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HANSARD

Tuesday, April 29, 2025 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2025 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, April 29, 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 of changes made to the Notice Paper. Motion No. 1281, notice of which was given by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, was not placed on the Notice Paper, as it is out of date.

In addition, Motion No. 1283, notice of which was given by the Member for Lake Laberge, was not placed on the Notice Paper, as it is out of order.

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 Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon spring conference and Tourism Awards of Excellence

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate Compass 2025, the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon spring conference, and the recipients of the Tourism Awards of Excellence. This important annual event brings together the best and brightest from across the Yukon's vibrant tourism sector — business owners, operators, marketers, community leaders, and innovators — all united by a shared passion for showcasing the best of what the Yukon has to offer.

This year's theme, "Tourism in Motion: Circular and Regenerative", invited us to rethink how tourism can build, renew, and create something better for our communities, our environment, and our shared future. It challenged us to see tourism not just as travel but as a way of hosting and connecting with each other, with the land around us, and with new possibilities.

This year's conference also drew inspiration from First Nation knowledge systems, asking how hosting in its truest sense builds resilience, well-being, belonging, and respect. Here in the Yukon, we already see powerful examples of these ideas at work, and Compass 2025 was about building on that momentum, turning good intention into real actions.

Over the weekend, delegates participated in an impressive lineup of sessions focused on leadership, sustainability, innovation, Indigenous tourism development, and cultural

stewardship. Through workshops, keynotes, and discussions, the conference reaffirmed how critical tourism is not just as an economic driver but as a connector of people, cultures, and communities.

A highlight of the conference is, of course, the Tourism Awards of Excellence where peers recognize outstanding achievements in their sector.

Our sincere congratulations to this year's winners: the Raven Inn hotel for Sustainable Tourism Business of the Year; Jesse Cooke's Husky Bus and Klondike Experience for Employer of the Year; and Patrick Meusel of Northern Lights Resort and Spa as Tourism Employee of the Year. Each of these recipients represent the best of Yukon's tourism industry. Their passion, hard work, and innovation inspire us all.

Mr. Speaker, Yukon's tourism industry is more than statistics and visitor numbers. It's about the people, those who open their communities and hearts to share the beauty of this place with the world, and it is about preserving and celebrating the unique landscapes, cultures, and stories that make this place the Yukon.

On behalf of the Government of Yukon, I offer my thanks to the Tourism Association of the Yukon, its leadership, its members, and all of the dedicated people behind Compass 2025. You brought back tourism from the pandemic faster than anywhere else in Canada. Your efforts strengthen not just the tourism sector but the entire territory.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to TIA Yukon and the recent spring conference held on April 24 and 25 of this year, "Tourism in Motion: Circular and Regenerative", held in the beautiful Haa Shagóon Hídi in Carcross. I'm sure that it was a couple of days filled with conversation, sharing of ideas, and growing the industry.

So many operators and industry leaders who are the movers and shakers of their communities love to attend and find out what is new and how each other's seasons are shaping up as compared to the previous season. I was at first puzzled at the two words that are not synonymous with tourism: "circular" and "regenerative". "Circular": to focus on reducing waste by reusing resources and designing smarter systems. "Regenerative": strengthening communities and restoring the natural environment. If you love what you do, your thoughts will lead to circular motions, moves, and regenerative ideas so that your business is sustainable and economically viable.

It is a challenge for organizers to keep a large group busy and interested, but there is always something to learn and friends to meet and make. The reception and drinks and award presentations were brought back to Whitehorse and held at the MacBride Museum, a lovely place to highlight and host the final part of the agenda, the awards ceremony.

Awards went to: Tourism Employer of the Year, Jesse Cooke of Dawson and Klondike Experience; Employee of the Year, Patrick Meusel, who works for Northern Lights Resort and Spa; and the Sustainable Business of the Year, Raven Inn.

We all become winners when we have people and businesses who go above and beyond to ensure that our visitors are given the best visit ever. They are the best advertising we can have.

Congratulations and best wishes for your continued service to the tourism industry and for being Yukon champions. Thank you to TIA Yukon, all the sponsors, and those movers and shakers who continue to make tourism great. Here's to an amazing year.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to celebrate the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon's successful conference held last weekend at Haa Shagóon Hídi in Carcross. This year's conference was inspiring, from its theme "Tourism in Motion: Circular and Regenerative" to its real conversations. Tourism is not just where we go; it's about how we host and connect. Facilitated conversations with industry leaders and participants gave all the opportunity to rethink how tourism can rebuild, renew, and create something better for our communities, environment, and future.

The conference focused on strengths of what we know and a future of how we can build better. Circularity is not just about materials; it is about relationships, reciprocity, and rethinking how we move through the world.

Tourism can reduce waste, regenerate ecosystems, and strengthen local economies by designing smarter, more connected systems. When done with care, tourism has the potential to restore, reinhabit, and revitalize places. Regenerative tourism is about strengthening communities, reconnecting with the land, and ensuring that tourism not only minimizes harm but actively contributes to healing and renewal.

We are excited to see what comes next, as we know that folks left feeling inspired and energized.

Thank you to all who put the time, energy, and care into a great weekend, and congratulations to this year's winners. Your hard work and dedication deserve recognition.

Mahsi' cho.

Applause

In recognition of Law Day

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize Law Day, a national event celebrating the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, signed on April 17, 1982.

Since then, the Charter has served as a crucial check and balance, setting out rights, freedoms, duties, and obligations that guide laws and lawmakers in this great country. It has become a symbol of what is right and a constitutional reflection of our values as Canadians. The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* is the measuring stick against which we evaluate Canadian laws.

Since 1983, the Canadian Bar Association has celebrated Law Day to commemorate the signing of the Charter. The Charter protects fundamental freedoms of expression, religion,

association, and peaceful assembly. It outlines rights to life, liberty, and security of the person, equality before and under the law, and equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, now than ever, Law Day is an important reminder of an annual opportunity for the public to learn and engage on topics in law, the legal profession, and the legal institutions that are foundational to Canadian democracy. Beyond this, it is an opportunity to celebrate and explore our *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and contemplate our rights and duties as Canadians, not the least of which is our right to vote.

On this day after our federal election, we know that every Canadian is appreciative of the importance of our precious rights and the needs to respect and protect them. It is an opportunity to take pride in our *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and to remember how fortunate we are to have secured inalienable rights as Canadians. The Canadian Charter is heralded across the world as an important document in democracy. As legislators, it is our responsibility to work to create, amend, and maintain laws that promote fair, independent, and unbiased treatment for all Yukoners.

To help celebrate Law Day this year, on Friday, May 2 at 11:45, a fun run and walk will be held on the Millennium Trail. It will start behind the visitor information centre here in Whitehorse. This is an annual event that promotes healthy living in the beautiful Yukon spring. It supports a local charity and reminds us how important our legal system and Canadian Charter are. This year, funds will be donated to the Canadian Mental Health Association, Yukon, to support the Living Life to the Full program.

Please join in on this great event.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Law Day, which is observed annually in recognition of the proclamation of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The Charter, signed on April 17, 1982, was built on the foundation of the *Canadian Bill of Rights*, which the government of Prime Minister Diefenbaker introduced in 1960. The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* protects the rights of all Canadians, including the right to life, liberty, security of the person, the right to freedom of speech, the right to freedom of religion, equality rights, the right to fundamental justice, and the right to counsel.

I will, however, point again to the troubling omission in the Charter of a key part of Diefenbaker's bill of rights, which is the protection of the right to own property. The lack of proper constitutional protection of property rights haunts innocent Canadians to this day, as the federal Liberal government plans to confiscate lawfully acquired private property from innocent people who have done nothing wrong. That Liberal plan is very troubling to innocent people across the country who own firearms, including many people here in the Yukon.

It also does nothing to address the real sources of violent crime in Canada. As the Toronto Police Association stated

publicly earlier this month on April 8 — quote: “Gun bans and buyback programs do not work.”

Mr. Speaker, it’s important for everyone to remember the legacy of all those who have worked and fought for our freedom and rights of Canadians and to do our part to ensure that future generations have those same rights and their freedoms protected.

Locally, the Yukon branch of the Canadian Bar Association is hosting its annual Law Day fun run and walk on May 2 at 11:45. This event begins at the Whitehorse Visitor Information Centre and follows the Millennium Trail for a five-kilometre loop. Participants can run or walk, and all proceeds this year will go to the Living Life to the Full program through the Canadian Mental Health Association, Yukon, for mental wellness support in our communities.

