powerful symbols of identity, creativity, and presence.

The exhibition call-out received 53 amazing submissions from First Nation artists living in or from the Yukon. From this incredible response, 21 pieces were selected for display, each telling a unique story through traditional and contemporary materials and practices. Recognizing the depth of talent and enthusiasm behind every submission, the curators also created a dedicated retail case, ensuring that the pieces not selected for the exhibit still have an opportunity to be seen and appreciated.

The My Big Bougie Beaded Earrings exhibit brilliantly places "bougie" within an Indigenous context, highlighting the interplay between high fashion, pop culture, and deep cultural heritage.

Through the artistry of these earrings, we see the fusion of modern and traditional influences and bold designs inspired by contemporary aesthetics yet grounded in time-honoured materials and techniques. The result is a collection that is both

a celebration and a reclamation of Indigenous presence in the world of high fashion and self-representation.

Since its splashy grand opening gala on March 14, the exhibit has captured the attention and admiration of Yukoners and visitors alike. Running until May 20, it not only provides a platform for these talented artists but also serves as a fundraiser, with proceeds directly supporting the artists as well as heritage programming at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre.

I encourage all Yukoners to take the opportunity to visit this extraordinary exhibit and witness first-hand the creativity, skill, and cultural pride embedded in every piece.

Today, I ask the members of this House to join me in paying tribute to the artists featured in what is without a doubt a big bougie "bead-azzling" exhibit: Cohen Quash, Florence Moses, Shirley Smith, Elaine Jakesta, Stormy Bradley, Vashti Etzel, Dennis Shorty, Mary Rose Sequia, Bobbi Rose Koe, Montana and Delaney Prysnuuk, Heather Dickson, Adanchilla Pauls Lepine, Karrie Brown, Natasha Peter, Kaylyn Baker, Kimberly Joyce Koyczan, Janelle Hager, Sarah Johnston Smith, Shandal Sam, Brianna Capot-blanc, Virginia Smith, Larissa Stanley, and, of course, our curator, Teagyn Vallevand.

I am so proud to be wearing my statement earrings today made by Kaylyn Baker.

*Applause*

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to the My Big Bougie Beaded Earrings exhibit, running from March 14 to May 20 on display in the Hudę Njú Kú gallery in the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre. Teagyn Vallevand is the curator behind a community-driven exhibit celebrating the bold, the beautiful, and the bougiest handmade earrings by local First Nation artisans, which highlight the talents of Yukon Indigenous artists through 21 carefully selected pairs of earrings on display and even more for sale to the public.

Teagyn has been a force in her advocacy efforts over the past decade, working to spread lateral kindness to strengthen her community, to empower youth, and to help herself and others to strengthen connections to Indigenous identity. Teagyn's determination and devotion to her community are truly inspiring. Her passion for art knows no bounds. Her own beadwork is masterful, and her dedication to perfecting skills and techniques in so many art forms is admirable. Beading as a skill is easily acquired but, as a form of art, takes years to cultivate. Mastering bead types and placement and colour and composition of pieces takes an artistic and keen eye and a zealous attention to detail.

The 21 pairs of earrings that make up this exhibit are made by Yukon First Nation artists, many of whom have mastered the art of beading or other forms of art. As Teagyn says, while not every pair of earrings is beaded, all of them are bougie.

I would encourage all Yukoners, if you have not had a chance to visit the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre to take a look at this exhibit, to take the time to do so. Congratulations to Teagyn and to all of the incredible artists whose artwork was selected to be part of this beautiful exhibit.

Salamat po.

*Applause*

**Ms. Blake:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to My Big Bougie Beaded Earrings. This art exhibit, hosted at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, showcases 21 pairs of beaded earrings created by Indigenous beaders across our territory. The exhibit celebrates the individual creativity and flair of the Indigenous artists who created them. It has been coordinated by Teagyn Vallevand, a citizen of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. Teagyn has not only worked hard to produce this incredible exhibit but also to bring her community together. She is educating the broader community on how to engage with Indigenous arts and crafts respectfully.

Beaded earrings have long been part of Yukon First Nation culture and economy. The process of making, wearing, and gifting these pieces holds deep significance, with each piece carrying its own unique story. The 21 pairs currently being exhibited each tell a tale in their own right. They are big, bougie, and showcase the incredible talent and voices of the artisans who created them. This event highlights the importance to know the art we buy and where it comes from.

In a world where fashion, overproduction of textiles, and cultural appropriation are rampant, it is essential to recognize how we can uphold and support Indigenous arts and industries. This exhibit runs until May 20, and I encourage everyone to go and check it out.

Thank you to the organizers and artists who have made this exhibit possible, and I look forward to seeing what else Teagyn can pull out of her sleeve.

Mahsi' cho.

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I have a document dated February 7, 2025, addressed to the Minister of Education regarding the EA allocation process, and it is copied to a number of individuals, including me.

**Speaker:** Are there any reports of committees? Petitions.

### PETITIONS

#### Petition No. 30 — received

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 30 of the First Session of the 35<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly as presented by Kate White, the Leader of the Third Party, on April 15, 2025.

The petition presented by the Leader of the Third Party meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

**Speaker:** Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 30 is deemed to be read and received. Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of

its presentation. Therefore, the Executive Council response to Petition No. 30 shall be provided on or before April 30, 2025.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

#### Petition No. 31

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, today I have a petition for tabling that reads:

This petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT open pit heap leach mining uses toxic, harmful substances and has permanently damaged lands, waters, wildlife, and plants that Yukon First Nations have lived on and stewarded since time immemorial;

open pad heap leach mining is proven to be unsafe for Yukon's environment in past operations and in the 2024 uncontained catastrophe at the Victoria Gold Eagle Gold Mine;

it is in the public interest for Yukon to complete relevant investigations before permitting any more mines, including:

(1) the independent investigation of the Eagle Gold Mine heap leach collapse;

(2) a public inquiry into the Eagle Gold Mine failure under Yukon's *Public Inquiries Act*; and

(3) a performance audit of Yukon mineral governance and devolution implementation by the Auditor General of Canada if the request by the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun is accepted; and

a collaborative process is already in place to develop new minerals legislation to ensure sustainable development by:

(1) modernizing the legal framework that assessed, regulated, and oversaw the Eagle Gold Mine; and

(2) ensuring Yukon First Nations have a meaningful role in managing their Traditional territories;

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Yukon to place a complete ban on all future open pad heap leach mining developments and to expedite both the completion of land use planning, as laid out in Yukon's *Umbrella Final Agreement*, and the development of new minerals legislation.

This petition is signed by 237 Yukoners.

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

THAT this House congratulates artists Mary Beattie, Mary Blahitka, Minnie Clark, Erin Dixon, Sho Sho Esquiro, Teaka Lewis-Clark, Calvin Morberg, Nathalie Parenteau, and Eila Vallevand on being selected to add their work to the Yukon permanent art collection.

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

**QUESTION PERIOD****Question re: Property title transfers**

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I asked the minister about policy changes that had been made within the lands branch of EMR. One of those has introduced a new requirement to fully pay for a lottery lot 30 days prior to closing. As far as we can tell, this was a change that was not made due to any legislative or regulatory change but simply an internal policy change that was apparently made without the minister's knowledge. This policy change has created new red tape and costs for home builders, which has in turn increased the cost of housing.

Yesterday, the minister said that he was going to check in with the department, so I would like to follow up. Why was this policy made, why didn't the minister know about it, and now that he knows about it, will he agree to eliminate it?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, yes, I did reach out to the department, of course. When I spoke with them yesterday, they explained that this was a change that had happened last year. It is being raised now, and I appreciate that. The department has and continues to work with the Housing and Land Development Advisory Committee, which the city had struck to work on questions around timing. They explained to me that they always work with municipalities around issues regarding timing of title. They explained that, when title is transferred from the government to the homeowner — it used to be under the title "clad to weather," but the problem was that some of the "clad to weather" — with most of the home builders, that was great, but for some home builders, they were finding that they weren't actually clad to weather. There was no physical moment of time, so they moved it, in conversation with the city, to tie it to the "third inspection of the building and electrical."

That was the response that I got from the department.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister providing an explanation from the department, but my question was: Why was this policy made, that is so significant, without the minister's knowledge? Why does he need the question in Question Period to go and get the answer?

We have heard serious concerns raised by home builders, both individually and through the Yukon Contractors Association, who have expressed concerns about this policy change. They have told us that this requirement places a significant burden on home builders and serves to increase the cost of building and the capacity to build more homes — this all during a housing crisis.

Can the minister explain why this policy change was made without his knowledge, and now that he knows about it, will he go back and correct it and eliminate this process that creates so much red tape and cost burden on home builders?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I was made aware of it a year ago or a year and a half ago when it was introduced, and I apologize that it had left my memory between then and now. The direction that I have continued to give is to please work with the City of Whitehorse or whichever municipality that we are talking about at the time. There is now also a Yukon home builders association, so I have asked that

we continue to work with them. It is about finding the right moment in time where there is a level that is achieved for that house to make sure that we also protect Yukoners who are going to purchase those homes. We saw that, in some instances, there was a problem with it.

When I talked with the department yesterday, I just encouraged them to continue to be in dialogue with groups like the City of Whitehorse, the Housing and Land Development Advisory Committee, the Yukon home builders association, and the contractors who are out there. The reason why it has been put in place is to try to make sure that it is a definable moment, which will ensure that we are protecting everybody's interests.

**Mr. Dixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, now the minister says that he did know about it last year when the policy change was made. I would remind him that he is the minister of the department; he's responsible for the policy implementation for the department. This is a policy change that was made within the department — lands branch — and it's causing issues for home builders. Now, he said that he is going to work with the city and the Home Builders' Caucus, but it's the Home Builders' Caucus of the Yukon Contractors Association that has raised this issue with the minister and with his department already. They have called on the minister and the department to eliminate this harmful policy that increases the cost of housing and increases red tape for builders.

Now that the minister seems to be more aware of this policy change, will he go back and correct it? Will he eliminate this policy change that has caused an increase in the price of homes for Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I was not aware of the concern that was being raised until the members opposite raised it yesterday, but the member opposite is suggesting that this has been drawn to my attention by contractors — I have not come across that.

Look, in general, we are always happy to work with the industry; we see their important role here. Yesterday, I was made aware that our housing starts are up by 200 percent over the first two months of this year, so there is a lot of building activity happening in the Yukon. Of course, we know that the territory has been growing incredibly, including here in the City of Whitehorse. We know that we have been putting out 1,000 lots over the past five years; we will continue to do that work, and we will continue to work with the contractors.

Let me just say right now to contractors: If they are interested to talk to me about this problem, I'm interested to talk to them, and I have always directed the department to stay in touch and work with them.

**Question re: Canada housing infrastructure fund**

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, on March 12, the Yukon government announced that they had finalized a 10-year agreement for the federal government's new Canada housing infrastructure fund, or CHIF. The plan for this new fund is to build or improve critical infrastructure that allows for the development of new homes. We have heard a number of

questions about this fund from communities, as they are wondering how this money will be prioritized.

Can the minister tell us how eligibility for funding under this program will be determined? Will Yukon municipalities have a say in which projects get funding? Will the minister engage municipalities in choosing which projects get funded?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to handle questions about all the significant infrastructure funding that we have allocated to municipalities over the last several years — also about upcoming programs that have just recently developed, like the Canada housing infrastructure fund.

I think that the track record of this government speaks for itself. My predecessor and I have spoken with municipalities, heard their concerns, and acted on it. We can see this right now with the comprehensive municipal fund, Mr. Speaker, for which we have given the greatest increase in its history, because we heard that ask and we met it. We will continue to work closely with our municipalities on this new infrastructure fund that the federal government has placed before us. We have always done that, Mr. Speaker. We want to know what municipalities' priorities are, and we will continue to meet those priorities as we can.

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, I didn't really hear any answers there.

In the previous federal infrastructure funding programs, the funding formula was 75/25, with 75 percent coming from the feds and 25 percent from the Yukon government. For projects occurring within a municipality, will Yukon municipalities be required to make any contribution to the new CHIF, and if so, what percentage or amount will they be required to provide?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I will say to date, under the Investing in Canada infrastructure program, the Yukon has advanced 70 projects totalling more than \$600 million of combined federal and Government of Yukon contributions. The final projects for the Investing in Canada infrastructure program were submitted by March 31, 2025. That funding will continue to drive infrastructure development in the rural Yukon and across the territory until 2033 — I believe is the date.

Again, we are really pleased to have recently signed the Canada housing infrastructure fund agreement, as the member opposite has just spoken about. This important agreement will help to accelerate the construction and upgrading of critical infrastructure, supporting the construction of more homes. The Yukon will see \$98.9 million — almost \$100 million — worth of new projects in the coming years.

I said that we will certainly work with municipalities on this, and we will work out the details, because sometimes the municipalities are applying to this fund directly from Ottawa and sometimes we are applying on their behalf. That changes — some of the projects will be funded 100 percent, I'm told, by Ottawa, and some will be a smaller amount.

We are currently working with the City of Whitehorse on some of these proposals that they put forward for our infrastructure funding that they have received, and we're working with Ottawa to see if we can change that percentage

that they contribute. We'll continue to work with our municipalities.

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, on the federal government's website, they include the program eligibility requirements. According to that site, one requirement for accessing this funding is that the territorial government must work with Canada to support municipalities in implementing measures to enable the adoption of standardized housing designs. In addition, this work must be done within 18 months from the publication of the new pre-designed housing catalogue.

So, has the Yukon government communicated this requirement to Yukon municipalities and the steps that municipalities will be required to take to be eligible for this funding?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, we are working very closely — as I've said for the first, second, and now this answer as well — with our municipalities, making sure they know what the conditions of these funding programs are from Ottawa. We know — I have communicated this with municipalities — that they will be tighter.

I believe — and I will check with the department, but I believe that some of these criteria that the member opposite is referring to now — and I want to make sure that the information is correct so that we don't spook municipalities — but I believe that it's tied to the population of the city that is applying for these funds. I will check into that and make sure.

I don't believe that Whitehorse has crossed that threshold — which is the largest municipality in the territory and the one that this might apply to — but I don't believe that they have crossed that threshold.

I'm going to check this criterion with the department to make sure that I'm accurate on this, but I believe that criterion does not apply Whitehorse as it currently stands. If it gets much bigger, that may apply but not at the moment — is my understanding — but I will check in with the department and make sure that's correct.

#### **Question re: Health care services in rural communities**

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Selkirk First Nation posted on Facebook letting the community know that the Pelly Crossing Health Centre could be closed from April 29 to May 21. During this time, health centre phones will be transferred to Yukon EMS.

A request has been made to place a paramedic in the community during that time to respond to emergencies, but there is no confirmation if that will be provided yet. There are also efforts to recruit an administrative assistant for that time to process travel and health follow-ups, but again, no confirmation.