I would like to acknowledge all of those involved in organizing this year’s event and thank all the participants for signing up and helping to support this cause.

Applause

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the NDP to pay tribute to Law Day. Law Day is a day that honours the foundations of justice, the strength of our legal institutions, and the ongoing pursuit of fairness for all. It celebrates the signing of Canada’s charter of rights and freedoms, and it reminds us that law is not just a system of rules; it is the heartbeat of a free and democratic society.

In the Yukon, where diverse voices rise from our communities, nations, and cultures, the law serves as a bridge uniting us through respect, truth, and accountability. We recognize the dedication of legal professionals, judges, advocates, elders, and community members who work tirelessly to uphold justice. We uplift those who navigate the legal system with courage, seeking healing and resolution, and we celebrate the inclusion of Indigenous legal traditions, which root justice in relationships, storytelling, and land-based wisdom.

The annual Law Day run this year will be raising funds to support the Living Life to the Full program, powered by the Canadian Mental Health Association, Yukon. All the funds raised will be put toward providing access to mental health support in our communities. So, this Law Day, I hope everyone will consider participating in the run or donating to the Canadian Mental Health Association, Yukon.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under Tabling Returns and Documents, the Chair has for tabling the report on subsistence, travel, and accommodations of Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly for 2024-25.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the *Twentieth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees*.

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

PETITIONS

Petition No. 30 — response

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise to respond to Petition No. 30. I acknowledge the correspondences that I received about this project and thank those who partook in the YESAB process. Your engagement is valued and your concerns have been carefully considered.

The area of this proposed land treatment facility lies entirely within the traditional territory of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. The petition presented by the Leader of the New Democratic Party claims that the proposed location of the land treatment facility, which the petition defines as a “toxic waste dump”, needs to be reconsidered with proper community consultation.

Mr. Speaker, the petition claims to speak for all residents and many other Yukoners, but it bears just three signatures, including the Leader of the Yukon NDP but notably not the Member for Kluane. I certainly respect and note the Member for Kluane’s balanced approach and his understanding of the land and the community he represents.

The Bear Creek-Nygren area is not untouched wilderness. The Bear Creek Roadhouse was established between 1903 and 1904 to serve gold miners and travellers in the region. Yukoners’ land claims negotiations began in the 1970s and the *Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Final Agreement* was signed in 1993. Long before that, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations stewarded these lands for countless generations. Their relationship with the land is not only historical but living and ongoing, as recognized and protected in their final agreement.

It is critical to note that between the facility and the Nygren subdivision lie two large category A Champagne and Aishihik First Nations settlement land parcels and two smaller category A parcels. Along with the Alaska Highway and the active gravel pit, these form a substantial buffer between the facility and the Nygren subdivision.

To remind Yukoners, category A lands hold the highest level of First Nation ownership and provide full surface and subsurface rights. These lands are central to any discussion about development to any traditional territory.

Champagne and Aishihik First Nations’ willingness for this facility to be situated adjacent to their category A land demonstrates their commitment to doing things right and taking deep responsibility for environmental stewardship.

Mr. Speaker, some perspective. The proposed land treatment area is 767 square metres. We are talking about a facility smaller than two basketball courts. If the project completes the regulatory phase and is permitted to operate, the Department of Environment will continue to monitor the site to

ensure that the project complies with environmental regulations. It is important to remember where we are: on the edge of Kluane National Park and Reserve, which together with its partner, Parks Canada, forms the largest contiguous protected area on Earth outside of the polar regions — nearly 100,000 square kilometres, about the size of Newfoundland. This is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a globally significant landscape.

For generations, the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations were systematically shut out of decisions about the lands that they had stewarded for thousands of years. The creation of Kluane National Park and Reserve, for all of its grandeur, continued to be an area of exclusion where Indigenous voices and rights were sidelined.

Addressing the legacy of contaminated soil is an act of stewardship, economic opportunity, and justice. Trucking contaminated soil far is so costly that, in practice, many sites are left untreated. A local facility operated by Castle Rock Enterprises, a 100-percent Champagne and Aishihik First Nations-owned company and part of Dakwakada Capital Investments Limited Partnership, would make it possible to address contamination, keep jobs and expertise in the region, and ensure that remediation occurs.

In response to public input, the facility's location was moved an additional 800 metres farther from homes, exceeding regulatory requirements. The company has committed to robust environmental safeguards. Working people, families, and communities depend on both development and environmental responsibility. It makes sense for the facility to be located near Haines Junction, close to a major gravel pit, and along the corridor. This is where the work is and where people can benefit from employment.

This project is in line with the spirit and intent of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the *Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Final Agreement*. When the legal status and stewardship role of category A lands are ignored, it displays a fundamental misunderstanding of the Yukon's modern treaty landscape, and that is disheartening.

As Minister of Environment, I rely on the integrity of the YESAB process. The government's decision to allow the project to proceed to the permitting stage reflects our belief that it can proceed responsibly with appropriate safeguards in place.

Let's move forward together with humility, integrity, and a shared commitment to doing better.

Speaker: Are there any petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House congratulates incumbent Liberal candidate Brendan Hanley on his impressive re-election as Member of Parliament for the Yukon.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House congratulates Liberal leader Mark Carney on his election win in the riding of Nepean and for leading the Liberals to victory in the 2025 federal election.

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

THAT this House recognizes the work and contribution of Gabrielle Dupont, Ryan Leef, and Katherine McCallum, who put their names forward for the Yukon in the 2025 federal election.

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

THAT this House recognizes the time spent debating the supplementary budget for the Department of Health and Social Services during the 2025 Spring Sitting and encourages the Official Opposition to govern their time accordingly during debate on all matters before the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* amendments

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Canadians elected a Liberal government that has promised to attract and derisk investment in and expand the development of critical minerals exploration and extraction.

This is obviously a promise that is very important for the Yukon. It will require the federal government to work with First Nation governments and the Yukon government and will likely mean that amendments to the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* are needed. In order to advance these, the federal government will be looking to the Yukon government.

The Premier has talked about one such amendment to YESAA that is before the federal government, so can he tell us when he expects that amendment to pass the House of Commons, and what further amendments will the Yukon government push for to help the federal government advance its goal of speeding up resource development in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I think, as all members of the House know, there has been a tremendous amount of work done around the amendments to the YESA act here at home. This will be something that is, of course, a priority in conversations with the new Liberal government. It was an amendment that we had hoped to see last fall. We think that it is incredibly important. The work has been done on this.

I would like the member opposite to give us a sense of the perspective from the Yukon Party, if they feel that there needs to be any further consultation on this at home. I know that the member opposite has spoken to this. We feel that there has been a lot of work done. We feel that it's incredibly important that this gets done as quickly as possible. Maybe when he rises to his feet, he could give us a sense of how the Yukon Party feels.

For us, it is about making sure that this amendment gets on the docket and that we get the legislation done as quickly as possible.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, following a meeting between the Prime Minister and the premiers in March, the Premier of Yukon stated that the Prime Minister made a commitment to streamline regulatory processes that currently fall under both federal and territorial jurisdictions by having the Yukon, in this case, take the lead. On March 27, the Premier told the Legislature that he wanted to see this new regime test-driven in the Yukon and, in particular, on the permitting on the BMC's Kudz Ze Kayah project. For this project, there is currently a court-ordered consultation with affected First Nations on the decision document by both Canada and the Yukon.

Can the Premier explain whether or not he will be advocating for this new process to be test-driven on the Kudz Ze Kayah project, and if so, what will that look like, and when will it begin?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I am going to take that opportunity that was given to the member opposite to give us a position by the Yukon Party as the member opposite does feel that there has been enough consultation. I am absolutely happy to hear that, because we feel that this is something, that this amendment should go forward, so thank you for that.

I think that we need to see within the YESAB process exactly where we can look at a reduction of red tape and any duplication that's in place. Of course, in other jurisdictions, you have what seems to be parallel processes by both the federal government and the province. Here, that meshes together. In some cases, we have departments at the federal government, such as fisheries, which has a unique lens on what they're bringing as an introspective to the table.

The key is to figure out within our structure where we can see a more agile approach that still ensures that we have the accountability. Whether it's the BMC project, understanding how the federal government, in conversations with departments like CIRNAC, can come to the table and adhere to the vision of the Prime Minister or in future projects, these are all key pieces — but again, I think it's fair to say that we want to see who the minister is of the department, and we want to see how they want to enact this within the Yukon.

Mr. Kent: Of course, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Yukon also plays a significant role in advancing permits for projects. During this Sitting alone, we have talked about the long list of outstanding decision documents that proponents are facing. We have talked about a placer bubble for water licences that is on the verge of bursting.

We have talked about exploration permits that are about to expire, leaving companies with large exploration plans in limbo this summer. While asking for further regulatory improvements from Canada, what is the Premier doing to get Yukon's own licensing and permitting house in order?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, much of this, of course, falls under Energy, Mines and Resources, and if there are subsequent questions, I know the minister is happy to speak to this.

I will get up because we are talking a bit about some of the challenges, as mentioned by the member opposite, around the Water Board. Of course, this is the exact same thing that was experienced by the members opposite about 10 years ago. We are looking at making sure that, now that we have had this experience, it doesn't happen again. That is work that we have heard from the chair of the Water Board. That's ensuring that we have more resources at the Water Board and really making sure that we still have a strong system. There is maybe a sense from the Yukon Party that they would change the whole structure of the Water Board. Maybe there is a sense that they want to bring the Water Board closer to government. We do believe that the independence of the Water Board is paramount. That is something we have talked about over the last while.

Again, I think the decision document is making sure that we have the capacity there in place to do that good work — is going to be key. We have had a lot of conversations based on that MOU between the Government of Yukon and the Water Board and the work of Energy, Mines and Resources on ways to fast-track and reduce the process time but also ensuring the integrity is there, which I think we all want to see.

Question re: Bail system reform

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, many Canadians recognize that changes made to the bail system by the Trudeau Liberal government weakened it and have resulted in an increase in violent crime by repeat offenders. The union representing the RCMP members called it a "catch-and-release" system. Multiple letters to the Prime Minister, signed by all 13 premiers, have called for action on bail reform.

In March, every single premier signed a letter to Prime Minister Carney to request more action and further changes. In contrast to some provinces, this territorial government has been silent about what specific changes they would like to see to the bail system.

So, now that Canadians have elected a prime minister who committed to making changes to the bail system, can the Premier tell Yukoners what changes they will be seeking from the federal government?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, federal bail reforms through Bill C48 created a reverse onus to target serious repeat offenders involving weapons, expanded the list of firearms offences that trigger a reverse onus, and brought in the reverse onus targeting repeat offenders of intimate partner violence. A reverse-onus shift does, in fact, shift the burden to the accused to demonstrate that their detention is unwarranted.

We have been working collaboratively across sectors and with communities to reduce the root causes of crime, and that remains an important aspect of the broader response. As we know, root causes of offending can include conditions of poverty and unaddressed mental and physical health needs. We can also note that bail reform is an important topic for ministers responsible for justice and for public safety. Ministers discussed these concerns in several jurisdictions about repeat offending and random violent attacks against strangers. It has been on our agendas. We have spoken to the Prime Minister;

we know that the premiers have also done so in the letters noted by this question.

It remains a priority and an important topic for us to deal with, with a new Liberal government.

Mr. Cathers: I would remind the minister that all premiers agreed in writing that the bill she mentioned didn't go far enough.

In their platform, the Carney Liberal Party promised to make stricter bail laws for violent offenders, organized crime, and human trafficking. The Manitoba government has called for a specific set of reforms to the bail system. The Ontario government issued a call for a series of clear and specific changes that they would like to see made by the federal government. The Yukon Party proposed specific measures to fix the catch-and-release bail system, but so far, this territorial Liberal government has been completely silent on what specific changes they would like to see.

Will this government agree to make a clear request to the federal government for specific changes to the bail system so that Yukoners can once again feel safe in our communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will take the opportunity, just in case Yukoners are not aware, to remind the member opposite that changes to the *Canadian Criminal Code* are the responsibility of the federal government. That is why we have been working so hard across jurisdictions and with the federal government to determine what changes can be made to reduce concerns regarding the bail system and to increase public safety.

Ministers of Justice and public safety have worked hard and directed the FPT ministers and coordinating deputy ministers — a coordinating committee of senior federal, provincial, and territorial officials — to work on a criminal justice and criminal procedure working group, and that has undertaken urgent work to examine the issue of repeat and violent offending as it relates to bail, and proposed solutions will come forward at a future meeting with the ministers of Justice.

I expect this to be a top conversation and agenda item for the premiers as well as for the ministers of Justice in working to combat the issues that have arisen in many jurisdictions across Canada. We are working to prevent crime, including gender-based violence and intimate partner violence.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, far too often now, Yukoners are hearing about repeat offenders being arrested after committing more crimes. People were upset to see video of an altercation on Main Street in broad daylight, which included shouting and what appeared to be a gun pulled. RCMP statements about shots being fired in communities or illegal guns being seized have become commonplace.

Yukoners are wondering what happened to our communities. A big part of the problem is the Liberals' soft-on-crime changes made under Trudeau to the bail system. Multiple letters signed by all premiers have called for action on bail reform. It has been over 25 months now since this Premier signed a letter that said — quote: "The time for action is now."

When will this territorial Liberal government either sign on to support changes to the bail system proposed by provincial

governments or outline its own clear list of priorities for action on bail reform?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting when you hear the line of questions identifying the fact that I have stood arm in arm with all premiers in this country asking for bail reform. We have seen independent interventions by provinces. We have seen Justice ministers — what I will say to Yukoners is this: This system has to change, and that is why premiers are standing up, and I agree completely with that. As we sit down with the new Liberal government, they have to take into consideration that provincial and territorial governments are putting the resources in place that are required. They also know that the RCMP and other police forces are doing incredible work, but they are also feeling like the work that they are doing is for naught, because as soon as they go out and deploy their resources, we see individuals who are then being put in a position where they are being released.

I do agree with members of the opposition on most of the points that were made. I do believe that we have to see significant changes in this country. That is really what is going to rectify the challenges we have seen where it is break-and-enters, crime, the effects that we have seen on our business community, the toxic drug crisis.

So, look, of course, we are going to be standing up. This is top of mind as we sit down, because we need changes in this country when it comes to bail reform.

Question re: Department of Education sexual orientation and gender identity policy

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago, our office received a letter from the chair of the Catholic Education Association of Yukon. In that letter, she pointed out that, while the Department of Education has set out a sexual orientation and gender identity policy, there are no procedures or guidelines in place for how schools should implement that policy. In fact, she went on to argue that SOGI was not yet fully developed or implemented.

If that is true, that is quite shocking, especially since the minister has stood up multiple times in this Chamber and in the media and claimed that she fully supports the implementation of SOGI. From the sounds of this letter, implementation hasn't actually happened yet. Can the minister explain why the chair of the CEAY is under the understanding that SOGI has not been fully implemented or developed, and if that is the case, why not?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear that the sexual orientation and gender identity policy is a requirement in every single school in this territory, including the Catholic schools. I have had — I talked about this just recently in Committee of the Whole where we talked about meetings that I've had over the last couple of weeks with the bishop and with the association for Catholic schools. I talked to the member opposite at that time about the work that we're doing to ensure that there is an MOU in place before the end of this school year. We are currently working on a number of protocols; one that is complete is the communication protocol. There is one on staffing where we're working with the Yukon

Association of Education Professionals on consultation. There are a number of others.

In terms of — again, SOGI policy is absolutely a requirement in every single school in this territory. We remain committed to that. We have also included in the LGBTQ2S+ action plan to do a review on SOGI, and we're also working with the Child and Youth Advocate on a further review.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, Yukoners fully expect the minister to correct the understanding of the chair of the CEAY. Staff at St. Francis of Assisi were informed that the Department of Education had chosen a new textbook to replace the homophobic textbook made public in March 2024.

So, last week in budget debate, I highlighted the contents of this new textbook. It's far from inclusive or in line with SOGI policies. This new textbook is no better than the one it replaced. It teaches that marriage, sex, and love can only be between a man and a woman. It suggests that people who are not heterosexual suffer from psychosis, neurosis, or pathological illnesses and that they are not capable of love.

Since the minister was made aware of this textbook's homophobic content, has it been pulled from the curriculum, and if not, why not?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, yes, the member and I had some debate about this last Friday in our budget debate. We had discussed the process that the Department of Education went through with a committee who worked to review the previous textbook that was taken out of the classroom and was replaced with another textbook. I am currently looking into the use of that textbook, and will have more to say about it at a later date.