The most shocking part of this post is that this was an anticipated closure, meaning that the government knew about it. It's one thing to close during emergency circumstances, and it's a whole other to have a planned closure of essential health services.

How long has this government known about this possible nearly month-long closure of the Pelly Crossing Health Centre?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, our government certainly recognizes the essential role that health centres play in communities and the impact that these service reductions have on communities and the concern here. The closing with respect to some services at the Pelly Crossing Health Centre is a result of the national health human resources shortage, which continues to impact our ability to consistently staff remote and rural community health centres. This is a dynamic situation; we are working still to mitigate the interruption for the community. We understand the situation is of deep concern to residents, and we're working hard to fill this gap and to restore service as soon as possible.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, as of right now, there will be no preventive or ongoing health care in Pelly Crossing for almost a month. So far, there is no confirmation that there will be a paramedic in the community either. At the end of the month, Pelly Crossing is on its own.

I'm curious if the government understands what this means for people who are going to put off checkups, follow-ups, and health concerns. Without guarantees of a paramedic, this potentially leaves the community on its own even if it comes to an emergency situation.

Does this government think that it's acceptable to leave a community without access to health care, possibly even emergency health care, for an entire month?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, that's not exactly correct. Emergency Medical Services will be present in the community during the time of a slowdown in service between April 30 and May 20 — as I said, due to staff shortages. The EMS services will be present in the community during that time to ensure continued access to emergency care. We are still working with EMS to have critical care paramedics stationed in the community during that period of time.

Residents can call 911 or use the phone outside the health centre to reach emergency services, and for non-urgent health concerns, Yukoners can access service at 811, a number known as the “nurses line”, which has 24/7 Yukon support directed at Yukon citizens for health care information. We encourage anyone with additional questions about the temporary closure to reach out to Community Nursing, and we look forward to continuing to mitigate this situation.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for confirmation that EMS will be in the community.

Health centre closures due to staffing shortages have nothing to do with the staff at the health centres, who work incredibly hard; this has to do with the failure of government to recruit and retain health care workers in the communities.

Last fall, the minister reported that vacancy rates in community nursing were at 32.5 percent in 2023. Although that was an improvement last summer — but again, we are seeing significant closures early in the year. It gives rural Yukoners reason to worry that we are backsliding. This closure was not a surprise, as the post says it was anticipated, yet here we are again with a community denied access to health care and a government with no plan to deal with it.

What is this government's plan going forward to recruit nurses for rural health care?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the quote about 2023 levels of community nursing vacancies, but I know it improved significantly since then. I don't have my fingertips on the number, but I am happy to provide that to the member opposite and to everyone in the Legislative Assembly when I can locate it.

We certainly recognize the essential role that the community health centres play and the burden that a temporary closure places on residents. We are actively recruiting health professionals and exploring innovative staffing models to support our rural communities. Our government will continue to prioritize the health and safety of Yukoners and is working to minimize disruptions to care.

We work hard with respect to making sure these types of temporary interruptions do not affect communities. This is a period of 20 days, which is far too long. It is due to a staffing shortage. The reason it was noted as “anticipated” is because we provided the notice to the community ahead of time that this was knowledge that we had coming up — to begin on April 30. That's the anticipation. Again, it is described as a dynamic situation that we are working to continue to mitigate to make sure — if we are able to — to place a paramedic in that community, and we are always continuing to seek to have nurses in that health centre.

#### **Question re: Building code and standards**

**Ms. Clarke:** A few weeks ago, the City of Whitehorse unanimously passed a resolution that will go forward to the AGM of the Association of Yukon Communities next week. That called for the Yukon government to reconsider the automatic adoption of the National Building Code. When the minister was asked about this previously, he seemed to suggest that it was a matter of internal trade, but that was not what the city's resolution is about.

Can the minister tell us if the resolution that was put forward by the City of Whitehorse is something that the minister will consider?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I know that we are doing public engagement around the National Building Code, and there is a real trade-off here around what sorts of things we adopt.

A couple of decades ago, the city came out early and adopted advanced levels of the National Building Code, and they did that ahead of the territorial government at the time. When they did that, what happened was — we started transitioning our building stock to getting it much more energy efficient. That is something that has happened. That transition — the effect of that is still being felt today.

So, while there is some downside to these elements of the National Building Code, there is also some upside to it. What are we doing? I just noted that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, along with Community Services, is setting up to do some public engagement. When I get those dates and times, I'll make sure to share them with the members opposite so that they can talk to their constituents as well, and let's just make sure that Yukoners are aware of how they can feed into that opportunity to discuss the potential for changes to the



National Building Code — including, by the way, to our Yukon Contractors Association, because they do a lot of the building here, so it would be important for them to know.

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, during debate about the motion at city council, it was pointed out that, from time to time, the automatic adoption of the National Building Code can create issues for home builders and the subtrades involved in building houses. Adding additional time for consultation, engagement, and review of proposed changes to the National Building Code could allow for more awareness, communication about the implications, and understanding among both builders and inspectors. It could also allow the Yukon to consider whether or not changes to the code make sense for the Yukon and fit with northern building realities.

Will the minister consider making this change to reconsider the automatic adoption of the National Building Code?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to address this issue on the floor of the House this afternoon. I am aware of the concerns of the City of Whitehorse, of the item that they put before the Association of Yukon Communities. I am working on this file, of course, with the City of Whitehorse.

I will say to the member opposite that, since Whitehorse has come forward with this, times have changed in Canada. We're seeing the federal government, the current Prime Minister, talking about creating a Canadian market and making sure that there are goods and services and that people can flow across the country with ease, reducing or eliminating barriers to trade and free labour through the country. A national building standard supports a unified market for materials and equipment to expand access to tradespeople and enables Yukon workers to take on projects in neighbouring jurisdictions because there's one standard.

So, there are benefits, as my colleague mentioned in his remarks just a few minutes ago. I will ask the member opposite: Is 18 months of consultation enough for the industry in her mind?

#### **Question re: Yukon River crossing at Dawson City**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I asked the minister about the government's plan for the *George Black* ferry and this is what he said — quote: "... the *George Black* ferry will have to be replaced in outgoing years, and this government, in its 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."

I reviewed the five-year capital plan earlier today and didn't see the project mentioned.

Can the minister tell us what he meant by the project moving forward shortly? What year is it planned for?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to answer this question and to provide good news to the constituents of the Member for Klondike and for Yukoners in general.

For over 50 years, the *George Black* ferry has been an important connection and piece of history for Dawson City, supporting residents, businesses, and visitors alike. As the ferry nears the end of its life, it is time to look ahead. After public input and extensive analysis, the Government of Yukon is moving forward with the replacement of the *George Black* ferry.

By investing in a new ferry, we are prioritizing reliability, sustainability, and efficiency while keeping the rich history of river crossings in Dawson alive.

To move this project forward, we will be issuing a request for proposals this spring for a planning study to replace the ferry. The study will assess the viability of constructing permanent concrete landings to replace the current seasonal gravel landings. This project has been factored into the five-year capital plan under the transportation budget.

The next two years will focus on design and planning studies for the ferry replacement, and in 2025-26, \$100,000 is budgeted toward its replacement.

Mr. Speaker, the replacement of the *George Black* ferry is planned for fiscal year 2027-28 and fiscal year 2028-29.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister just made it very clear that he was going to replace the *George Black* ferry. In that case, what is the cost estimate to completely replace the *George Black* ferry? It's certainly going to cost more than \$100,000.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I would absolutely agree that it is likely going to cost more than \$100,000. As the planning phase advances, we will conduct several studies, including fish and wildlife and hydraulic assessments, to understand how the new ferry could impact the surrounding environment. A submission to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board as well as consultation will be required before this project proceeds to implementation. The Government of Yukon values its strong working relationship with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government and the City of Dawson and is committed to meaningful dialogue through this project.

As I indicated yesterday, both Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the City of Dawson have been notified, and I do look forward to meeting with both the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the City of Dawson on various matters pertaining to Highways and Public Works matters and Environment matters in early May in person.

With respect to the specific question from the Member for Porter Creek North, the ferry is currently budgeted at \$6 million in 2027-28 and \$6 million in 2028-29.

#### **Question re: Educational assistant allocation policy**

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, last year, the Yukon government announced a change in the policy for EA allocation. This change created a significant backlash from several stakeholder-affected groups. A group of them — including the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, Autism Yukon, LDAY, the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, and the AYSCBC — wrote a public letter to the

minister in March of last year, and following that, the minister promised to follow up with these groups and address their concerns.

However, just a few months ago, the minister received another letter about the issue, this time from the YAEP, the AYSCBC, and the Yukon Association of School Administrators. Yet again, concerns have been raised about this government's lack of meaningful consultation about this important policy.

Why is the Minister of Education continuing to push unilateral changes to the EA allocation model without meaningful engagement with those most affected?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, every student absolutely deserves the necessary support to fully access their education and be included within the school community. The 2025-26 educational assistant allocation process is well underway for all three school authorities. I believe we had this very discussion, I think, in Committee of the Whole not long ago where I confirmed that we were using the same allocation process as we have previously as we continue to work with all of our partners, particularly with the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, as we have wrapped up our collective bargaining.

This is work that's currently underway. It's very important work, and there are a lot of moving pieces. We work with three authorities now, and I think that the member opposite is aware of that as well. The First Nation School Board is responsible for their EA allocation, and we are working with all of our partners as we continue to review. Again, confirming, Mr. Speaker, that we are using the current process — the process that we have used for many years — as we continue to review.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, here's what the YAEP, the AYSCBC, and the Yukon Association of School Administrators said in their February letter — and I quote: "YG is actively segregating stakeholders by engaging in one-on-one closed-door meetings under the pretense of public and stakeholder consultation. YG's glaring attempt to advance its surreptitious managerial agenda in setting one-on-one meetings, are prejudiced by a glaring power imbalance, and undermine any past stated and public YG commitment [to] open and inclusive collaboration and consultation."

Mr. Speaker, these are scathing words from these important education partners. What was the minister's response to them regarding those statements?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, working with partners to ensure that all voices are heard is an imperative step toward making sure that all students are included and supported to meet their absolute top potential. The Department of Education began reviewing how the Yukon education authority allocated educational assistants in the fall of 2023 and heard from many partners on how educational assistants were allocated. The Yukon education authority met with every school in area 1 and 2 in the 2023-24 school year to review each educational assistant request.

The First Nation School Board and CSFY work separately and follow their own allocation process. During this time, Student Support Services officials gathered feedback from

schools on the process. The work is continuing. For the 2025-26 school year, as the department continues discussions with partners, staff will, for now, use the 2022-23 rubric form and base allocation. Formal consultation with the YAEP is ongoing, and allocations in the future may be affected by the redefinition of the role of educational assistants.

I have more to say on this.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, these questions are about the letter sent by these important partners just a couple of months ago with respect to the process and the consultation.

Here's another quote from that letter: "It is clear that YG is actively attempting to undermine stakeholders demand for and public expectation of transparent and publicly recorded consultation meetings. YG has stifled stakeholder feedback and concerns. YG has failed to facilitate an open forum in which stakeholders can express their concerns about the existing allocation framework..."

They go on to request that the minister commit to transparent and publicly recorded consultation meetings, so my question for the minister is: Will she agree to this request from these stakeholder groups?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education aims to ensure that the allocation of educational assistants is transparent, consistently applied, and objectively considers the diverse needs of learners while aligning with the resources available and supports all three school authorities as they seek to update their systems. While change can be challenging, these changes are moving the Yukon education authority toward a more equitable and effective process for allocating educational assistants. These allocation process adjustments are needed for Yukon education authority schools. The two school boards are separately undergoing their own updates and changes.

Again, we are using the model from 2022-23. The process is well underway to allocate educational assistants. We are working with all of our partners to ensure that we are hearing all of their input. There is also a joint management committee that is time-limited in terms of working as a collaborative committee formed with education partners to revise the training plan programs on educational assistants and teachers on call.

That's all relevant work that ties into this.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

#### Motion No. 1261

**Clerk:** Motion No. 1261, standing in the name of Mr. Kent.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt South:

THAT from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on a date during the 2025 Spring Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly to be determined by House Leaders and reported to the Legislative Assembly by the Government House Leader, Michelle Grant,

senior vice-president, and another senior official from PricewaterhouseCoopers appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions regarding the receivership, operations, and management of the Eagle Gold mine site.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to this motion here today.

When I initially identified a similar motion that I had ready to be presented at the last private members' day for the witnesses from PricewaterhouseCoopers, or PwC, to appear during this Sitting, it was strictly for transparency and accountability purposes, but with today's motion, it goes beyond that.

With their submission to an Ontario judge on April 1, 2025, PwC have increased the amount required to manage the ongoing situation at Eagle Gold to approximately \$220 million. Those expenditures, of course, go through to the end of September this year.

For reference, this is \$70 million more than the Yukon government officials initially estimated the total cost to be last August, and when we look at a situation, although different, at the Mount Polley mine when the tailings dam breached, the total cost to repair and remediate that site was \$70 million. We are over three times that. We are \$150 million and counting — higher than that at this point with no end in sight. Of course, that project remained in the hands of the company and has been fully remediated and is operational again.

So, this new additional spending request couldn't be made beyond the expiration of the current one in the fall. We have heard many stories and concerns about the receivership process, wasteful spending on the site, concerns around water treatment, procurements, leaking water storage ponds, human resource practices, and the list goes on and on.

The budget for Mineral Resources, when we look at mains to mains from last year to this year, has increased from \$6.2 million to \$123.9 million in this year's budget almost exclusively because of the expenditures on Eagle.

This appearance that we have requested in this motion — for PwC witnesses to come and provide information and answer our questions during Committee of the Whole — will allow all MLAs to question the PwC senior officials who have signed off on the reports to the court.

It is, of course, our job to scrutinize spending of Yukon taxpayers' money and to ask questions on behalf of the citizens of the territory. While I appreciated the briefing this morning, in my view, it doesn't go far enough.

Officials from PricewaterhouseCoopers did brief me and the leader of the Third Party, and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources was also present there along with officials from Energy, Mines and Resources and officials from our offices.

Appearing before Committee of the Whole and answering our questions is fundamental to what we do here. The questions and responses are held in an open and transparent forum, and there is a permanent record through Hansard of the exchange that can be referred back to by MLAs in the future.

In a text last week, the Government House Leader informed me and the Leader of the New Democrats that PwC had indicated that they would require a court order to appear before the Assembly. This morning at the briefing, we were informed that this court order would have to be applied for by us as the ones who were seeking their appearance. After the briefing, in consultation with the Clerk's office about what that would look like, I was given advice that this is not the case, and I was referred to the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* 2017, chapter 20. So, I'll quote from that document. It's under the title "To Send for Persons" and it says: "Standing committees often need the collaboration, expertise and knowledge of a variety of individuals to assist them in their studies and investigations. Usually these persons appear willingly before committees when invited to do so. But situations may arise where an individual does not agree to appear and give evidence. If the committee considers that this evidence is essential to its study, it has the power to summon such a person to appear."

Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say: "A committee exercises this power by adopting a motion to summon one or more individuals to appear before it at a set date, time and location. The summons, signed by the Chair of the committee, is served on each of the individuals by a bailiff. It states the name of the committee concerned, the matter for which the appearance is required, the authority under which it is ordered, and the date and location of the appearance. It also orders the witnesses to be available from the time of the appearance until duly released by the committee."

Again, we appear to be in a situation where PricewaterhouseCoopers has informed us that we would have to go to the court if this motion passes and seek them to appear as witnesses, but our own procedure and practices that, granted, are adopted from the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* suggest otherwise.

It's no secret that the Yukon Party did not believe that the receivership course was the right course of action in this case. On this, we differ from our colleagues in the Yukon Liberal Party and the NDP. That said, where we do agree is that it is also fundamental to our system of government that we respect the rule of the judiciary and our democracy. But the judiciary also needs to respect the role of the Legislature in that same system.

The Legislative Assembly, during Committee of the Whole, has the right to call for witnesses to appear before it. Given the scale of funds being given to PwC in relation to the heap leach failure at Eagle, I have a hard time believing that an appearance is an unreasonable request.

The decision that we make as MLAs on this motion today should not be taken lightly. A vote against this motion will essentially mean that we do not have the ability to call for witnesses as described in our procedures, and it also shows that we do not want accountability and transparency around an extremely large expenditure of taxpayers' money. If this doesn't pass, we are inviting companies like PwC to avoid the scrutiny of the Legislature going forward.

So, what's to say that they won't seek to avoid a public inquiry if one is called for? What's to say that they won't seek to avoid an audit by the Office of the Auditor General if one is called for?

If it does pass, then PwC needs to be back here within two weeks to appear.

If it passes and they fail to appear, according to the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, which I quoted from earlier, they will be in contempt of the Legislature. Here's a quote from that document: "The United Kingdom Joint Committee on Parliamentary Privilege attempted to provide a list of some types of contempt in its 1999 report..."

One of those is: "without reasonable excuse, failing to attend before the House or a committee after being summoned to do so". So, clearly, according to the rules and procedures that we follow, PwC would be in contempt of the Legislature if this motion passes and they fail to appear.

I've also heard that, in limited circumstances, the Sergeant-at-Arms has the ability — and has, in the past, in different houses — taken individuals into custody for failing to appear.

So, this motion has been altered from the original one that I tabled a couple of weeks ago to give flexibility to who will appear and when they will appear, provided that it is before the end of the current Sitting.

So, two weeks ago, I believe all members of this Legislature were in favour of a similar motion and would support it. I hope that is still the case today for the sake of Yukoners as well as all current and future MLAs who are looking to ensure that there is openness, transparency, and accountability and that we still maintain the ability to call for witnesses to appear before our committees.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks. I look forward to hearing from other members on this important issue today, and I also hope that all members will support this so that we can preserve our ability as a democratic institution to have witnesses appear and answer questions on issues of such magnitude and importance to Yukoners and Yukon taxpayers.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to begin by thanking the member opposite for bringing — this is a slightly different motion than the one that we were going to debate two weeks ago, but I know, from working in the background — the member opposite will be aware that I was looking to amend the motion to make it more like the one that is in front of us today. So, first of all, thank you for bringing it back and thank you for writing it in the fashion that they have.

I am going to try to talk about a few of the things here and I am going to try to provide a little bit more background information regarding PricewaterhouseCoopers and what they have done in the background, but I want to just start by saying that we too, as members of this Assembly and as government, would like to have PwC — it's a short form for PricewaterhouseCoopers, the receiver — appear here as witnesses this Sitting.

We had some debate on this in a previous Committee of the Whole, I recall. Maybe it was on the supplementary budget. I remember an exchange that I had with the Member for

Copperbelt South back and forth about this. I stated at the time that I was interested in seeing the receiver appear here as witnesses. I also remember saying at that time that there was an issue that had been drawn to my attention about the receiver.

The receiver is appointed by the court. It is a federal court that has done this appointment. In our system of governance, there are three branches. The first is the legislative branch, which is us; that is us as 19 MLAs. Our job is to do several things. One of them is to pass legislation here for the Yukon, and in that legislation, it includes budgets, and in the budget that is before us today, it includes money that is going to the receivership to deal with the environmental remediation on-site at Eagle Gold mine. I think that does bear scrutiny. So, the Legislative Assembly as a branch — what we do is pass legislation.

We also represent — each of us has a constituency and our job is to represent our constituents here so that the whole of the Yukon is represented in the legislative branch. Finally, there is a role where the opposition has the ability to — and I guess if they are back-bench government or private member government MLAs — pose questions of the government to hold the government to account.

The second branch of the governance system is government itself — the executive branch — and their job is, once there is, for example, a budget in place, to go and execute that budget — to spend the money on behalf of Yukoners to improve the lives of Yukoners.

The third branch is the judicial branch. The judicial branch is made up of our courts. Each one of these branches has roles to play. In this instance, in this motion that is before us, we bring all three of those branches together somehow. The government is here because it was the government that went to the federal court to seek to introduce a receivership. It certainly has the courts involved, because it is the federal court that has appointed this receiver to do their work. They are doing work on behalf of that federal court; they are responsible to that court. And we have our legislative branch, of course, because we are seeking to have witnesses here.

So, after that debate that had happened in this House — and after the member opposite was seeking to bring forward a motion that we didn't have a chance to debate two weeks ago, but here we are today — I reached out to the receiver; I wrote to them on April 7 and I requested that they come as witnesses. I said to them: Here are the times that we have available between now and the end of the Sitting — and could they come? They wrote back to me and explained that they were appointed by the court and how that binds them — that they have a responsibility to that court. I wrote to them on the 7<sup>th</sup>; they wrote back to me on the 8<sup>th</sup>; I wrote to them on the 9<sup>th</sup>. I was asking for clarification.

They wrote back to me on the 10<sup>th</sup> again and explained that, no, they would require, from their perspective, a court order in order to authorize them to be able to come here. I appreciate that the member opposite has done some investigation into the Parliament of Canada and those rules, and that is great. I stand on my feet to say that I would like to see the receivers come.

When that exchange happened, the receiver had offered to us to take written questions from us — from the members opposite, the critics of Energy, Mines and Resources, or me — to receive those written questions, to respond in writing, and then to publish those responses onto their website which they have up for the receivership. And at the same time, I suggested to them that we may wish to table those here in our Assembly to become part of our official record so that, just like Hansard, there would be a record of the questions and responses. That was offered to us, and I said to them: Look, could I ask for something more as well? And I asked them if they would come to provide a briefing for the Official Opposition, the Third Party, and me, and they agreed to that and we worked through that.

I think that I let colleagues know about this exchange last Friday, and then over the weekend, we worked together to try to see whether we could agree on a time to have the receiver come. The receiver had given us a brief window, and this morning, the receiver came and briefed — I think for an hour and a half or so — members of the opposition and me.

In that meeting, the receiver said that they would take the questions that we had provided to them, that we would circulate those among ourselves to make sure that we had captured the questions appropriately, and then the receiver would take those and provide written responses. Those written responses will come back and, again, will be made public both on their side and could be made public on our side.

At that meeting, the receiver reiterated — or I heard them say just this morning — that they are bound by the court and would need to get the authority through the court to appear here. There is a difference of views on this, and I am supportive of this or we as a government are supportive, because we do want the receiver to be here.

I want to just acknowledge a few things that the receiver has done with respect to trying to provide more information.

Their job, as ordered by the court, is to make this information public. That is written right into the original court order. They have an obligation to do that, but the main purpose of that is that their job is to inform the court. The court is a federal court, so what they have done is they have put the court order up on their website. They have put their reports up on their website; they have put up sort of monthly information. In the past couple of weeks anyways, the Member for Copperbelt South said that he would like to get me to table, for example, information about local contractors and how much money was going toward them in investment. We got that report through the receiver, but we also asked the receiver to make that a regular part of their monthly reporting. They agreed to do that.

I will also say, as part of the court order, that the receiver is responsible to brief and hear from the Yukon government and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun government. That has been happening and is ongoing. There is a requirement built into the receivership that they should be making more information public. In general, from my impression, that has been happening. I want to acknowledge, on behalf of the receiver, that work they have been doing.

Where they are hitting their limit and what they are expressing to us is — you will see this when I table these letters — that they believe, in order to appear as witnesses, they would require the court that has authorized them to do this work to also empower them to do this. The way they described it to us today is that they are bound by what the court authorizes them to do. The court did not yet authorize for them to appear as witnesses, so they are stuck.

Another thing I will point out for all Yukoners today is that normally when a receiver comes in on a role, it is more often about dealing with the solvency or insolvency of a company. In this case, it is not. This is not a typical approach — all the more reason to want to hear from the receivers. It's about dealing with the environmental concerns that are on-site; it's about remediating those concerns and making sure that it is going to happen.

The last thing I will say — and then I will take my seat and listen with interest to the rest of the debate — is around the witnesses and what we have done as a government with respect to witnesses. Over the past several weeks, I tabled a review of our recent assemblies. Under the Yukon Party 33<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Assembly, I think we had 12 witnesses over a five-year period. Those were constrained to workers' compensation, the Hospital Corporation, and the Energy Corporation — I think several times each. During the 34<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, I think we had 20 witnesses who appeared over a period of four and a half years under the Liberals.

Under the 35<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, we have now had 18 witnesses appear under the Liberal government. Each of those times, we have definitely brought in much more than the standard three. We have brought in the Yukon College, now Yukon University. We have also brought in, for example, the chief medical officer of health; we brought in David Loukidelis when he did that report for us about our corrections system; we brought in the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel; we brought in *Putting People First*, and we proposed to bring in quite a few different other groups.

In this Assembly, we had, for example, the citizens' assembly. After they tabled their report, they came in to appear before us as witnesses. So, we have been supportive of witnesses. In general, we have brought in more witnesses than the previous government by a margin. We are supportive of this motion, but we think that there is a question to be resolved. I will table those letters so that others can get a copy and take a look at that dialogue and exchange.

Again, thank you to the member opposite for raising this motion.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak with regard to this motion. There are a couple of questions that I highlight. One is the fact that, although I appreciate that my colleague from the Yukon Party and I had an opportunity to have a conversation today with — I'm going to say "the receiver" — the person who represents the receiver, the reality is that our colleagues in this Chamber did not have an opportunity to ask questions that may not have — well, may not have come to mind at that point.

So, I appreciate the engagement that we had today, and I did appreciate the briefing. There is really that question about public accountability or the public ability to — for example, I'm going to hazard a guess that, if we were to have the receiver appear as a witness, there would actually be folks in the gallery. I think that this one is of enough interest — public interest — that this is not just for elected folks within the Chamber or for the two of us or three of us who got to sit in on the briefing today; I think that this is of bigger interest.

To be perfectly frank, after this motion was identified yesterday, I thought I was going to have the briefing today and that would be enough, but in hindsight, it is really about Yukoners having access. So, I appreciate the commitment to posting the information, and I appreciate the commitment to accepting more and additional questions and posting them. The reality is that it's different from someone being able to sit in the Chamber and hear from the witness themselves. It's different than the rest of our colleagues in this Chamber to be able to ask questions. Of course, there is always one figurehead in each of the parties who does that typically, but it does give opportunity for others to feed in or ask questions when there is time.

I appreciate that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources just highlighted the difference between the number of witnesses between his government and previous governments, but I don't know that looking backward and going back ever makes any sense; so, I would rather, like, look going forward.

With the Eagle mine site, what we're dealing with is unprecedented; we haven't dealt with that in any time. You know, I know that there have been talks about: Did the receiver for the Faro mine appear? Again, we're looking backward and not looking forward. There were lots of questions that I think we would probably have been better suited to ask the receiver during the Yukon Zinc and Wolverine mine process, right? I think that there should probably have been different levels of scrutiny — and I don't want to say "accountability", because the receiver is accountable to the courts. The receiver is following the steps that they need to, but it's really about the public ability to look into and to understand.

So, although yesterday I really thought that I would have enough today, after my meeting — and it was good, and I appreciate the receiver very much and her colleague for coming; I appreciate it. I recognize that is outside of the norm, and I also recognize that one of the things that I was told to say today is that appearing is not a normal thing for a receiver, and I hear that.

But I also know that a mine disaster of this level is not a normal thing for Yukon. The amount of money that Yukon is transferring over right now for the remediation of the Eagle mine is a substantial part of our budget. It is a substantial part of our money. It is money that is not going to other parts to support Yukoners. It is going directly toward a mess left behind by big mining.

I thought that I was going to vote against; I don't feel that way now. I really think that it is an opportunity, for example, for Yukoners to be able to sit in this Chamber and hear those responses. I told the minister that we shouldn't talk back, but I

will, but my first five years of being elected, I was never in this Chamber until after Question Period by myself. We had witnesses. We had people who sat in the Chamber all during Question Period for my first five years. Three of them were here today when I tabled the petition, and they were here because what was happening in the Yukon was important. It is important again. What is happening with the Eagle mine is important. What happens next is important. What happened before to get us to this point with the Eagle mine is important.

I think that there is a definite level of responsibility here to make sure that this information can be shared out in a way whereby folks are able to access it and they are able to understand it. I think that, no different from when other witnesses appear here, it is making sure that it goes in Hansard, that it is publicly available, and people can sit in the Chamber. At this point, I will have to say that I am torn, and I am interested to hear from others if they have points to add and arguments one way or the other.

I do appreciate that it was brought forward and, to echo the minister, that it was reformatted in such a way that it was easier to digest.

But I think that this is an important issue and I think that this is also, honestly, precedent-setting for us going forward. What is our power as the elected representatives of Yukon? What should we be able to ask for? What is too much? What is too much? I think that if we are talking about accountability and an understanding of where the money that should be benefiting Yukoners is going, I don't think that is too far.

I am interested in hearing from others if there is anyone who has stuff to say. I have to say that my position yesterday is probably a bit different today, and so I thank the Speaker for the opportunity.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate the remarks by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources as well as by my colleague the Leader of the New Democratic Party here in the Legislature.

Obviously, no one wanted the heap leach to fail at the Eagle mine. It created an incredible burden on our environment, it created an incredible burden on our economy, and it also affected so many people across the territory and beyond, whether it's people who worked at the site or those living in and around the site who were displaced by the heap leach failure.