One of the things I can confirm is that we do not have any classrooms using that textbook right now — there isn't a current class that's being offered at St. Francis of Assisi — and so that is something I have confirmed. I am absolutely looking into the areas of concern that were raised in Committee of the Whole, and again, this review of the curriculum materials that are used in specific classes at St. Francis of Assisi was done, and I will have more to say on it when I can.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, that textbook has been paid for by Yukoners. It's on the Yukon Education resource list, and it needs to be pulled off that list. The minister has admitted that the Yukon government has been funding Catholic religious education since at least the early 2000s. We've established that paying for religious education is contrary to the 1962 agreement between the Yukon government and the Catholic diocese, so it's deeply troubling that, despite this agreement, Yukon taxpayers have been paying for religious education in public schools for over 20 years.

The minister has already stated in this Chamber that her department is looking into why the government stopped invoicing the Catholic diocese for religious instruction and started using taxpayer money instead. At the same time, she was not able to provide the overall cost to taxpayers. So, when is the Department of Education — when is the Liberal government — going to stop funding religious education?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education has done and is still continuing to do a deep dive into

the history of the 1962 agreement. We've done an incredible amount of work looking at the history, and we're working with the Catholic Episcopal Corporation on some of that review now. I've talked today about the MOU that we are putting in place, which will be in place before the end of the school year.

We have a number of protocol agreements that will be attachments to this MOU. One of them will be communication. There is staffing; there is funding for religious instruction, which is one of those protocols. Curriculum and instruction materials, professional development, development of policy — these are the areas that have been identified so far for protocols that will be put in place and will become attachments to this MOU that I expect to have in place.

I have met with the bishop around this work that needs to be completed. I have met with the Catholic association — and very committed. I have given very clear direction around this, and I expect to have the work done.

Question re: Internal trade barriers

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, prior to the federal election, Prime Minister Carney promised an agreement on removing all internal barriers to trade by Canada Day. This will mean that the Yukon will need to consider which barriers to trade they are willing to remove before then.

Can the Premier tell us which policies he is considering putting on the table in the upcoming negotiations and what those changes will mean for Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, yes, you have seen a number of provinces take a leadership role. The Conservative government in Nova Scotia is starting to look at reduction of barriers — bilateral agreements that have been signed throughout Atlantic Canada, requests for the same in central Canada. We have talked to the Department of Economic Development and said: Let's put everything potentially on the table here. There is a push. We are going to see what that legislation looks like from the federal government. Part of the work that we have to do is — out of those 29 different "barriers", you could call them — that we will still have an obligation to have conversations through consultation with a number of organizations.

As an example, if we are looking for a change around liquor, we have an obligation to go out and talk to communities but also to the producers. So, that is work that we have gone out to our deputy ministers and said we want undertaken. Of course, we can't go into all of these right now in the time that is allotted for Question Period, but happy to say that we are very committed to looking at reduction of barriers and making sure that we have this free trade across the country.

Ms. Van Bibber: Another barrier to trade that hurts Yukoners is our lack of access to supply management quotas. This means that some Yukon farmers or food producers cannot sell their products in other parts of Canada.

Will the Premier make addressing this concern a priority in his discussions with other provinces and the federal government for the upcoming Canada Day agreement?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Look, Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the fact that the opposition has taken a perspective that is very in

line with the People's Party of Canada when it comes to this. Really, when I hear across the country the position, it is the exact same as the People's Party of Canada that the Leader of the Official Opposition and members have taken. They should go back and take a look at that.

When I do think about things like either dairy or the egg business, I would have to go back and take a look at the work that I have done as minister responsible for agriculture. I know that there is work being done, because there are other opportunities other than the position that has been taken by the Yukon Party — again, aligned with the People's Party of Canada.

This will be an active conversation. We absolutely want to see it. We have invested in these industries over a number of years. We think that it is incredibly important that our egg producers have a vibrant access to market, and as well, hopefully we will see more investment in dairy. Those are all very important conversations, and we want to make sure — and again, for any Yukoners, please make sure, if you have that opportunity, to buy those local products.

Question re: Shakwak project funding

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, it has been almost two months since we first asked about the future of the Shakwak funding for the north Alaska Highway. Many Yukon contractors who were excited to see the money committed in the budget have grown concerned about the lack of communication from the Yukon Liberal government about it. The same goes for my constituents, who want to see this long-overdue project started. We know that there is funding uncertainty from the Americans, but Yukoners deserve a clear answer from this Liberal government.

Will this project be put out to tender this year?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you very much for that question. As I have indicated in prior responses, in 2024, through partnerships with the State of Alaska and the US federal highways, the Government of Yukon announced \$37 million US in project funding over the next several years to rehabilitate sections of the north Alaska Highway. I know that the Member for Kluane is very supportive of that, that this government was able to make that breakthrough with the Alaska government and the federal authorities that the former Yukon Party was not able to do. The recent change in the US administration and its approach to trade with Canada has raised uncertainty about finalizing funding agreements between Alaska and the US.

The Government of Yukon remains committed to securing the funding that was previously announced as we work collaboratively with our American counterparts to complete funding agreements.

Our government is reviewing the existing agreements that may apply to the north Alaska Highway and remains committed to fulfilling our obligations under this agreement. The Department of Highways and Public Works has committed \$8 million in the 2025-26 capital investment season within the north Alaska Highway corridor. These funds would be

recoverable through the funding agreement with the US after the work has been completed.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, at some point, this Liberal government is going to have to make a call about this project. If they aren't going to tender it this year, then they should communicate that to Yukoners and contractors as soon as possible. If they genuinely believe that waiting may result in some clarity from the Trump administration, then they should communicate that too. However, indecision and uncertainty do not help contractors.

Is there a drop-dead date on which this Yukon Liberal government will concede that this project won't happen this year, and if so, what is it?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I know that the members opposite absolutely support the funding for the Shakwak project, notwithstanding their inability to acquire any funding during the end of their mandate. We are continuing the conversations. The Premier is speaking with the Governor of Alaska, and I have been in contact with my counterpart, the transportation commissioner, in Alaska as well.

As I indicated in prior responses, we are looking at an early May deadline with respect to these contracts. But, please, Mr. Speaker — there is a lot of work that is going to happen on the north Klondike Highway as well as opportunities for contractors in the range of \$35 million.

The work on the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport continues; the work on the Nisutlin Bay bridge project continues; and of course, we completed the Dempster fibre as well. In addition, in Kluane country, there is the Kéts'ádañ Kù School which is starting this year as well, so there are many opportunities, and we will work hard to ensure that Shakwak funding is secured.

Question re: Culvert steaming

Mr. Hassard: In Committee of the Whole on March 26, I asked the minister of highways why there has been a reduction in road maintenance and, in particular, steaming of culverts on Yukon roads this year. The minister assured the Legislature that this wasn't true — and quote: "Our roads are inspected daily by road forepersons. Winging and steaming activities have commenced across the network." He said that there has been no change, Mr. Speaker.

Well, one big change that we know about this year is the fact that YG had not steamed culverts on the Hunker Creek Road. This morning, the Hunker Creek Road washed out and the placer mining industry in that area is facing temporary shutdowns.

Does the minister stand by his stance that there has been no change in maintenance this year in relation to steaming of culverts?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, you learn a lot in this job, and the member opposite assists me with my education on this.

In any event, winging activities are ongoing throughout the Yukon. The decision on which areas and sections to wing is left to our road forepersons who are responsible for a designated section of highway. Our roads are reassessed daily to make the

determination on where new winging and steaming may be required.

Steaming and winging are essential seasonal maintenance techniques employed by Yukon's Highways and Public Works crews to manage our unique northern road challenges. Steaming involves using hot water or steam to thaw frozen culverts and drainage systems, particularly during spring runoff when ice blockages can compromise road safety. Our dedicated maintenance teams sometimes need to steam the same culvert locations more than 10 times in a single winter to maintain proper drainage and prevent overflow onto roadways.

"Winging" refers to the use of specialized grader attachments to clear the snow and ice from road shoulders and remove aufeis, which is also known as "surface ice", that forms when groundwater seeps onto roadways. This vital work ensures that our highways remain passable during winter months and prevents damage to road infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to investing in efficient maintenance strategies that keep Yukoners safe on our roads while protecting critical infrastructure.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I am not so sure that the minister is learning much here and I think that probably the placer miners in Dawson will agree with me.