Again, I should echo what my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King said in that we appreciate the offer that PricewaterhouseCoopers, or PwC, made with respect to submitting written questions and having the responses to those placed on their website and perhaps tabled or placed on the Legislative Assembly website.

We also appreciated the briefing this morning. We had scheduled two hours, and we appreciate the time taken by everyone who attended and the answers that were provided and those that were committed to get back to us on.

However, I don't believe that briefings are a substitute for PwC appearing as witnesses. We're fortunate that we get to attend a number of briefings, whether departmental briefings on financial bills or departmental briefings on legislation. But in spite of those briefings, we still get the opportunity to come back here in Committee of the Whole and pose questions to the minister.

Sometimes, those questions are the same or similar to ones that we pose in the briefing, but the important thing is to get those questions and the answers to those questions on the record.

I also look forward to reviewing the documents that the minister tabled here today — the letters, I believe, that he mentioned — and we'll be able to take a look at that.

But something that the minister said is that this receivership is not a typical approach. Normally, it just deals with financial matters, but, of course, this one deals with environmental oversight as well. It's not a typical approach and it certainly isn't typical of what we've seen in the territory from an expenditure side of things. Again, there's — I mentioned the number — \$220 million, which is where we're at so far in expenditures for this.

Again, we don't have any idea if that is enough to complete what we want to see done there or if it's not enough. I mentioned Mount Polley, which is obviously a different situation there with the tailings storage facility breaching, but Yukoners whom I have talked to in the last while, when I have mentioned that what is happening at Eagle is now three times the cost of what it took at Mount Polley right through to remediation — there is a lot of concern when they hear those numbers.

Again, today's motion is about two things. As I mentioned, it is about openness, transparency, and accountability for us to be able to ask questions of a witness who is responsible for an incredibly important project on the environmental side and an incredibly expensive project from a fiscal side and, of course, the economic concerns that we have with it and the concerns for the people. As I mentioned as well, it's also about protecting our rights as the legislative branch of government to be able to summon witnesses to appear. As I mentioned, we respect the judiciary and what their role is, but they also have to respect us as the legislative branch and our rights and our role with respect to, in this case, the expenditure of a significant amount of public funds.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks. I hope that I get support for this motion and that we can set the wheels in motion to issue a summons to the individual who is identified and another appropriate individual from PwC to appear here in the next two weeks before the Spring Sitting ends.

**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 No. 1261 agreed to*

**Speaker:** Bill No. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*, remains ordered for consideration by Committee of the Whole. Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), the Third Party designated Bill No. 310 as an item of business today. I shall now leave the Chair and the House shall resolve into Committee of the Whole.

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### **Bill No. 310: Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association — continued**

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Ms. White:** Welcome back to my colleagues in the Assembly, which is less weird. But I'm grateful to be joined by

Ron Pink who is online on the east coast of Canada and, of course, my staff back in the boardroom of the NDP office. So, we're ready to answer questions.

There is a bit of a delay. I'll give folks the heads-up that there's a delay between the Internet radio and when we speak here, so there will be a second delay before the answers kind of circulate back.

I'm looking forward to continuing where we left off two weeks ago. I'm grateful to be back here to discuss Bill No. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you to the member opposite. I think we were still asking questions in general debate, and I'm pleased to continue that. I have no issue at all with delay. I look forward to the responses.

Again, the purpose of my questions is to, on behalf of Yukoners, indicate questions that we have about the implications of Bill No. 310 or how it came about — some general questions — and also to inform the debate and the Hansard and Yukoners about the importance of this legislation and what impact it will have.

So, I guess my first question — I know that they're a bit disjointed, because we've been all over the place with issues around the bill and the impact, but I think I'll ask: Will passing Bill No. 310 reduce or increase administrative burden for Yukon physicians? If so, how?

**Ms. White:** So, there will be no change in administrative burden for Yukon doctors, but I would like to highlight some of the concerns that exist right now and what this bill hopes to achieve. As an example, two doctors recently closed their practices, citing inaccessible overhead and challenges accessing funds, while contracted physicians are provided overhead monthly, on time, and without question and without meticulous scrutiny.

Some of the reasons to move toward Bill No. 310 with the ability for representational rights are in support of reducing, actually, administrative burden so that time and energy can be redirected to clinical care — such questions as: Why open a clinic and have to fight for your funding when other physicians can wheel and deal and get better treatment?

Again, this wouldn't happen if the YMA was the main voice in negotiating on behalf of everyone with committee representation of all physician groups represented and ratified — representing the whole — and really will save the burden on doctors. They won't have to spend hours and hours negotiating contracts, as this will be done for them by the Yukon Medical Association.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thanks for that answer. I wonder about the details that we have heard, Deputy Chair, about inequities. I think we all recognize that it has occurred in the past through the system that has been operating here in the territory. I guess I'm wondering about the conflicts that could exist and, quite likely in some cases, will exist between a physician for whom the YMA is negotiating — and ultimately what they would like to see in a contract or in the details — and the YMA itself.

So, not just a conflict between sort of the government insured health services process and what that process can afford

to pay or will be able to pay or have a mandate to pay physicians — but what if the physicians themselves have a conflict with how YMA is representing them, and what sort of thought has gone into that? Even though we have lots of physicians who have said that this is of interest to them and they would prefer this to be the process — and there is no question that this exists in other places — and because it exists in other places, I guess that I am wondering what research and what has been available to the members opposite putting forward this bill for the resolution of conflicts between physicians and the way in which, in this case, the YMA has been representing them.

**Ms. White:** In reference to the initial part of that regarding inequity, the YMA will follow the desires of the majority of members. They act democratically just like a government.

Just going back a bit to the burden, community contracted physicians claimed 40 to 60 hours dedicated to negotiating their contract, as an example — to be able to remove that burden to those physicians — and I think that when we look at the rest of the country, we recognize that this is an important path forward. There is always the potential for conflicts, but the reality is that removing the burden of having to do that negotiation for oneself, I think, will be a big deal. The reality is that sometimes a member may be unhappy, but the YMA needs to act in the best interests of all members, not just a few.

They are the same concerns that are dealt with today when physicians have concerns. The YMA believes in a fair ratification process similar to the rest of Canada, so they are confident that they will be able to navigate their way through. Again, I believe that they're talking about elevating for the entire industry. They have also suggested that being part of the negotiations committee is a solution — on focus groups to collect feedback. They have mechanisms in place already that they utilize. I believe that those will be strengthened when this bill passes.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** How many new members of the Yukon Medical Association do they expect to gain if Bill No. 310 is passed?

**Ms. White:** Of course, that would depend on how many more doctors can be recruited for the territory, but for example, visiting specialists would be around 30 or more, plus visiting locums.

Again, the bill says that a physician can choose to be a member of the Yukon Medical Association, but all practising physicians will have to pay a fee. I think the hope and expectation is that specialists and locums will choose to sign on, but regardless, they will still be contributing to the collective there.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** That makes sense. Of course, any new physicians coming to the territory — I don't want to make any assumptions. Does that mean that all physicians who are currently practising medicine here in the territory are members of the YMA now?

**Ms. White:** So, currently, of the 123 practising doctors in the territory, 120 are Yukon Medical Association members.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Have members opposite, as sponsors of this bill, and/or the YMA spoken to doctors from



outside the Yukon who specifically said that the issues discussed in this bill — or that would be resolved by Bill No. 310 — have kept them from practising here in the territory?

**Ms. White:** I believe that right now a lot of the stories were anecdotal — for example, hearing from the locums the stresses that they recognized in the siloed approach and what they viewed as the inequities. I believe that this, again, is mirroring the rest of the country, which is, again, bringing us in line with others, and I believe that will answer a lot of the issues that we have seen from folks saying that they are choosing not to come here because of the challenges.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Do I understand that there have been conversations about individuals who say that they are not prepared to come because of the current state of the situation? I just want to be clear about that.

**Ms. White:** I did not have questions with any physicians out of the territory — similar to that the minister didn't have questions with anyone related to her bill yesterday.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** That is not really what I asked, but I will move on.

How about — have you spoken to any medical students who, specifically about this legislation or because of us not having this type of legislation here, wouldn't consider practising in the Yukon?

**Ms. White:** I did not speak to any medical students just like the minister did not speak to anyone in the queer community about the families act.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I don't really want to get into this, but my answer yesterday was that 70 percent of the respondents self-identified as members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and I don't think we need to bring that debate in here, but if you are going to quote what I have said or make inferences to this particular piece of legislation, I think that you should do so accurately.

What I also note here is that the Member for Lake Laberge has called “clear” with respect to this. I believe that I have responsibility. I believe that our government has a responsibility to ask questions about the implications or how Bill No. 310 came about so that there is a history in Hansard when people look back to see this.

I have been extremely clear that we are supportive of this legislation, but that does not mean that I don't have questions about how it will be implemented and what the impact of it will be. I'm asking the member opposite about whether conversations have happened with doctors or medical students who don't reside here who have said that this is a barrier for them. We have had lots of submissions here in this discussion about how it is a barrier; I'm just looking for the evidence of conversations about how it has been a barrier, and I was clear in the invocation of my question that it was both for the member opposite — the sponsor of this bill — and for the YMA.

**Deputy Chair:** I would remind members to direct their remarks through the Chair.

**Ms. White:** I discussed at great length two weeks ago how this bill came about. It was a meeting that I had with the Yukon Medical Association in February where they brought forward their concerns. I believe that the Yukon Medical

Association, as the representatives of Yukon physicians, are best suited to represent the desires and the needs of physicians. They collected letters of support across the country from other medical associations. Inequities in remuneration is raised repeatedly by both locums — visiting specialists — that recruitment would be better with representational rights. Payment inequities are well localized, and this bill would certainly help that. They have also heard similar things from medical students.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Meaningful collaboration with our partners, of course, is the foundation of good governance, and our government has been firmly committed to listening to Yukoners, and this includes the needs of our health care professionals. As we work toward making progress and transforming our health care system — including things like updating the *Health Professions Act* and the implementation of the *Health Authority Act* — our top priority is taking time to listen to the needs of our health care professionals. I'm concerned that this bill could have been advanced without full consultation with the entire physician community.

So, my question is: I'm wondering what consultation was completed ahead of drafting this bill. We have all heard that the bill happened very quickly in a number of weeks. And then, what — a two-part question, I guess: What further work needs to be done, should the bill pass, to consult with Yukon physicians?

**Ms. White:** So, again, it has been on the agenda of the YMA for years, with overwhelming approval at meetings. We have discussed previously the five separate motions that have been moved and then unanimously approved at those YMA meetings. I believe that is an indication of the support there.

It has been brought up previously with the government at the Joint Management Committee meetings. I read those into the record the last time — so, meetings going back as far as 2022.

Again, the Yukon Medical Association board represents physicians — or the board represents physicians at the YMA. They have been involved in the preparation. Messaging to membership was always communicated while legislation was being created. So, they communicated with their members. Again, hopefully, once the bill is passed, they will have their usual process of town hall.

Then, there is also additional internal messaging and work with the Yukon Medical Council and recruiter to help to get this message out if and when this bill passes.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Can the member opposite speak to the consultation that was done, particularly with physicians who have negotiated agreements — so, outside of the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Medical Association — for fee-for-service-type medical care? What consultation has happened with those contract holders about Bill No. 310 and what that will mean for them?

**Ms. White:** So, there have been multiple consultations both in group settings, at the annual general meeting, and in private. To the point of the specifics that the minister asked about, they have also sent letters of support.

So, some of the 90 letters of support come from those doctors who are on contract right now and not fee-for-service. The YMA has not received any indication or e-mails not supporting. Again, there have been many signed letters, and it was again voted on in annual meetings. So far, the YMA has only received letters and e-mails of appreciation for trying to move this forward.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Can the member opposite describe what consultations have been done with doctors as part of the drafting process of this legislation?

**Ms. White:** There was no consultation with the YMA at large in drafting the legislation. That was done with the president, so Dr. Derek Bryant, the executive director, and the lawyer representing the YMA, because I don't know if having 120 people trying to write legislation would be beneficial, so it was kept tight to the YMA folks.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I just want to be clear, because we heard that this happened very quickly and we heard from the member opposite that it was at the behest of the YMA; we've had conversations with the YMA that it was at the instigation of the New Democratic Party. Obviously, they have worked together to come here. I just want to be clear that, in the drafting of the legislation, the only physicians that I am aware of would be Dr. Bryant and Dr. Kmet involved in looking over the draft and providing instructions about the intention of the legislation.

**Ms. White:** Pardon me; I sat down before the last two messages came through. So, it was current president Dr. Bryant and past president Dr. Kmet and the executive. They all saw and approved of the language, so there were a multitude of doctors. My apologies for sitting down before I got that out.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am wondering if there are locums or visiting doctors who are current YMA members. I have a question about whether there are physicians who don't support the bill, but I have heard the member opposite say that they have only heard from doctors who do support the bill.

My question involves — is with respect to locums or visiting doctors. Are all the letters that have been received from current YMA members, or have you received support from non-YMA members or from visiting or locum doctors? Are they on that list of supporters?

**Ms. White:** So, the letters were sent directly to the minister. They weren't actually addressed to me, and I got copies after.

They have just clarified to say that there is no one calling them to complain, and currently, visiting specialists have already started joining the YMA, so that is fantastic news.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Could the member opposite indicate what the impact — I know we have heard some of this — but what the general impact will be as YMA moves to becoming the sole bargaining agent for physicians in the territory? What would the impact be for the YMA itself, and what will the impact be for Yukon physicians?

**Ms. White:** I think it's important to note that it's going to give physicians a unified voice. It's going to bring about fairness and equity in representation. With that, there's the ability to bring a better health care system with uniformity for all doing the same type of work.

All physicians in all sectors of care will be equally considered when negotiating benefits and compensation. So, this will put us on the map with being competitive with the rest of Canada. Through this, it will improve patient access by diverting time negotiating and trying to get back — in trying to get a deal — pardon me — so it will lead to improved patient access by diverting time that's required for negotiating and getting those folks back to the clinic. And, so, really, what we see the impact as being is positive.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** We've heard a lot about how the YMA was interested in having representational rights and started to speak about it with governments since 2021. I don't think it's lost on anyone that, in fact that was the case, in 2021, we were in the middle of a world pandemic. Physicians were on the front line; medical staff were otherwise occupied and rightly so, and we thank them so much for the work that was done during that very serious time.

I'm noting that our government told the Yukon Medical Association that, in fact, we support the concept of representational rights for them. In fact, I personally told the YMA representatives in late January 2025 that, in fact, we did support that. We told them that our negotiating team would be ready to proceed with that. I'm wondering if the Yukon Medical Association conveyed our government's support for the concept of representational rights to the members opposite when they began to work on Bill No. 310.

**Ms. White:** I mean, I read these in before, and I'll do it again. So, you know, I referenced a Joint Management Committee meeting from December 14, 2022, bullet point number 4, which is motions from the 2022 YMA AGM. It says there are new motions from the November 2022 YMA AGM, including one on a hospitalist. Two other motions were shared verbally — dispute resolution and representational legislation for physicians. Representational legislation for physicians could be apart from the health authority legislation that is currently being developed to be further explored. So, that was December 14, 2022.

October 11, 2023, so almost a year later, again, Joint Management Committee in — we go through all the bullet points and then we get to the very back page that says Action Item Summary — I believe that is what that follows — yes.

It says: HSS to review existing YMA AGM motions on enshrine role of YMA in legislation and advise YMA if they are specific enough to provide direction needed or if YMA needs to vote on more specific motion.

I am going to go back into an e-mail correspondence between the minister's executive assistant and the executive director. This was just after the new deputy minister took over and it was trying to catch the newest deputy up. It says: "Here is a cut and paste from my notes from our August 28<sup>th</sup> conversation with" — the previous DM — "... that led to tonight's meeting with the board..." I am going to quote from this: "Summary of 1:1 with Deputy Minister ... August 28<sup>th</sup> discussion..."

The deputy identified that she is in support of YMA to have representational rights. She apologized if it's perceived that minimal work has been done, and she agrees that it hasn't been

a high priority due to limited resources and competing priorities; YG has been significantly under-resourced and they just haven't had a director designated to prioritize and keep progress on this item, which she feels is slowly changing by bringing a new person on to the team; she reiterated many times that it is not intentional nor with malicious intent to prevent the YMA from having representational rights; it is a simple matter of just being over-committed to a long list of priorities.

The reason why I am bringing these up is that this just kind of shows probably the path of how come I am standing here representing Bill No. 310. I think that the reality is that traction for legislation seems far and almost impossible from the YMA's perspective. Recent conversations, as recently as this winter, was language to commit to ensure representational rights would progress due to volume of turnover of deputy ministers, but there was no firm commitment. This is enshrining it; we are putting it in legislation. There is a history prior to these Joint Management Committee meeting minutes in 2023, but it shows a pattern.

Although I appreciate that the minister said that, from the perspective of the YMA, it didn't feel like things were moving.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Did the YMA tell the member opposite that our government supported the inclusion of representational rights in the MOU that was about to be negotiated in 2025?

**Ms. White:** I respect the fact that organizations like the YMA and others had meetings with the government. I don't ask about those; I don't ask about what is discussed or how it is discussed, and I certainly wouldn't start doing that.

So, when this came about, it was in talking about the frustrations of where the YMA was at and where they hope to go and I offered to help.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** On March 31, 2025, the MLA for Takhini-Kopper King wrote on a Facebook post — and I quote: “[I] still had to convince the Yukon Liberals and the Yukon Party to support [her] legislation...”

My question is: Knowing the hours of collaboration, the interchanges, exchanges, the meetings, and the suggestions that have been made by my government, by our department, and by me as the Minister of Health and Social Services, why would the member opposite be able to assume that the Yukon Liberals would not support such a bill?

**Ms. White:** There had been no formal commitment, including in debate that day; there was never an indication. I was told that the minister — I would have to go back to read the language, but there wasn't, like: We will support this legislation.

I was only told that in a letter that I was sent on — I'm just trying to find the letter. I was told unequivocally that the Liberals would be supporting it on April 4 in a letter that the minister sent me.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** With respect to the question that I previously asked about whether or not the YMA informed the member opposite that there was government support for the concept of representational rights, was the member opposite told about the conversation — which was the same conversation, actually — in which the YMA represented that

they were not yet ready for representational rights to be implemented?

**Ms. White:** I'm repeating what I am being told right now — the Yukon government provide a willingness to discuss but nothing tangible and that it would be in negotiations and that the YMA would respectfully wait to see what would be mutually agreed upon at the negotiations table but knowing that legislation changes wouldn't have been made or couldn't have been made in those negotiations.

In 2022, Yukon government legal told the YMA that they could not have representational rights without legislation changes, so when the opportunity arose in February, it seemed like the best solution forward. At the meeting that the minister referenced, the YMA indicated that they wished to be thoughtful and recognized that a transition plan is important, but they did not talk about timelines, and since this has come forward, they have been diligently working on a transition plan. They are confident that their transition plan will be effective to support Yukon physicians.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The YMA has been very publicly committed to reconciliation here in the territory. I believe that a resolution existed coming out of their last annual general meeting in November 2024. I may be wrong about the date, but my recollection certainly is that there has been public commitment to reconciliation here in the territory. Were any First Nation governments, organizations, or others consulted with respect to Bill No. 310?

**Ms. White:** The Yukon Medical Association looked across the country to see what was happening for physicians in other jurisdictions. Again, I note that there are similar organizations and bodies across the country representing physicians, and I have someone who is just typing in an answer, so I will just stand here for a second.

The Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Hospital Corporation's First Nation stakeholders were all involved as they developed their strategic plan, including focus groups. Representational rights is a long-standing issue well-discussed with First Nation governments and the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I understand that to mean general conversations but nothing specific about Bill No. 310. When the member opposite gets up again — if that's correct, maybe a clarification.

As Bill No. 310 is currently drafted, it will impact all Yukon medical practitioners, including those currently employed by government or employed by government in a position in which they are not providing medical services to the public. There are examples where individuals are either in non-clinical, advisory, or consulting roles or they might be a member of a committee and be compensated for that. They might be a public health officer and be compensated for that. I am wondering if the member opposite can tell us what the intention of Bill No. 310 was and if, in fact, all medical practitioners carrying out each and every one of those roles are intended to be impacted by having the YMA negotiate their work contracts.

**Ms. White:** To the first point, no, the Yukon Medical Association did not directly discuss Bill No. 310 with the CYFN or the Yukon Hospital Corporation's First Nation stakeholders.

They agree that only those who deliver medical services — for example, physicians who do direct delivery — were intended to be covered.

I appreciate that the minister reached out with an amendment to clause 3, so I look forward to discussing that in line-by-line debate. She is correct. I appreciate her and her officials and their proposed amendment for clause 3. It is only supposed to be for those physicians directly delivering medical care.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I look forward to having a few more questions when we get to the line-by-line debate, and a I appreciate the answers provided to the questions today.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*?

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

*On Clause 1*

*Clause 1 agreed to*

*On Clause 2*

*Clause 2 agreed to*

*On Clause 3*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am pleased to further discuss, as the member opposite mentioned, conversations that we have had with respect to the intention of the Yukon Medical Association in representing every single medical professional in every possible opportunity of their employment. I think our conversations have resulted in the fact that this was not the intention. This is a situation in which an amendment, I think, is appropriate to Bill No. 310 to be more specific with respect to the intentions and put clearly for clarification purposes.

What we can do here in this part of the debate is to amend clause 3 by adding clause 3.01.

*Amendment proposed*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move the following amendment:

THAT Bill No. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*, be amended at page 2 by adding the following clause after clause 3:

3.01 Exception

Despite sections 2 and 3, the Yukon Medical Association is not the sole bargaining agent on behalf of and may not enter into agreements that bind,

(a) a medical practitioner with respect to a contract with the Government of Yukon

(i) to provide advisory or consulting services to the Government of Yukon, including as a member of a committee, and unrelated to personal treatment of patients for fee by the medical practitioner, or

(ii) to oversee or assist in the implementation or delivery of specific health or health-related programs for the Government of Yukon, and unrelated to personal treatment of patients for fee by the medical practitioner;

(b) a medical practitioner who is included in the Administrative Register referred to in paragraph 9(1)(e) of the *Medical Profession Act*, and who practises medicine only in an administrative capacity; or

(c) a medical practitioner with respect to the services rendered under their appointment or designation under an enactment as a public officer or as the deputy of a public officer.

**Deputy Chair:** The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South:

THAT Bill No. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*, be amended at page 2 by adding the following clause after clause 3:

3.01 Exception

Despite sections 2 and 3, the Yukon Medical Association is not the sole bargaining agent on behalf of and may not enter into agreements that bind,

(a) a medical practitioner with respect to a contract with the Government of Yukon

(i) to provide advisory or consulting services to the Government of Yukon, including as a member of a committee, and unrelated to personal treatment of patients for fee by the medical practitioner, or

(ii) to oversee or assist in the implementation or delivery of specific health or health-related programs for the Government of Yukon, and unrelated to personal treatment of patients for fee by the medical practitioner;

(b) a medical practitioner who is included in the Administrative Register referred to in paragraph 9(1)(e) of the *Medical Profession Act*, and who practises medicine only in an administrative capacity; or

(c) a medical practitioner with respect to the services rendered under their appointment or designation under an enactment as a public officer or as the deputy of a public officer.

Is there any debate on the amendment?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I will note first that, late this morning — closer to this afternoon — the member opposite and I received — I think all parties — a letter from the Yukon Hospital Corporation and we were able to very quickly — not thoroughly but very quickly — assess what their issues were with respect to contracts that they would have similar to government contracts. I am assured that this amendment will address their concerns. I think that their initial request included information that they wanted to have the Yukon Hospital Corporation or Shāw Kwā'ā, the future health authority, named in this amendment.

I am mentioning it here because I am not interested in making that change. I don't think that it is necessary. I think that what we should be talking about is the role of physicians and the kinds of work that will be exempted from having the YMA negotiate on their behalf and not where someone might be doing that work. I know that there will be situations in the future. We don't know the full impact with respect to this bill on the Hospital Corporation or on a future health authority, but I think I am satisfied and have information that this particular amendment will address their initial concerns.

This amendment adds additional clarification by adding section 3.1 to the bill that is currently tabled and adding an exemption to the bargaining powers that are provided to the Yukon Medical Association in sections 2 and 3. I think that is the clear intention. The exemption is essential because it recognizes that physicians often — and sometimes both — do this kind of work as well as fee-for-service work, but physicians often act as independent advisors or in other capacities to advise government. Without this exemption, the bill as tabled allows — and I think that the member opposite agrees — the YMA to represent and negotiate on behalf of physicians for all purposes, including contracts that are unrelated to medical services. I don't think that was the intention and we have heard that it probably was not.

This would include roles essential for public health, including the chief medical officer of health, who must be able to act independently and to provide advice unburdened by issues of compensation or negotiations with other physicians. I had the opportunity to speak with the chief medical officer of health yesterday. I know that there are ways in which this has been done across the country in different ways, but I did speak to him about a potential amendment that would insert this part in Bill No. 310 and he was supportive of that, recognizing that there are different ways to do it across the country.

But given the concerns about the interpretation of the bill that we have discussed previously, any ambiguity is likely to lead to arbitration and this could be costly or take time away from the delivery of health care. We have an opportunity to make it better; let's do so. We have an opportunity to put in the full intention of the Yukon Medical Association; let's do so.

The current bill would make the Yukon Medical Association the bargaining agent, as I've said, for all physicians regardless of how they are doing their work in a clinic or maybe in a boardroom or a community, so let's make this amendment to clarify.

As a universal bargaining agent, the YMA will be entrenched in a bargaining relationship with government, and this could make it difficult if there was a situation in which a physician would be contracted to give public health advice to support a health situation and well-being of Yukoners but perhaps couldn't accept that service contract because the YMA or the government were otherwise involved in other processes with respect to physicians. The impact could be devastating if those individuals could not be hired, or there could be unintended consequences. Without being an alarmist, I'm happy just to say "unintended consequences".

This is one of the reasons why we need to see this amendment proceed to allow physicians to provide neutral, independent advice to government and to Yukoners.

Department of Health and Social Services does contract with physicians — including, as an example, the chief medical officer of health and the deputy medical officers of health — to perform many roles. These provide essential public health advice as statutory officers. They are also contracted to review things like medical travel claims submitted by their peers or to ensure that the medical travel system is fair and in accordance with best practices. They also advise on matters like emergency

medical services practices and the medical records information system on which many physicians hold strong and divergent opinions.

I can also note that they sit on boards and committees, providing essential expertise in long-term system-wide projects.

I think that we have to consider how we can look to physicians to provide independent expert advice on physicians' claims. These are some of the roles that exist. When that advice may affect compensation of their colleagues or their peers, they would need to be able to do so independently. Without the exemption that I am suggesting here, the possibility exists that government could be prohibited from contracting with physicians to fulfill essential roles for program delivery or public health — as I have noted — or in the absence of a clear agreement with the YMA on all aspects of physician compensation. We do not intend for that to be the case, but we need to make sure that the intentions here are clear and that this piece of legislation is as strong as it can be.

Let me say that this amendment will omit the risk by allowing doctors to work independently in administrative and advisory roles. It will clarify how we agree to compensate future chief medical officers of health, for instance, or physicians providing services in roles other than traditional practice. We do not yet fully understand how the bill will apply to the Hospital Corporation in every situation or in the future to Shāw Kwā'a, the health authority. I would certainly have some concerns with respect to the definition of "memorandum of agreement" in section 1 — references agreements with "any other party" — because it's not yet clear what other parties the YMA intends to negotiate with or what impact this might have on the Hospital Corporation or the health authority in the future.

That same section allows the YMA to negotiate on — quote: "other matters of mutual interest". We don't fully understand the scope of these other matters yet or where they might begin or end. So, anything that the Hospital Corporation or the health authority have concerns about, we will work out presumably in the future.

**Ms. White:** The minister, the minister's team, and mine had conversations, including with the YMA, this morning. We had made some editorial suggestions to the initial proposed amendment. We have both accepted, as did the government, the changes that we propose. We appreciate the additional clarity that this brings to the bill and we will move to support the amendment.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would just note here a couple of things. One is that this letter from the Yukon Hospital Corporation, which was no doubt coordinated in its timing with the minister's office, was only sent to us 16 minutes before the House began sitting this afternoon. This bill has been on the Order Paper for weeks now. It was debated extensively two weeks ago, and the deliberate last-minute nature on the part of the government is quite notable.

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

**Point of order**

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Under our Standing Orders, we talk about the word “deliberate” being used here — that this was purposefully misleading. It clearly is just when the document was sent, and I think that we are not supposed to use that type of language, so I would ask you to rule on that, please.

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Lake Laberge, on the point of order.

**Mr. Cathers:** On the point of order, I think that the Government House Leader is confused. I didn’t accuse a member of misleading this House, so I don’t think that there is a point of order, and I think that the Government House Leader is confused about the Standing Orders.

**Deputy Chair’s ruling**

**Deputy Chair:** On the point of order, members should avoid language that suggests that other members are deliberately confounding the procedures of the Assembly.

On the amendment, the Member for Lake Laberge.