Because of the minister's neglect, his department is out there doing emergency work on the Hunker Creek Road right now as we speak. They have a private contractor grading. Their crews are urgently trying to do last-minute steaming to get the road reopened. This would have been much easier and a whole lot cheaper if they had just steamed the culverts like they do every other year.

Does the minister now understand that his decision to cut back on steaming culverts was a bad decision?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question from the member opposite.

Mining is a key economic driver for the Yukon and our government remains committed to supporting a strong and sustainable industry. We understand how critical early spring access is for Yukon placer miners to mobilize equipment and prepare for the season ahead.

The Department of Highways and Public Works dedicates significant time and resources each year toward maintaining the Yukon's year-round and seasonal highway infrastructure. The goldfields, Mr. Speaker, are no exception and we endeavour to keep our timelines in line with the operational needs of Yukon placer miners.

The department began early mine road openings and maintenance on February 18, 2025, starting with the Dawson goldfields. Highways and Public Works is coordinating with Canada Border Services Agency to align our efforts with the forecasted opening day at the Little Gold border crossing. We also began work on the Top of the World Highway on March 15 using internal resources. Additional contracted support to deal with the glacier-affected areas joined those efforts on March 18. The Top of the World Highway is open beyond Sixty Mile Road.

So, these conversations occur every spring. We get the e-mail communication from the placer miners, I receive communication from the Member for Klondike, and we are absolutely responsive to the Yukon placer miners.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, it's really unfortunate that neither the Member for Klondike nor the minister of highways understands what they're talking about here.

This is just one of the issues that we've raised with respect to roads utilized by the placer mining industry this Sitting. Not having access to their claims means huge disruptions to the industry and those who rely on it.

So, will the minister of highways commit to attending the gold show in Dawson City next month, go to the KPMA spring general meeting, and explain to them why the culverts weren't steamed this year, causing the roads to washout? Maybe, Mr. Speaker, while we're at it, will the Member for Klondike go with him to that meeting?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, there is additional funding that is combined funding of Energy, Mines and Resources, Economic Development, and Highways and Public Works based on the communication from placer miners and the MLA for Klondike in recognition of the value that Yukon placer miners have to the Yukon —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, please.

When a member has the floor, please be respectful and mindful.

Minister of Highways and Public Works, please continue.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In addition to the regular maintenance budget, we are absolutely responsive, in contradistinction, I understand, to the Yukon Party between 2011 and 2016.

So, absolutely, I believe that the budget — and I will confirm likely this afternoon with the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin — is in the range of \$500,000 or \$600,000 of additional road maintenance and road clearing, which occurs in addition to the regular budget. To say that this Yukon government is not responsive to placer miners is really beyond the pale.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 10: *First Appropriation Act 2025-2026* — continued

Chair: The matter before Committee is general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-2026*.

Yukon Development Corporation

Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, first of all, I would like to welcome the Yukon Development Corporation's president, Gary Gazankas, and the vice-president, Daniel Carrick-Specht. I think they are here for the first time helping us with questions, so I welcome them to the Assembly. We did have the witnesses here — I guess they were here a couple of times, sort of a staged appearance — so I am going to give a few opening remarks with information that we didn't get to from the witnesses, and then we will turn it over for questions.

Our government and the Development Corporation remain committed to reliable, sustainable, and affordable energy for all Yukoners. One of the key initiatives that is advancing is looking at connecting the Yukon and the British Columbia electrical grids. The Yukon Development Corporation received \$40 million from the Government of Canada's critical minerals infrastructure fund. We put back in a third of that again — just over \$13 million — to make it a total of \$53 million. Over five years, it will flow directly through the Development Corporation.

The project is large; it's complex, with infrastructure that would cross multiple traditional territories as well as a provincial and territorial border. Connecting the Yukon to British Columbia's electrical grid will increase our dependable power supply; it will reduce greenhouse gas emissions from fossil-fuel use; it will support the development of renewable projects here in the Yukon, because it provides the opportunity to sell that energy out; and it will support critical minerals development. Overall, I think of it as a nation-building opportunity that will advance Arctic security and foster shared growth and prosperity.

A couple of other things that I want to note — the first one is that we have extended the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative for 2025-26 to continue to support the development of First Nation- and community-led renewable energy projects.

To date, over 30 renewable energy projects have been funded across the territory. One of those, as an example, is the Haeckel Hill wind project here in Whitehorse, which is the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Chu Níkwän Development Corporation.

We have also — another thing that investing in the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative has also funded is the Kluane wind project. More recently, we have a project that is supporting the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council to investigate pump storage. While this is still in the early stages, I want to commend the leadership of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council as they seek community input and involvement in determining the feasibility of investing into pump storage that will benefit all Yukoners.

Another one that I wanted to comment on is the Arctic energy fund. In this budget, we have support for the Sāde' solar project down in Watson Lake. This is led by the First Kaska. It's a 4.7-megawatt DC solar system connecting to a 2.8-megawatt AC battery. The total project is just under \$30 million, and that has just about \$18.5 million coming from infrastructure funding, so again, that doesn't hit rate base, because that is us supporting the projects.

I spoke about this project earlier in the Sitting, and I think I got some of the numbers wrong, so I just want to correct the record. The Sāde' initiative is expected to come online in 2027 — I think that I said that — but the penetration is expected to be 24 percent, and it will reduce GHG — greenhouse gas emissions — by about 100,000 tonnes over its 30-year lifespan.

Finally, in this budget, there is \$3.8 million for the winter electrical affordability program. This program will provide residential customers with a rebate directly on their bill of up to \$33 a month during the winter months, so October through March, when electricity bills are typically higher.

With that, I will take my seat and I look forward to answering questions from members opposite.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, and I will take the time to welcome the officials here today and thank them for the briefing they provided us on the budget earlier this Sitting and also thank them for the appearance as witnesses before the Legislative Assembly within the last couple of weeks.

I want to jump around a little bit here and ask a few questions of the minister. As I mentioned, the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation were here as witnesses, so we had a chance to ask a number of questions then, but there are a few things I didn't get to in the time that I had, so I'm going to start with the repairs at the hydro facility at Aishihik Lake. I am just wondering if the minister can tell us if those repairs are completed yet. If not, when are they expected to be? Also, if the minister has a cost estimate for the work done so far.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I don't have a cost estimate in front of me, and probably that is because some of that cost is still evolving, but I do know that they were expecting to have the first turbine back up later this spring. I don't know if there is a hard date, but they also note that they need to do some maintenance. They think that there is bearing work that has to be done on the second hydro facility. So, what they are going to do is wait until Aishihik No. 1 turbine is back up and running.

When that is up and running, that is when they will take down Aishihik No. 2. That is all due to happen this summer so that it is up and ready to go for winter when it is most critical for our energy infrastructure.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that, and just one other quick question on Aishihik. I know that, last year, we experienced a bit of a drought and low water levels in that area. I know that snow load is one of the contributing factors — not all of them, but it is one of them. I am just curious if the minister can tell us what the water levels are expected to be? Are they expected to be back up toward normal this year in that Aishihik Lake watershed area, which, of course, is where the hydro facility is?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, the Department of Environment does those snow bulletins monthly, and the April 1 snow bulletin says that the precipitation in that area is just slightly under average. We are sending a note off to Yukon Energy to see if they can tell us where the lake is at.

If I get an answer, I'll stand up on my feet today to share that with the House. If not, I'll make sure to send a quick text over to colleagues once I know what the lake levels are.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that. I have just a couple of questions then about the Whitehorse hydro facility. We know from witnesses last week that the focus right now is to get the 60-day extension to the water licence so that they can work off the decision document that was issued and go forward to get that longer extension.

I just wanted to clarify with the minister. I believe that he mentioned in Question Period on Friday morning of last week when we were in here for our makeup day that he would not interfere with the water licensing process. The minister can correct me, but I'm taking that to mean that, if the water licence expires at the end of May and there is no extension in place, the facility will not operate. I'm just looking for some clarification. Obviously, when we are in Question Period, there's not much time to answer, so I'm just looking for some clarification on what the contingency plan is if we reach the end of May and there's no water licence in place or extension in place for the Whitehorse hydro facility.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: No, we will make sure that the electricity stays on. When the witnesses were here and the member was posing this question — I heard it, and it was a good question — the utility said that they are staying focused on re-licensing. I knew that the question was better suited to come to us as government rather than to the utility, but, of course, I am not able to rise to speak to that in that moment.

Then, when the question comes to the floor, you have a minute and a half and it feels like there are six things that you need to try to answer. I was not trying to give a response that would say that we are not going to make sure that there is electricity for Yukoners; I am just trying to say that we will respect the Water Board's role.

What I have asked through our legal team is to make sure that we have a solution that can allow the facility to continue to operate so the Water Board has time. That's exactly what the 60-day extension that Yukon Energy has applied for is also meant to do.

Yukon Energy went into YESAB and gave themselves half a year, but it took a year and a half, and so everything gets pressed back in time. When they saw that it was possible that they wouldn't get the hearing for the re-licensing in place in time, they then went to the Water Board to seek a 60-day extension, but that too might not get issued in time. So, then, we are now working to backstop that to make sure that the electricity can stay on for Yukoners while the Water Board has the time that it will need in order to make its decisions. This is sort of like the diligent side on us to make sure that the Water Board has the ability to do its work.

Mr. Kent: Just to follow up on that — and I believe the minister said that the legal team is working on finding a solution to ensure that the facility can continue to operate in the event that we reach the end of May and there is no extension to the existing water licence in place.

I am just curious: When would the minister expect to hear back from the legal team with respect to how that can be accomplished?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: If I can just back up for a second and give the other answers. The Aishihik 1 is expected to be back up in June. The water levels of the Aishihik reservoir are projected to be back to normal by this coming winter. I don't know where they are at exactly at the moment, but the team at Yukon Energy says that they think it is going to be good for this winter.

Then, on to the question about timing for this, the legal folks have done their preparation work now. It is prepped.

We are not stepping into the middle of this unless it is required. So, what we anticipate is that we should hear from the Water Board on the request for a 60-day extension sometime in mid-May. The licence runs out by the end of May, so we will have that window of time to initiate the work on our side. I believe that the work is prepared now, but we are holding it. We have made Yukon Energy aware that we prepared this way so that they don't get concerned that there is no backstop, but we won't utilize it if the application to the Water Board is successful.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that, and I will save the similar questions regarding placer water licences for Energy, Mines and Resources debate if we get back to it before the end of the Sitting.

I don't expect the minister to have these numbers, but if he could just somehow find a way to get them back to us through a letter or through a legislative return if they are readily available. I am just curious about the cost of the permitting and the licensing. The minister mentioned that they went to YESAB, I believe, in 2023, so I am just looking for the overall cost to prepare for that YESAB submission, to go through that process and into the water licensing process. If the minister can get those costs to me at some point, I would appreciate it.

I am going to move on to the budget. Under the operation and maintenance budget, the minister mentioned in his opening remarks that there was an increase of \$3.85 million for the winter electrical affordability rebate. This is a net increase of \$350,000 because the interim electrical rebate has been eliminated.

Again, this has been a replacement for that program and upping it by \$350,000. I'm just curious — with the changes that were made and now the rebate will apply to residential electricity customers from October through to March, I'm just wondering if that decision was made internally, or did some organization or group or individuals come to the government to make that change, or was there some consultation on this that came back with the results that wanted to see this change made to just a winter rebate program rather than the one that it was replacing, which was year-round?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, talking about the Whitehorse Rapids re-licensing, that project cost has been — order of magnitude — \$10 million. It's a lot of studies, a lot of engagement. They did some pre-work starting about four years ago, and then around three years ago is when Yukon Energy brought together what they called the "principals", so that would include ourselves as the Yukon government; that included the three nations — Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council — and then started to do all of this work.

There were, you know, lots of pieces of work, and they had this hope that this would be through long before now, but there were delays, mostly in YESAB.

The question was around the winter electrical affordability rebate. The initiative for this was — we did have in place the interim electrical rebate. It was, as the member opposite noted, \$3.5 million. We were doing two things. Number one, we were trying to make it more effective. Second of all, we were trying to address affordability generally. This is just one initiative of many. I asked the corporation to take a look at what some possibilities might be, and they brought me back a range of suggestions, and we landed with the winter electrical affordability rebate. The reason that we landed with winter is because our residential bills are higher in the winter — both because of light and heat or the darkness and temperature.

For those reasons, a rebate in the winter months is more meaningful than in the summer months when our bills are lower. It was targeted that way, and at the same time, I just requested through Cabinet that we increase it by 10 percent; hence, it is here in front of us today to debate and to vote on in a few days.

That was the whole intention.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, I appreciate that. It does sound like the work was done internally without — it was internal work and not consulted on outside.

I did have just a quick follow-up question on the winter electrical affordability rebate. I appreciate, in the briefing documents, the Yukon Development Corporation let us know that residential electrical customers will be eligible for a maximum of \$33.77 per month, October to March. I asked at the time, and officials let me know that there are currently 19,000 ratepayers who would be eligible for this. I am just looking for confirmation of that number.

Then also, as we move this fund out over the next five-year time horizon or whatever planning horizon the government uses, will the amount increase based on increases in the ratepayers — so, as the population increases, will it stay at

\$33.77 per month, or will that amount decrease as the number of ratepayers increases over the next five-year time horizon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The corporation did check with both ATCO and Yukon Energy — it's mostly ATCO — to confirm the number. The \$19,000 is — you have to think of it as a rough estimate, because what they're explaining to me is that the number changes throughout the year. The numbers go up and down, so \$19,000 is approximately the amount.

The member asked if the intention is to provide some sort of locking-in of the \$33 and change as the rebate so that if the numbers go up and down, that locks in. Currently, what we've done is lock in the \$3.85 million. That is what we have put in place, so that's what's in front of us, but we also recognize that, as a new program, it is pretty typical that we would do some analysis of it and review it right away to understand how it worked or not and how we might adjust it going forward.

So, at the moment, it is in the budget as \$3.85 million, but there is review work that will happen. I have asked that the review work — watch how it rolls out this winter and that there be a reporting back in the spring after it hits the end of its first cycle.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that, and we will continue to monitor how the number of ratepayers increases versus the amount of money allotted to this. I did want to ask some questions — the minister mentioned it off the top — the grid-connect project that is being led by YDC to connect British Columbia to the Yukon. The numbers that the minister mentioned in his opening remarks were \$40 million from Canada supplemented by an additional \$13 million from Yukon, for \$53 million. I believe that the minister said that it was over a five-year time horizon. My understanding from the briefing is that this money is being put into a Yukon Development fund which is administered by the corporation.

I am just curious if the minister can tell us how much is currently in that fund, and is it an equal five-year portion transferred from Canada's commitment and Yukon's commitment that is in that fund currently?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, colleagues are just looking up to see how much it is this year. It is always going to be a 75/25 split. So, whatever the spend is in each fiscal year, three-quarters of it will come from the federal dollars — and we just invoice for that — and one-quarter of it will come from our dollars.

The other thing that I want to note for colleagues here is that this money — because it goes straight to the corporation, it is not coming under this vote. I am happy to report on it at all times, but it doesn't show up in the budget, because the way the dollars flow is straight to the corporation.

Mr. Kent: Just to understand that a little bit better, the Yukon government's commitment of \$13 million over five years — how is that accounted for if it is transferred right into the — where — does it just come from Finance, or where would we find that accounting of how the Yukon's portion is transferred in? I understand that the Government of Canada wouldn't come through a specific department, but where would the Yukon's portion come from? In which department would we see that expenditure?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, YDC uses a calendar year, not a fiscal — for their fiscal year — so, I always get tripped up by this stuff. Second of all, it's not the government that is transferring funds to the Yukon Development Corporation to provide the 25 percent on this project. This is coming from the Yukon Development Corporation's fund, its own dollars, that is through rate of return on Yukon energy, et cetera, so that has always been there. The budget for the 2025 calendar year is currently \$5.5 million, and then one-quarter of that — 25 percent of that — would be YDC's portion. I'm not running the math, but let's call it \$1.625 or something like that — that would be the range. I know that they adjust their work plans over time, so it isn't — I want to be careful that this number is what has been currently planned, but I know that they continue to update their plans over time.

Mr. Kent: Thanks very much; I appreciate that. I'm assuming then that we can look at the Public Accounts in the fall and the YDC financials that are appended to the Public Accounts and go from there. So, we'll take a look at that.