**Mr. Cathers:** Again, what I will just note is that we received both the letter that was sent today and this amendment with very little time to review them. Certainly, if there are issues that might be problematic in the language with this proposed amendment by the minister, we have not had the opportunity, since we just saw the amendment here on the floor of the Assembly, to discuss it with the Yukon Medical Association ourselves. I understand via the Leader of the Third Party that there seems to be an indication that they don’t have a concern with the language, but it does seem that this information could have been shared by the Minister of Health and Social Services earlier than this afternoon, leaving us all in a better position to discuss it, so it is unfortunate.

That being said, the key question for us is what the Yukon Medical Association’s views are of this section. I know that the Leader of the Third Party is in touch with the legislative drafter right now, so if we could just get some clarification on that, it would be the only concern from our perspective.

**Ms. White:** Just on some points of clarification, I wish all parties shared amendments ahead of time, but that has never been the practice. I do appreciate that the minister reached out to me earlier today, and I reached out to the YMA, and in collaboration, we brought this forward to provide clarity. The message from the YMA directly is — it says that the YMA fully supports.

There is also — for clarification, the letter that came to all three parties actually came from the Yukon Hospital Corporation, so it did not come from the minister or the government. It did come at 12:27 p.m. today. So, that, I don’t believe, is what we are discussing here specifically; we are talking about the amendment. It does bring clarity. I do appreciate the amendment. We have talked before about how amendments can strengthen legislation, and this is an example. I appreciate the amendment, and we will be voting in favour.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** While I always appreciate the Member for Lake Laberge taking the opportunity to criticize me, this letter, as the member said, is not from me. I didn’t send the letter at 12 — whatever time it was. I certainly received it some 18 minutes before 1:00 p.m. today. I did have a heads-up earlier that a letter might be coming, but I didn’t see that text until we were finished with the initial House business today.

Nonetheless, I appreciate what I believe to be support despite the criticism that I did something untoward to the members opposite, which is not, in fact, the case. I do expect that support for this amendment will make Bill No. 310 better. I very much appreciate it being well-received by the sponsoring member.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on the amendment?

*Amendment to Clause 3 agreed to*

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further debate on clause 3 as amended?

*Clause 3, as amended, agreed to*

*On Clause 4*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I may have had an answer to this, but I guess I wanted to just make it clear for Yukoners. Do the YMA’s current bylaws already require medical practitioners to pay dues — this is section 4 about membership and dues — or is this a shift from the current practice? And how do these two items align, I suppose? Medical practitioners may be offered the opportunity to join the YMA, but they must pay the dues. How does the YMA either enforce this provision now or will they be enforcing it?

**Ms. White:** So, membership dues are currently a requirement. They are in section 2 of the bylaws of the Yukon Medical Association. Additional enforcement processes will be developed prior to January 1, 2026, when this bill is set to come into force. Bylaws will be amended at the AGM or a special general meeting prior to that.

*Clause 4 agreed to*

*On Clause 5*

*Clause 5 agreed to*

*On Clause 6*

*Clause 6 agreed to*

*On Clause 7*

*Clause 7 agreed to*

*On Clause 8*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** At the briefing originally on this Bill No. 310, it did not at that time include a coming-into-force date. I’m very pleased to see section 8 here.

So that Yukoners are well aware, we had a meeting regarding, in particular, the inclusion of section 8 and the necessity for it with Yukon Medical Association and others who were involved in the drafting and the members of the New Democratic Party so that my team could express concern about it not being included. I’m very pleased to see that it is included.

It is the practice to have a coming-into-force clause or a “commencement” clause, as it’s call here, in most bills. This is one of the critical additions, I think, that were made through the process of getting the bill finalized and getting it here.

As I think everyone here must know now, the negotiations are currently underway to negotiate a new memorandum of understanding — or “memorandum of agreement”, as it is referred to — between Yukon government and the Yukon Medical Association, but without a coming-into-force clause or commencement clause, the potential passing of this new bill would have it come into force upon the passing of and the assent of the bill, which would have put the negotiation process in jeopardy.

All of a sudden, there would be a new piece of legislation and there would be new authorities for the Yukon Medical Association, and there would be new things to discuss, including contracts that are in mid-contract and other details as anticipated by Bill No. 310. The concern was always — and expressed — about requiring the two parties at that time to halt and to shift immediately into a new process.

Our government is committed to establishing a new memorandum of understanding, and seeing this section included is very important to us for that reason. My question with respect to that is: How was the date of January 1, 2026 arrived at? Is that a reasonable amount of time for the Yukon Medical Association to prepare appropriately for the transition?

**Ms. White:** After careful consideration, the Yukon Medical Association made the decision that eight months was sufficient time. They have already started looking at the mechanisms and the things that they will need to put in place. They believe that this is a significant and sufficient amount of time, and it will allow them time to do what they need to do ahead of the January 1, 2026 coming into force of this act.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** One of the suggestions that was brought forward during conversation with the YMA and with the movers, the New Democratic Party, regarding this Bill No. 310 was that, in fact, the commencement section should include the words “a date to be fixed by the Commissioner in Executive Council”, commonly known as a “proclamation date”, so that it could be more flexible.

The suggestion of a specific date was also a conversation that we had, and clearly, this version of Bill No. 310 has come forward with a specific date of January 1, 2026.

*Amendment proposed*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** As a result of having the more flexible date considered by this Legislative Assembly, I move:

THAT Bill No. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*, be amended in clause 8 at page 3 by replacing the expression “January 1, 2026” with the expression “a day or days to be fixed by the Commissioner in Executive Council”.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South:

THAT Bill No. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*, be amended in clause 8 at page 3 by replacing the expression “January 1, 2026” with the expression “a day or days to be fixed by the Commissioner in Executive Council”.

Is there any debate on the amendment?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this particular amendment. I am suggesting the amendment — very pleased to see a commencement section, as I have said. I am very hopeful that everything could be done prior to January 1, 2026, but in order to make, in my submission, this legislation as strong as possible, it’s important to make sure that the coming-into-force date is outside of the negotiations that are currently going on with the Yukon Medical Association.

We would certainly hope that they will be completed and a new memorandum of understanding will be ratified by that date, but it is possible — all things are possible, I think, now in our world — not having expected many of the things that have happened over the last number of years in the Yukon Territory. But anything is possible and, as a result, this is a hard-and-fast date. If for some reason that MOU and negotiations were not completed or ratified, then a hard-and-fast date would really adversely impact and not allow the flexibility that would be appropriate.

We certainly spoke to the YMA, and we appreciated their understanding of a commencement date at all and I think that we have gone a long way to helping to have that be included. My suggestion here is that the date to be fixed by the Commissioner in Executive Council is, in fact, a more flexible date in the event that the parties are ready sooner than January 1, 2026 or later than January 1, 2026 for the full implementation of this bill to come into force. It would be a much more flexible opportunity to have the proclamation happen as the parties are ready. If the parties are not ready for some reason, the act would require an amendment, and there would need to be the opportunity to have the act amended, because it will come into force, should it pass today, on January 1, 2026.

It is also common practice, particularly with a private member’s bill, that they are not brought into force upon assent, so we are not suggesting that here — no one is — but it is an opportunity to have it on a future date for legislative counsel to review the bill in its entirety for full consideration of consequential amendments that might be needed. I know that the sponsoring member — the Leader of the New Democratic Party — said that there were no consequential amendments, but at the last minute, we have heard some concerns from the Hospital Corporation. There is a Hospital Corporation act and there is a new *Health Authority Act*, so I think that it will allow time for those items and the impact of Bill No. 310 to be fully considered. It will allow time for any Yukon Medical Association bylaw changes, fee changes, or administrative changes that need to be happening to basically allow for readiness and the capacity to operationalize this bill, which will be well-received and a great step forward, but every little detail of what that will mean is probably not yet known.

With respect to the commencement section, it is my suggestion that we provide for more flexibility by changing, as I have suggested here with respect to the amendment, the wording to move away from a specific date to make sure that, in the modern era of drafting legislation, we can remove any

ambiguity and also make sure that we can adjust to the true implications both for government but also for the Yukon Medical Association to make sure that they have the time.

As I said, if it were sooner than that, it would even be better, but we have to recognize that we're at the beginning of negotiations. We have had three days of negotiations. The parties will return in the first or second week of May for another number of days, and certainly, we all hope that it will be completed and we will be moving forward with a ratified agreement.

But doing both things — both the negotiations piece and operationalizing the implications and changes of Bill No. 310 — are probably things that we should make sure that we have some flexibility on.

**Ms. White:** There were multiple conversations between the minister, officials, me, and the YMA, and we did take on board — including a commencement date — in a meeting in March. There had been suggestions about 2017. This one had been floated about a commencement date to be determined by the executive council. The reality is that the YMA wants to be able to control this. They want to know what they are working toward, they want to have jurisdiction on that, and they will have it done and ready to go. They are happy with the deadline of January 1, 2026.

So, we will not be supporting the amendment.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would just note — as I mentioned previously when we debated this legislation — that we had the opportunity to meet with the Yukon Medical Association multiple times to discuss this legislation while it was in draft form. One of the suggestions that I made to them at the time — regarding coming into force — is that they would be well-advised for the legislation not to say “a day or days to be fixed by the Commissioner in Executive Council” — that it would be better to name a specific date.

We understand that the specific date was picked by the Yukon Medical Association and we will not be supporting the amendment.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further debate on the amendment?

Shall the amendment carry?

**Some Hon. Members:** Count.

### Count

**Deputy Chair:** A count has been called.

*Bells*

**Deputy Chair:** All those in favour, please rise.

*Members rise*

**Deputy Chair:** All those opposed, please rise.

*Members rise.*

**Deputy Chair:** The results are seven yea, 10 nay.

*Amendment to Clause 8 negatived*

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further debate on clause 8?

*Clause 8 agreed to*

*On Title*

*Title agreed to*

**Ms. White:** Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*, with amendment.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that the Chair report Bill No. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*, with amendment.

*Motion agreed to*

**Deputy Chair:** The Chair shall now rise and report.

*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. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*, and directed me to report the bill with amendment.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I request the unanimous consent of the House, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 59(2), to move third reading of Bill No. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*, at this time.

### Unanimous consent re moving third reading of Bill No. 310

**Speaker:** The Leader of the Third Party has requested the unanimous consent of the House, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 59(2), to move third reading of Bill No. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*, at this time.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** Unanimous consent has been granted.

### Bill No. 310: *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association* — Third Reading

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 310, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my colleagues for what feels like a very momentous occasion. I would like to recognize that Katrina Fillmore is in the gallery right now, joined by two of my staff members, Laurie Tritschler and Nicole Dhillon, who have done an incredible amount of



work to help support me to get me here. We, of course, have Ron Pink online way across the country as we get to this point. I also want to thank Dr. Bryant, Dr. Kmet, and others who were able to support and have discussions to get here. I recognize my colleagues from the Liberal Party and the Yukon Party and thank them as well.

This is a really monumental occasion in the Yukon as we now step into the next chapter of how Yukon physicians will be supported — the leadership that they continue to give through the Yukon Medical Association. What this will allow and what this will support, I believe, has the opportunity to be transformative. I am excited for the small role that I was able to play to help to get us here. I look forward to my colleagues' closing statements and, again, I am just grateful to just be here today just on the cusp of a vote. It is an exciting day.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in favour of Bill No. 310, which, of course, represents an important component of our collaborative work with physicians toward a stable and strong health system. A healthy and strong community of family physicians and acute care physicians is absolutely critical to ensuring that Yukoners have access to excellent primary health care services, which we do. Primary health care providers are the foundation of our health care system. Our ability to deliver care in hospitals, clinics, and the community is really essential to maintaining access to quality health care for all Yukoners.

As we prepared in the last number of months for these important negotiations —

**Speaker:** Order, please. The motion has not been moved.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Leader of the Third Party that Bill No. 310, entitled *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Ms. White:** My apologies, Mr. Speaker; I will sit down so my colleague the Minister of Health and Social Services can get back up to where she was at.

Again, I appreciate the support to get us through to third reading of this bill and to this portion here. Again, I thank my colleagues for their support.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, just to reiterate as part of third reading, I am very pleased to speak in favour of Bill No. 310, which represents an important component of our collaborative work with physicians toward a strong and stable health care system.

As we have prepared for the important negotiations that are ongoing and based on our conversations between the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Medical Association over the last several months in preparation, we are really pleased to have supported a clear

mandate to achieve several shared goals. We look forward to those conversations continuing.

Today, we have before us a bill that speaks to representational rights. While there are elements of the bill that warrant close review, I am pleased to have the opportunity to work with the members opposite and the YMA on this bill.

Since learning of the bill, we have met with the Yukon Medical Association on several occasions and provided preliminary written feedback on two occasions and had many, many phone calls. We all worked together to advance this shared goal and support the Yukon Medical Association and physicians to move in this direction.

We voted unanimously in this House back in March that the government should prioritize recruitment and retention of physicians and work with the Yukon Medical Association to reduce administrative burdens and cut red tape. That work remains our focus and our top priority.

We also work closely with independent physicians who provide independent advice, and this includes — as I mentioned earlier today — the chief medical officer of health, whose role is so important in keeping Yukoners truly healthy and safe. We also work with other independent medical officers who provide advisory services, such as reviewing medical travel claims or advising on health system transformation. It is truly essential that physicians remain able to provide independent medical advice to government and through government to Yukoners.

Over the past years, we have worked closely with the Yukon Medical Association on other work as well. One of my first meetings upon being given the honour of this role as Minister of Health and Social Services was with the then-president of the Yukon Medical Association and then, quickly after that, with the Hospital Corporation. I have mentioned this before in this Legislative Assembly, but I told each of them and then them together that I truly believed that, if we weren't cooperating as a trilateral group, then we would not be able to achieve what Yukoners needed for their health care services and for the progression and transformation of the health care system here in the territory.

I also want to make note of the fact that I had the honour yesterday morning of greeting not all of them but certainly more than 350 registrants for the Tri-territorial Health and Social Professionals Conference that is happening here in Whitehorse. There is just an amazing array of individuals who have come together to talk about health care in the north, our priorities, the cultural components that are necessary, the changes that are afoot, and the transformation that is critical. I truly believe that this is one step forward in that transformation.

We have all inherited a health care system that is more than 70 or 80 years old. Even if it's considered to be post-World War II, it's extremely old and it is based on a system that has not had a lot of evolution or changes over that period of time. We have, for various reasons — not the least of which are challenges with the population growth, with an aging population, with the baby-boomers bubble coming into being seniors — challenges with health human resources. We have a unique opportunity to change our health care system to address the issues of our health care system, and this is part of that.

Today, the passing of Bill No. 310 is a significant part of that, because we must modernize, we must move forward, and we must do that on behalf of Yukoners. It is an extremely unprecedented — and I don't use that word — we have an unprecedented opportunity to form what health care will look like in the future, and I urge all Yukoners to be involved in that. It's incredibly important work.

Our government also collaborates with the Yukon Medical Association through the Joint Management Committee to identify and work on system-wide priorities. We also work on the Physician Payment Advisory Committee — and that's critical work that we do as well — and on the Health Human Resources Steering Committee.