I did want to ask then about the procurement for this project. Is it being done through — or I guess what platform is being used? Is it the Bids and Tenders platform that the Government of Yukon uses, or is it Merx or some other platform that is being used? I guess, are we able to access what the contracts awarded are with respect to this work through the Yukon government's contract registry, or is there somewhere else that we would be able to look at the type of contracts that are awarded — the process, whether direct award or invitational or public tender, and the amounts of those contracts and obviously to whom they were awarded?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I just did the math on the 25 percent of \$5.5 million, and I got the number wrong — so, it's \$1.375 — apologies — million. That's the YDC's portion of the \$5.5 million.

For the Yukon Development Corporation's bids and tenders, they follow the Yukon government procurement policy broadly, but they also have some additional — like, for example, they also have some requirement to be working through their own board if projects are over a certain dollar value. So, there are thresholds there, but it's overall the YG procurement policy.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much; I appreciate that.

It was within the last couple of weeks that I saw some news articles and interviews. The premiers of Nunavut and Manitoba made a joint announcement about the construction of a power line from northern Manitoba into Nunavut to service a number of communities there with hydro. I believe that they set aside a specific amount of generating capacity — I think it was 50 megawatts. I could stand corrected, but then, you know, there are — the Premier of Manitoba mentioned that there are opportunities to increase that amount over time.

So, just flipping over to the Yukon-British Columbia example here, have there been any similar commitments from the Government of British Columbia to provide power if this line does go forward? We know as well from meetings in Vancouver at Roundup and from talking to other individuals that British Columbia is often finding themselves in a power

crunch where they are importing power from neighbouring jurisdictions. I am just curious if there are any plans in the works to get a specific power commitment from British Columbia if this line does indeed go in.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: One of the things that I can note for colleagues today is that we were excited to see the announcement from Manitoba and Nunavut, although they haven't yet applied through, for example, the critical minerals infrastructure fund, so we're a couple of steps ahead that way.

When we apply for the critical minerals infrastructure fund, I would like to acknowledge and thank the Government of British Columbia for writing a letter of support. So, the Premier has had direct dialogue with the Premier of British Columbia. I have had several meetings and direct conversations with my counterparts. Well, the role changed somewhere about six months ago, but I have continued conversations with the minister of climate and energy. I think that's the portfolio, but I will have to check what the portfolio is called now.

The other thing to sort of note is that we are not really interested to be a net importer here; we would rather be a net exporter. One of the ways to think of that is that we have excess summer energy, and this would present an opportunity to sell that energy down to British Columbia. Because they have the ability to store energy differently than we do, then that can be useful for them.

The other way we have looked at this is that we have given them a sense of the size of our grid right now, what might it become over the next decade or so, so they have a sense of the scale that we are talking about. They are still interested in this relationship and this opportunity.

It does another thing that I think they feel is important. The most likely route through British Columbia is to come up the Stewart-Cassiar Highway. That then creates an energy or an infrastructure corridor. It would be a mistake to think that the transmission line is something that you can tap into anywhere. That's tricky to think through or there are technical issues around that, but once you have that corridor there, you can always backstream or run other lines. There are possibilities that open up. Those possibilities — for example, British Columbia got dollars through the critical minerals infrastructure fund to invest in the Stewart-Cassiar Highway. We think that these two projects align themselves very well.

There are opportunities. We don't have an energy-purchase agreement in place at this point, but that is part of the work that would happen under the grid-connect study that the Development Corporation will undertake, which will be part of their whole endeavour.

Mr. Kent: I have quite a few more questions, but in the interest of time, I will share the floor with my colleague from Whitehorse Centre this afternoon.

I just want to ask one final question, and then I will perhaps send a letter to the minister. The letter will contain some questions about the *Our Clean Future* 2023 annual report. On page 41, there are a number of energy commitments that are being led by other departments, but I am assuming that YDC and the Energy Corporation will have some sort of a role in them.

My last question for YDC — and again, I thank the officials for the work they have done in preparing us for today and for attending today — I am wondering when the next general rate application is scheduled to go in from the Energy Corporation.

Will it include the \$10 million in costs that the minister referenced for the Whitehorse dam, or will the Energy Corporation wait until those costs are finalized to submit them to rate? I am just curious of the timing for the next GRA to be submitted by the Energy Corporation.

With that, I thank the minister and the officials for the time here this afternoon.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The utility is, I think, working toward a rate application for this year. I don't know exactly when. They have been doing that preparatory work. I think that the anticipation is that the costs that were incurred in relicensing will be included in that application. I think that is the current thinking.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister and to the officials for being here. I am joined, of course, today by my daughter, Marlow, in the debate, and I just really appreciate everyone's welcome, support, and patience with having her here today, so thank you for that.

I want to start by following up with a question that I asked when we had the witnesses here, which was about the protocol agreement between the minister and the Yukon Development Corporation. At the time, the witnesses indicated that they could get me a copy of the current protocol agreement.

I believe that there is one each year; the last one I can find online is 2021. I'm wondering if that is available anywhere online and if — perhaps today, since I don't think that there will be time to table anything and get it to me — the minister could just give me a really high-level overview of what the mandate provided to YDC this year was.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, the corporation has been preparing material for me for a legislative return. I think that it got into my hands today, and I'm working to try to get it to colleagues and tabled by tomorrow. We have agreed that these should be public-facing and we'll find a way to post them online generally. I know as well that we are just in that phase — they don't get updated every year, but "on occasion" is the way to think of it. So, there is work happening right now in trying to update the letters of expectation.

What do they look like? They just outline how we should work together — for example, in capital planning. So, there is money that the utility wants to spend, but that spending can have a bit of an impact on our own budgets, our own borrowing — things like that. So, we need to make sure that information is flowing back and forth between the energy utility, the Development Corporation, and the government, and so it's talking about the expectations of how information will flow. If the member opposite has an old one — if they have a version of an old one — it would be pretty similar to what the new one would be like, but there will be tweaks that happen to refine them and improve them over time.

I will work this evening to try to prepare a legislative return and get them into colleagues' hands, and if not, I'll make sure to just e-mail something around.

MLA Tredger: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for that. I do have an old one that I was looking at, and I was particularly interested in — I don't know if the format has changed. I'm looking at the one from 2020-21. In part 3 of that one, it provides a mandate direction. So, in this particular year, it was said that, pursuant to a number of things — it says that YDC shall, in undertaking new initiatives, restrict itself to energy-related activities designed to promote the economic development of the Yukon and then some other things. So, I'm just wondering how that's changed. In particular, what I'm wondering is: Is there a piece of that mandate around renewable energy in addition to the provision of reliable electricity for the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, thank you, first of all, for the opportunity to respond. I don't have that old one in front of me, so I would have to go back and check it, but what I can say is that part 3 has historically been derived from the order-in-council that creates the Yukon Development Corporation, so it's sort of language that exists from that.

In other parts of the letter of expectation, we talk about the sustainability and those kinds of principles. For example, in the one that I'm working on right now, we talk about the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation collaborating to publicly release a plan that identifies the resources needed in the immediate term to support electrification and climate change goals. It goes on to say to provide reliable service to Yukoners while beginning to plan for longer term demand projects — so there's language in there. It's not in the place where the member was looking, because that was derived from something else, but it is referenced here and there.

I will also say that Yukon Energy has been clear with me that their goal is renewable energy. It's built into their plan and I know that we focus a lot on the diesels here, but I just continue to say for everyone that we need the diesels, but that's not sufficient. It's critical to have and it's necessary but not sufficient. The reason is that if we just use diesels — if that is the goal — I can see what the prices of electricity get to when I look at other territories; it's super expensive.

Here in the Yukon, one of the things that we do is say that the price for electricity should be the same in Old Crow as it is here in Whitehorse or Watson Lake, but it's not true that the cost of producing that electricity is the same. The cost to produce it is much, much higher in our off-grid communities. It's because of the cost of diesel. It's the fuel cost, not the cost of the generators. They are expensive, for sure, but it's really the ongoing cost of the diesel that really drives the cost up in providing electricity.

So, back to the basic question, it is there in the letters of expectation, just in a different location.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister. That was really helpful. I appreciate him directing me to the right section, because that's an old one, and we don't need to argue about what was in an old one or try to figure it out exactly. It's helpful

to know what it is going forward. That's really my question, so that's helpful, because the language that he described really mirrors what I saw in the Yukon Energy strategic plan. It's helpful to know that the mandate that they're getting is aligned with that strategic plan.