We recognize and we support the importance of representational rights for physicians just as we are happy to work with our public sector unions to ensure fair compensation for other health care workers. Physicians are a truly integral part of the foundation of our health care system, and their ability to deliver care in hospitals and clinics and the community is essential to maintaining access to quality health care for all Yukoners.

There are still many questions about Bill No. 310, but we see it moving forward as the future.

I note that the explanatory note at the beginning of Bill No. 310 makes reference to recognizing the Yukon Medical Association as the sole bargaining agent to all medical practitioners in accordance with the terms of the act. The second point authorizes the establishment of arbitration processes to resolve disputes arising from — and I quote: "... those agreements."

Unfortunately, I didn't have an opportunity to ask the question — but it will be asked, no doubt, of the YMA — of what those agreements are; they're not defined anywhere. I think it's a reference from an older version of this section, but it does leave a question for Yukoners. When they read it — and maybe even for the YMA when they read it — those kinds of things will need to be interpreted in the future.

We have worked hard to make sure that the bill that came to this House achieves what Yukon physicians want and need and achieves what the Yukon Medical Association wants and needs and, in fact, was the best possible version from where we began.

Although it has changed drastically, I think it's an incredibly important process by which it has come to the floor of this Legislative Assembly for third reading. As a result — and I don't like to predict things — it will no doubt pass and come into force in the future. We will need to be working out some of those. There are always unintended situations that arise from new laws, and it's important that we face those with an open mind.

In recognition of the importance of physicians and our collaborations with them, we are looking for ways to support the intent and the work of all the parties on a good path. In this work — as it is with all of our work — our north star remains ensuring the health and well-being of Yukoners.

I look forward to supporting the bill as a component of our system-wide work to create a health care system that physicians and Yukoners deserve and expect.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to first of all thank the Yukon Medical Association for their work and advocacy on this important issue as well as the Third Party for tabling this draft legislation. We were pleased, as I noted before, to have the opportunity to meet with the Yukon Medical Association a number of times to discuss this draft legislation. I will not be long in my comments here, but I do want to just recap briefly that the Yukon Party is proud of our long record of championing investments in our public health care system, including supporting doctors and all health care professionals.

During our time in government, we launched the medical education bursary to support Yukon students and started the family physician incentive program for new graduates, which was to attract doctors to the Yukon. We also provided bursaries and supports for other health professionals under our *Health Human Resources Strategy*.

Other actions include planning and investing in the new emergency department for Whitehorse General Hospital, as well as developing the hospital masterplan for the campus, purchasing the new MRI and CT scanners for the hospital, constructing hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City, building two new ambulance stations in Whitehorse, and expanding 911 service to all rural communities. Of course, the list goes on.

During our time as the Official Opposition, we have continued to make health care a top priority, including pushing for increased funding for Yukon hospitals for years, calling out this government when it failed to pay doctors in a timely manner under fee-for-service, advocating for cuts to red tape for physicians, urging increased action on doctor recruitment and retention, asking for the Whitehorse General Hospital surgical services renewal project to move forward, and championing other solutions to the territory's health care crisis.

I again remind the minister that the *Health Human Resources Strategy* that they developed, which we are pleased to see, was only as a result of years of pushing by the Yukon Party for the government to take action in that area.

In wrapping up my comments, I would also note that, as I did at second reading, it is important to understand how government's relationship with doctors has changed. The fact is, for many decades, the fee-for-service model had almost all doctors practising under it, and in the last eight years, there has been a shift to more operating under alternative payment models, which makes this legislation necessary to address the situation, because in the past, the norm has been that the vast majority of doctors were covered by the Yukon Medical Association through the negotiation of the memorandums of understanding.

With that, I will wrap up my comments. I want to again thank all the doctors who provided letters in support of this legislation, thank the Yukon Medical Association for their advocacy, thank the Third Party for tabling this legislation, and we will be supporting the passage of this here today.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am going to pick up where the Member for Lake Laberge left off. The first thing I want to mention is that, even though we have massive increases in our budgets for health care, for doctors, for the hospital, the members opposite vote against those every time. They also complain that we are spending too much money every time. They say: Spending too much money; you need to spend more. I vote; they vote; they vote against it.

Yes, it is correct that the Member for Lake Laberge does stand and say that there should be more for doctors, but when we put forward more for doctors, they then vote against that.

I, like him, will say thank you to the Yukon Medical Association and to all of our doctors, locums, all of the people who come here for all of their great work. In particular, I want to say thank you to Dr. Kmet. I had a chance to see Dr. Kmet not in his role when he was president of the Yukon Medical Association, and I knew that he was in that role, but it was because he volunteers his time for an organization — Hospice Yukon — and my wife volunteers there as well, so I saw how they worked together — and the whole of that board and that staff — and they do amazing work.

He very generously reached out to talk to me about this situation and provided me with the background. That was very helpful, as I noted when we were talking, I think, in Committee of the Whole, because Dr. Kmet put it into a frame that I hadn't caught. I thought somehow that there were these two camps, and instead, there was a lot of overlap between those who are doing contract work and who are a part of the Yukon Medical Association.

I would also like to thank the NDP for bringing this bill. This is a minority Legislative Assembly. It has been since the 2021 election. But in the analysis that I have done to look at what has been achieved here, you have to note the productivity of the Assembly. I would note at this moment that this would be, I think, the fourth bill that the NDP has brought to this House. I'm hopeful that this bill passes and I'm hopeful that we have that vote in a couple of minutes. It would be the fourth bill that they have passed and that is impressive. I think that all of their staff should be proud of the work that they have done.

I would also like to thank Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice, which I'm guessing did some work in the background just because of the role of the Minister of Health and Social Services, who is also the Minister of Justice and also is a capable, professional lawyer who has had quite a distinguished career. I know that there was a lot of work that was put in here to try to assist to get this to the place that it is today. I thank all who worked to bring this forward.

The comment that I want to make — or couple of comments that I want to make — today is that I think we all saw the pressure that was coming to our medical system, and we saw it from quite a way out, including around doctors but not just doctors — it was nurses; it was all of the allied health professionals. We saw this coming. Really, it was because of the demographic shift that we saw on its way.

We fundamentally believed that what we needed to do was to reset the whole system. You can see that in the aging-in-place

strategy; you can see it in the health authority, but the place where I most noted it was under *Putting People First* — that we talked about how to reset the whole of the system. The minister referenced this a little bit in saying how the system was out of date — talking about it as being a 70-year-old system.

But the way that the system was focused before, it was really focused around doctors, and where we are hoping to get it — to move it toward — is not around doctors but around patients and to make sure that it's a more team-based approach. This is one of those steps in that opportunity, and I don't want to lose sight of that broader picture as we do this. This is again my appreciation both to the Yukon Medical Association and the NDP for getting us here. I see this as part of that bigger and broader work.

Just as we saw all of that pressure coming and we went to do this big transition to a more team-based, patient-centred model, COVID hit. What happened during COVID was really — there was so much pressure on our whole health care system that a lot of people across Canada and across the world — this was not unique to the Yukon — just said to themselves: Maybe now is the time to retire. Many of them did extra work during COVID, but at the tail-end of it, there was a moment where people said — and it would depend on your age and where you sit in sort of that whole baby-boomer spectrum. But some people said to themselves: You know what? That was a huge push; let's call it a day.

And everywhere across the country, this pressure mounted. So, we have these motions that come forward to talk about how we should try to recruit from the United States — great idea — but everywhere is trying to recruit from everywhere. Then, we have to do like Williams Lake is doing — to show how this is a great place to live, and then it comes back to all of these other things, such as how we form a community here.

With that, I think that we need to be looking at the whole of the system, so it isn't just enough to look at doctors and make sure that they are well-compensated for their work and have the ability to create work-life balance against all of the pressures that come in their roles. We are going to need, for example, nurse practitioners — more of them.

There have been other suggestions. The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has talked about other groups of professionals that we should consider as trying to help. My sense of this is that we should be asking them all. There is a tremendous pressure and I am always trying to judge how we are doing against other jurisdictions, because sometimes I feel that we have some blinders on here — that we have these huge expectations about what should happen, whether they are huge expectations of our doctors and what they can do or huge expectations of the government or the whole of the system. Anyway, there is a lot of pressure right now.

So, I think that this is a great step. It is an important step and I am looking forward to the new MOU and how that will be negotiated. I am looking forward to how we build this into a new health authority and how that works. I am looking forward to *Putting People First*.

Several years ago when we first brought forward *Putting People First*, the NDP had this really clever moment where

they tabled dozens of old reports for things that had not happened — sorry, what was the number?

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Eighty-six. That is more than I remember from that day. The point that was being made was that we can't let these things languish; we have to continue to move them. We have to put energy behind them.

So, yes, I think that this is a great step. I want to appreciate it for the step that it is, but I also want to flag for all of us that there is a lot of work to do and we have to keep doing that hard work together as Yukoners in all of our respective roles and that we are going to need help from all directions.

I will finish this by encouraging the members opposite to vote for the budget. I get that they are in opposition and that they disagree with it, but I don't think that you can both stand up and say to give more to health care, doctors, et cetera, and then also say to spend less money, because those two things just don't go together. I will stop there. Again, my appreciation goes to everyone who helped to bring this to third reading today.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Ms. White:** I thank my colleagues for their words today. I am going to actually step into a space that I don't normally go into, which is that Bill No. 310 wouldn't be here without the NDP, because when we were asked to help and heard the problem, we said: Yes, how can we help?

I want to thank Dr. Derek Bryant, Dr. Alex Kmet, Katrina Fillmore, and Ron Pink. I want to thank Jocelyn Barrett, Nicole Dhillon, Brontë Renwick-Shields, Dan Bader, Karissa Bascom, and Laurie Tritschler, because that whole group of people supported the MLA for Whitehorse Centre, the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin, and me to get here.

I want to say that when you listen and someone says that they need help and you are able to walk into that space, it is big and it is powerful, and it doesn't mean you can do it on your own. I acknowledge the support from the Liberals and from the Minister of Health and Social Services. I acknowledge the support from the Yukon Party and the Member for Lake Laberge. But I will say that I would not be standing here and we would not be standing here and we would not have discussed Bill No. 310, *Act Respecting the Yukon Medical Association*, if it wasn't for the NDP listening.

I am grateful to be here and I am honoured to be here, and I understand the responsibility of the work that we have done. I look toward a future where Yukon physicians feel fully supported, where the silos are taken down, and where fairness prevails. So, I am excited about that future. I thank my colleagues today. I look forward to a vote. It sounds like it is going to be unanimous. What a vote of confidence for Yukon physicians — what a mark of gratitude. For that, I think we should all be proud and I look forward to that moment.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

## Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

## Bells

**Speaker:** Madam Deputy 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.

**Deputy Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 310 agreed*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 310 has passed this House.

## MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

### Motion No. 1116

**Deputy Clerk:** Motion No. 1116, standing in the name of Ms. McLeod.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Member for Watson Lake:

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

**Ms. McLeod:** Mr. Speaker, this motion largely speaks for itself.

Every volunteer firefighter in the Yukon deserves to have personal protective equipment and turnout gear that is in good condition, and I understand that 80 percent of firefighters are wearing expired or damaged gear, and that is just not acceptable. Not only is this important to protect them from heat, known carcinogens, and other risks to their health, but the government has a legal duty to provide proper gear under part 11 of the regulations.

My colleagues and I have raised this issue on behalf of our dedicated volunteer firefighters multiple times in this Legislative Assembly, including last fall and several times this

Sitting, and fire chiefs have repeatedly tried to raise these concerns internally, and they have kept being promised that the issue would be dealt with, but it never was. This should never have happened, Mr. Speaker. If the minister had listened to the fire chiefs earlier, this never would have happened.

The government, in my opinion, has fallen short of giving their own opinion on if firefighters should attend fires using out-of-date or expired equipment and wearing worn-out gear. I believe that not having the appropriate gear puts our firefighters in a difficult position, because they want to help. They want to do the work that they volunteered for.

Now, the government needs to provide the much-needed funding and provide a timeline as to when that funding should be expected. We asked the government to provide a list of what each fire hall will receive, when it is expected, and when it is expected to be delivered, and our volunteer firefighters deserve that. We raised this issue last fall when the fire chiefs went public with this information, and government has had the time to ensure that this equipment was budgeted for this year, and still, it did not happen.

I would also personally like to see plans and funding put in place to allow for the renewal of equipment and gear so that we don't find that our firefighters are in this position again. This motion, Mr. Speaker, looks to make all of that happen.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, despite the tone of my good colleague across the way there, I want to begin by thanking the Official Opposition this afternoon. Normally, opposition Wednesdays can be political affairs, with my conservative colleagues seeking to put us — or, in this case, me — in an uncomfortable position, but this afternoon, the opposition has opted to show consensus, and I thank them for that and this opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, we are in agreement. I appreciate the House getting on board with funding personal protective equipment and turnout gear for our volunteer firefighters throughout the Yukon. I want to correct some of the inaccurate information that was placed in the House this afternoon on the public record by the member opposite. I really do appreciate the opportunity to speak about this issue in detail, because I have worked in this field for the promotion and delivery of personal protective equipment for much of my professional life.

I will also take the opportunity presented this afternoon by this motion to talk about the volunteer fire service, the fire chiefs, and the Fire Marshal's Office in detail and clarify some of the erroneous information that has been put in the public field. I'm not saying it was done intentionally; I'm just saying that it has happened. I welcome the opportunity to correct that this afternoon. In short, Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of important material to cover to pay homage to the work that Yukoners do in this very important field which is in some ways unique in the country in its support and delivery.

As I have said consistently, personal protective equipment is critical for workers in many industries in the Yukon. I want to say that again: It is critical for workers in many, if not all, industries in the Yukon. I have been involved personally in

promoting workplace safety through much of my professional career as a reporter and editor at the *Yukon News*, as a civil servant with, as it was called then, Yukon Workers' Compensation, Health and Safety Board — it's now the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board — and as a minister in this government both in Highways and Public Works and now as the labour minister responsible for employment standards and my old shop, the Yukon Workers' Safety and Compensation Board.

The goal in the Yukon Workers' Safety and Compensation Board is to have zero workplace injuries in the territory, and that is not an unachievable goal. It sounds sort of "pie in the sky", but it is a tangible target; it has to be the target, Mr. Speaker.

If you think otherwise, look around and tell me who you're willing to sacrifice this afternoon. Point a finger and say: They're the ones who are going to get injured or die today. I would assert that there is nobody in this Chamber who would do such a thing. So, the goal has to be zero. We have to strive for zero workplace injuries in the Yukon.

There are many tools deployed in the workplace safety field to help employers and employees prevent injuries and death. One of the foundations of that is personal protective equipment — safety glasses, hard hats, steel-toed boots, gloves, coats, heavy pants, fall arrests, guards on saw blades — I could go on for hours, but for your sake and mine, I'm not going to.

The important point is that whatever equipment your trade or profession uses to keep folks safe, you have to ensure that it is provided, that it is in good working order, and that it is used consistently. A pair of safety glasses sitting on a work bench is no good to anybody; you have to have them on your face. It's the same thing with hard hats and boots — the whole thing, the whole kit has to be deployed to keep yourself safe; I know it's important.

By "we", I mean all of us — all of us have a responsibility. As an employer, we have to prioritize funding for this equipment ahead of all other things. This is a "need to have"; it's not a "nice to have". This is essential gear.

Workers must have access to this equipment, and as I've said, they must use it. It's not discretionary; they have to put it on. That's the job. We have a personal obligation to wear it to prevent injuries. The employer has an obligation to provide it so that the worker can wear it and prevent injuries. That is how the system works. When deficiencies are flagged, as they were last October by fire chiefs, workers and employers must assess the severity of the problem and mitigate it if possible. They have to take action. When you hear about something in the workplace — safety issue — be it inadequate safety gear or defective safety gear or worn-out safety gear, you have an obligation to fix it.

On this, the opposition and I certainly agree. The principle applies to gear as well as to occupational health and safety issues. It comes down to, if you identify a safety hazard of any sort — a pit that hasn't been flagged or the edge of a building that hasn't been properly marked, even staircases that aren't properly marked to the edge — you have to do the work to make sure that those safety issues are mitigated.

If the gear fails to provide the protection that it is designed to provide, you either replace it or you keep employees on the bench until the gear is provided. It's simple. You can't put workers in harm's way without the gear they need to keep themselves safe. As I said, employers must provide that necessary gear and, if not, the service or the jobsite has to shut down. Putting employees in danger is not an option.

Again, the goal is zero deaths, zero injuries, and zero illnesses.

Identifying workplace dangers is not discretionary; it is an obligation. It is an obligation of every employee. It is an obligation of every employer. In fact, I would argue that it is an obligation of every citizen who sees a potential workplace hazard to report it. We all have a responsibility in this field. It is not something that the employees can say: The employer should have done it. The employee has an obligation to identify the risk; the employer has an obligation to listen to that and to also look for and identify the risks.

Once a hazard is identified, it has to be assessed, and if it poses a tangible risk, it has to be mitigated, dealt with. Not doing so puts people at risk of injury or death. Again, as I have — and I will highlight it again and again: This is a shared responsibility; it is everyone's responsibility. That doesn't mean that every deficiency is a show-stopper, and that's why Occupational Health and Safety works with employers and employees on these issues when they're identified. And, of course, when they are not, you can always call them up for advice, but when issues are identified, they will work with employers on this field.

Recently, Workers' Safety and Compensation did an assessment of local fire halls run by the Yukon government and the City of Whitehorse. They are doing all of the fire halls as I understand it. That investigation led to orders being written. The goal of these inspections is to ensure that firefighters are working in safe environments where hazards are identified and properly managed. The investigation did not result in the closure of any fire halls — that much I do know, and I know that the board is working with all employers to explain the orders and discuss ways to best remedy any infractions identified.

Now, as minister, I know that this has happened. As minister, I know that they are being dealt with by Community Services, and the fire chiefs and the firefighters operate under their command, but I do not have any detailed knowledge about those orders, and as minister, I can't be involved in those. That is because, by law, the minister shall not be directly or indirectly involved in any workplace safety matter — can't intervene.

All that said, I take workplace safety seriously. I take it very seriously. So, I have directed the fire marshal, through my deputy minister, to ensure that volunteer fire services have the necessary personal protective equipment to keep their workers safe. I made that decision immediately upon hearing from fire chiefs that there was a deficiency, and I immediately asked for action. I did not ask this in March, Mr. Speaker; I did not ask this in February; I did not ask this in January or December. I

asked the department to do this in October — as soon as I heard about it as an issue from fire chiefs and firefighters.

The fire marshal began to evaluate the needs and started the work to order the necessary personal protective equipment at that time. I should explain that the Fire Marshal's Office is a branch within the Protective Services division of the Department of Community Services in the Yukon government. The Fire Marshal's Office has a three-pronged role in terms of territorial fire services: first, in a governance and oversight capacity as the entity responsible for the delivery of fire protection and emergency response services to residents; second, Mr. Speaker, it has an administrative role to provide support as needed and requested by volunteer fire departments; third, it is the enforcement agency responsible for compliance with fire safety-related legislation.

In 2021, the Department of Community Services did a review of the fire service and the Fire Marshal's Office to see how it was operating. That review identified that the multi-role mandate is not easy to navigate. It presents several challenges to the Fire Marshal's Office, because the Fire Marshal's Office must balance the need for oversight and legislative compliance while recognizing and enabling the volunteer fire departments' need for an appropriate level of autonomy and independence. Further, it must support the fire chiefs responsible for the day-to-day operations of the volunteer fire departments and retain the essential cultural elements that characterize the volunteer fire services.

To ensure the continued success of a volunteer-based service delivery model, the Fire Marshal's Office must strike a balance in both establishing management control while simultaneously enabling an appropriate level of local autonomy. That's a long way of saying that it isn't easy. There is a lot going on in this branch. Now, the Fire and Life Safety branch improves the safety and fire protection in the Yukon through leadership, education, enforcement, and program development. Fire and safety conducts inspections, investigations, and ensures compliance with the National Fire Code and the *Fire Prevention Act*. The Fire Marshal's Office operates under Fire and Life Safety. The Fire Marshal's Office oversees fire services throughout the territory and collaborates with municipalities and unincorporated communities.

The Fire Marshal's Office provides oversight, administrative support, personal protective equipment, and training resources to 18 fire department jurisdictions across the Yukon. Of these, nine are fire departments; six provide community safety supports through scene safety response units; and two are inactive. Mutual aid agreements are in place to support jurisdictions that lack fire services, and the Fire Marshal's Office continues supporting these communities to establish fire programs.

The Fire Marshal's Office's fire programs run thanks to efforts of approximately 171 volunteers across the territory. That number is going to come into clear focus in a few moments. Those programs include volunteer firefighters, scene safety response unit members, and fire safety champions. Volunteer firefighters in the Yukon regularly train to keep their skills sharp. In 2024, they logged more than 10,000 hours of

training and incident response time. That's an incredible commitment, and I really do commend them for it. In 2024, the Fire Marshal's Office volunteer fire halls responded to approximately 232 calls across the territory.

The Yukon fire service includes municipal fire services in Mayo, Dawson, Carmacks, Faro, Teslin, Watson Lake, Haines Junction, and Whitehorse, as well as volunteer services in unincorporated communities. Yukon fire services are focused on structural firefighting, dealing with homes and other buildings; however, firefighters also respond to vehicle rescues, EMS assists, wildfires, and wildland/urban interface operations. Some municipal and unincorporated volunteer fire departments also have training to support vehicle extrication and scene management at motor vehicle collisions.

As of December 31, 2024, their services include scene safety response units which are deployed in Destruction Bay, Keno, Old Crow, Pelly Crossing, Ross River, and Champagne. We have fire departments in Carcross, Golden Horn, Hootaliqua, Ibex Valley, Klondike Valley, Marsh Lake, Mount Lorne, Tagish, and Burwash Landing.

The Yukon government works in partnership with communities to recruit and retain fire service volunteers to ensure effective, sustainable fire services. Low population density and vast distances, of course, make it challenging to provide fire suppression in rural Yukon. Rural communities often struggle with volunteer recruitment and retention. To maximize sustainability and success, the Fire Marshal's Office is working to develop relationships with First Nation councils and communities and also to provide increased support and education for their members.

Through 2022 and 2024, the Fire Marshal's Office met with communities, fire chiefs, First Nations, municipal governments, and fire service stakeholders to develop priorities for implementing the fire service review that I mentioned earlier and its key recommendations.

Now, as a result of that work, the Fire Marshal's Office has added two new service levels for communities that are not able to sustain a full fire department, which is eight members. The fire safety champion and scene safety response unit programs are those programs. Compared to a fire department, these programs require fewer volunteers and less training to safely operate.

Some of the equipment that firefighters are using these days is very sophisticated, often built for larger jurisdictions. The training to operate them is intense. So, in smaller jurisdictions, to keep up with workplace safety, which is important, you can't provide them with equipment that's so sophisticated that operating it puts them at risk. So, we had to scale down and provide new response units — that would be scene safety response units and the safety champions — to make sure that they could operate with the gear that would be necessary and that they could operate in their communities.

The implementation timeline for these levels of service was announced in July 2023. Following feedback from fire chiefs, the Yukon Fire Marshal's Office is proceeding with the levels-of-service model.

The fire safety champion program focuses on the most important components of Fire and Life Safety, prevention, and education. So, the fire safety champions hold community safety events, educate community members on the importance of working carbon monoxide and smoke alarms, and promote specific safety initiatives, like keeping chimneys clean. They're also a key point of contact for recruiting new volunteers. Hopefully, smaller units will grow into full fire departments.

A scene safety response unit is a step up from that with four members and provides an initial response and exposure protection, attempting to keep the spread of a fire contained to the primary structure. For communities with four or more volunteers, the Fire Marshal's Office will provide basic equipment, such as a water storage tank and a pump with foam induction systems in the bed of a one-ton truck. I believe one of those units was recently deployed to Champagne.

Scene safety responders are trained to keep the public clear of hazards and to apply water to uninvolved exposures — nearby buildings not yet on fire — until mutual aid arrives from a fire department. They are not firefighters per se and do not undergo the firefighter training. They are not trained to put water on fire; however, they will have to work safely on those fires, which does require some training.

Since the review of fire services and the introduction of new service level options, new fire services have been implemented in six communities: Keno, Ross River, Pelly, Destruction Bay, Old Crow, and Champagne. Again, this is since 2021.

In 2024, the Fire Marshal's Office team is providing training courses, including resilient minds, emergency vehicle operator training, auto extrication, wildland-urban interface, advanced pump ops, fire service instructor I, and blue card command. The Fire Marshal's Office also has a class 3 driver training program and a task book to develop new drivers. Other training offered by the Fire Marshal's Office to volunteers includes air brake courses, coaching the emergency vehicle operating course, incident command system 200, auto extrication course, the evaluator workshop, and standard first aid and CPR, which, of course, ties into workplace safety as well as public safety.

Fire and Life Safety conducts inspections that ensure compliance with the National Fire Code of Canada. In 2024, the Fire Marshal's Office completed 11 Fire and Life Safety inspections and permitted 36 fuel storage tanks.

Fire prevention is the number one protection tool. Fire prevention and protection programming is intended to stop fires before they start and contribute to a safer Yukon. Fire and Life Safety undertakes regular public education campaigns and community outreach about fire safety. Fire services across the Yukon also take part in this crucial work.

To reach communities, the Fire Marshal's Office has implemented a fire safety champion program supported by a designated fire marshal who serves as public outreach and prevention coordinator. This is, again, another new facet of the fire service that was implemented recently at the behest of fire chiefs. The fire safety champions organize community events that promote fire and safety initiatives.

The Fire Marshal's Office participates annually in Fire Prevention Week, a nationwide initiative in October to reduce and prevent the loss of life and property from home fire and other home safety incidents. Each spring, the Fire Marshal's Office participates in Emergency Preparedness Week, sharing emergency preparedness messages alongside our territorial and municipal emergency response partners.

The Fire Marshal's Office also works with partners on fire safety, carbon monoxide, and holiday public awareness and social media campaigns.

The fire marshal also works with our national counterparts through the Council of Canadian Fire Marshals and Fire Commissioners to track national trends and identify opportunities for collaboration at the national level.

Last on this, Mr. Speaker — and I provide this information so that people have a fulsome understanding about all of the work that the Fire Marshal's Office does and how it has changed, shifted, since 2021 when our report was delivered, how it is shaping the new Fire Marshal's Office, and how, by working with fire chiefs, we are amending and changing the way that the office works and also ensuring that we know, in the future, what needs that office has, for example, for personal protective equipment.

The Fire Marshal's Office has jurisdictional authority for structural fire services in the Yukon, including municipal and rural fire departments. Municipal governments manage their own fire departments but are subject to the direction of the fire marshal to carry out the requirements of the *Fire Prevention Act* in the boundaries of their municipality. The Fire Marshal's Office provides all infrastructure for unincorporated fire departments, including fire halls, equipment — fire halls, which we have also invested in heavily over the last several years in many communities across the territory, and I will be talking about that in a little while — fire apparatus, personal protective equipment, again, and training resources.

The Fire Marshal's Office handles logistics related to training records, incident management databases, certification, equipment upkeep, and honoraria. In addition to fighting structural fires, the Yukon's volunteer fire departments work with Wildland Fire Management crews to manage urban-interface wildfires that threaten communities. Again, the volunteer fire departments have the expertise to deal with urban-interface fires; wildland fire does not, and that is where the border ends. Wildland fire cannot work in the urban interface; volunteer fire departments can.

Volunteer fire departments were an integral part of wildland fire responses this summer. During the 2024 wildland fires, volunteer firefighters provided vital structural protection support to assist wildland fire crews, such as in early July when a wildfire was threatening the community of Mayo. I have spoken at length about how great the response was in Mayo — to that community — and the volunteer fire department in Mayo did a great job, as did the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun.

Similarly, mutual aid agreements among volunteer and municipal fire departments ensure that equipment and crews can provide firefighting coverage, particularly in communities

that are unable to sustain a volunteer fire service. That mutual —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

*Debate on Motion No. 1116 accordingly adjourned*

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*

**The following documents were filed April 16, 2025:**

35-1-327

EA allocation process, letter re (dated February 7, 2025) from Ted Hupé, President, Yukon Association of Education Professionals, Jeff Cressman, President, Association of Yukon School Administrators, and Sandra Henderson, Chair, Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees, to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education (Kent)

35-1-328

Invitation to appear as witnesses before the Yukon Legislative Assembly in Spring 2025, letter re (dated April 7, 2025) from Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, to PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc (Streicker)

35-1-329

Invitation to appear as witnesses before the Yukon Legislative Assembly in Spring 2025, letter re (dated April 8, 2025) from Michelle Grant, Senior Vice President, PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc, to Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Streicker)

35-1-330

Clarification regarding invitation to appear as witnesses before the Yukon Legislative Assembly in Spring 2025, letter re (dated April 9, 2025) from Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, to PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc (Streicker)

35-1-331

Invitation to appear as witnesses before the Yukon Legislative Assembly in Spring 2025, letter re (dated April 10, 2025) from Michelle Grant, Senior Vice President, PricewaterhouseCoopers Inc, to Hon. John Streicker, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Streicker)