One of the questions that I have is — it was pretty clear to me in reading the strategic plan that the Yukon Energy Corporation is not expecting to hit a 93-percent renewable target by 2030, which was promised in *Our Clean Future* to be legislated — actually, I think by 2023. When we have talked about this in the past, the minister had told me that Cabinet at the time was not ready to move forward with fulfilling that commitment because I think that they wanted more modelling, and it looked to me, in that strategic plan, like that was not something that the corporation was working toward in the next five years.

I'm just wondering if the minister can talk a little bit about the decision to abandon that commitment and in particular — I mean, we're starting to get into a different department here, but I don't see how we can meet our climate goals by 2030 without that renewable energy. That's really one of the commitments that had the biggest bang for its buck in terms of reducing emissions, so I wonder if the minister can just talk about that a little bit.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, the whole goal of trying to get renewable energy online — and the “bang for its buck”, as the member opposite mentioned — is still there. What we haven't gotten to is putting it into the *Clean Energy Act*, which would create this legal mandate. I just recall there being a complication around it, and I will have to turn back and I have just asked the president to sit down with me and the deputy minister from Energy, Mines and Resources to try to bring me back up to speed again about why that is a challenge and what the issues were with it.

I want to make sure that there is still an understanding that Yukon Energy is still completely committed to getting to this goal and that the route to get there is through the strategy that they just released.

I will just point out that yesterday, I think, I tabled a legislative return. I am not sure if the member opposite got it, because I tabled it in response to a question from the Yukon Party leader, but I want to point to it. I will make sure that there is a copy. I asked the corporation to just give me a map of the Yukon with all of the projects that are going on around it right now in terms of renewable energy over the last several years, because the Official Opposition said sometime during Question Period that we have no renewable energy projects.

The difference is that what we are trying to do is partner with communities and First Nations to invest in their renewable energy projects. One of the examples of this for me was the Old Crow solar project. That was the model. It wasn't our solar project; it was Vuntut Gwitchin's solar project. It was solar and battery, I think. That paved the way for a lot of other projects. More are needed — I get it.

I totally get it, but when I look around the territory, we have a solar project happening in Beaver Creek — \$1.5 million for that. We have the wind project that I talked about briefly today

in Kluane. We invested more than \$3 million in that. The big solar project in Watson Lake is a \$30-something-million project, and \$18.5 million of that is us putting infrastructure dollars into it. Those are examples of the projects that we are trying to do.

There are projects happening on our grid as well. The battery project is Yukon Energy's project. I mentioned Ta'an Kwäch'an. We also have other hydro projects being looked at around the territory. Chu Níkwän is looking at additional wind, and as soon as you get all of that plus growth, you really do need to make sure that the underlying system that we have here has the backup ready for it. Aishihik really taught us — Yukon Energy felt quite threatened when Aishihik went down. They just were really nervous about whether we would have reliable energy. That is all part of it.

Yes, with respect to wind, what you need is wind/battery backup. It is not enough — what I said in my previous answer is that it is not enough to invest in diesels. It is necessary but not sufficient, so there is a plan to work to get renewables across the Yukon. Part of that plan is the first five years — what is showing there under the Yukon Energy strategy. There is another part of that plan — we used the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative to provide seed design funding for projects to get off the ground and then, if they come to life, then usually we go off and hunt for infrastructure dollars to help get those projects built. We are working all the time on these projects, but they don't look like our projects. We are happy about that, because we think that this is an opportunity — and under the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, we think that there should be opportunities — for nations to have economic opportunities, including investing in energy projects.

MLA Tredger: I have so many follow-up questions out of that, because that touches on pretty much all of the things that I wanted to ask about today, so it is hard to pick one to start with. I will start with — just coming back to the minister saying that there was a reason that it wasn't going in the *Clean Energy Act* at this moment but that it was still the goal, does he mean that it is still the goal to have 93-percent renewable energy, and does he have a sense of when they expect to meet that goal?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It is the goal, and the goal is for 2030 to have 93 percent. We don't want to do it just one single year, because you get all of these problems with one year when it's a drought and suddenly you don't have the ability to produce renewable energy and then, in other years, you're producing more. So, we're trying to smooth that a bit. But the goal generally is to have it in place by 2030.

It's also still an action — I don't think that we've removed the action to get it into the *Clean Energy Act*, but there are challenges with getting it into the *Clean Energy Act*.

I will just say for colleagues in the House that the *Clean Energy Act* doesn't make the actions happen; it provides a higher level of accountability to government to ensure that they are working to make the actions happen. That is the purpose of the *Clean Energy Act*; it's more transparency around those goals.

But it is my recollection that the overall goal for the 93 percent is by 2030.

MLA Tredger: I actually agree that — I mean, I think that having the legislative framework is useful, but I'm more concerned about whether it happens or not.

I'm surprised to hear the minister say that it's still a goal, because that's really quite absent from Yukon Energy's strategic plan. They talk about their strategic priorities, and the only strategic priority that actually mentions renewable energy only talks about renewables for the future, and I don't see in the 2025 to 2030 document any statements about attempting to get to 93 percent by 2030.

I guess I'll just flag that as a difference between what I'm hearing the minister say and what I'm seeing from the Yukon Energy Corporation. I don't want to belabour the point, because I do have other questions, but it seems like a pretty big concern to me.

I want to go back to this question about grid stability and working with partners, because I agree that — I think that most if not all of the renewable projects have actually come from partners and not been built directly by Yukon Energy, except the battery project. The witnesses mentioned that the grid-stability study was in its final days of being finished. Is it finished? Is it available now?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will answer the specific question and I'm going to add a couple of pieces of information more. I am told that the study is completed. I am told that Yukon Energy Corporation is just doing a quick review of it. I believe that it's going to be made public-facing shortly. I don't have a date in hand, but I am told that the study is now done.

Let me use Haeckel Hill as an example. It's not in the Yukon Energy Corporation's plan, because it's not their wind turbines, but they have to plan for those wind turbines. We invested \$13.5 million into those turbines, but it doesn't show up under Yukon Energy Corporation. Where does it live then? As I just noted a moment ago, Chu Níikwän is looking at a next level of that. Even when they announced it, the day that they cut the ribbon on Haeckel Hill and they were talking about the next wind project, I stood up to the microphone and said: Yes, wind/battery-backup project, please. Since wind is intermittent, we need something to tide it over.

The beautiful thing about wind is that it is stronger in the winter, whereas solar is stronger in the summer, so solar works amazingly in off-grid communities, but wind can work on our islanded grid, but we need a battery system. Well, we have a battery coming on and that is in the Yukon Energy plan, and you need backup in behind that battery system, and this is in the plan. The plan is to have these load centres or energy centres that will take in the projects that come which we are supporting and fostering. The projects like pumped storage or wind don't show up in the plan, because they are coming through partnerships.

They are not Yukon Energy's direct work, but they're integral to being supported, and it is part of that big picture, so this is the necessary work to help support those community-based, First Nation-led projects.

MLA Tredger: I think what I'm understanding is that the expectation is that the new generation capacity will be built by partners as opposed to Yukon Energy itself. That makes

sense to me, but my concern is that there is not actually a mechanism to do that right now. The independent power producer program — which I believe is full, and maybe the minister can confirm that for me — that allowed proponents to build projects and know that they would be accepted into the grid — that's closed now, is my understanding.

I guess I'm wondering about the mechanisms for allowing proponents to build new projects that can be connected to the grid. If I just quote from chapter 1 of the Yukon Energy planning document, on page eight, it says — quote: "Reflecting on the past 25 years, on average over 90% of the electricity we have generated has come from renewable resources. To maintain this position, we will need another 90 gigawatt hours of renewable winter energy built and connected to the grid by 2030."

What I don't see in this plan is a way to get another 90 gigawatt hours by 2030, and I'm totally fine if it's not built by Yukon Energy; I'm quite happy for it to be built by partners, but I don't see a mechanism for partners to build it either. Now, I know there is going to be a call for power in the next two to three years — I believe 24 to 36 months is the timeline identified. I would be surprised if a project that's — the call for proposals that goes out in 2027 would be part of the grid by 2030. That seems really fast to me, though I could be wrong.

I guess I'm just — I guess the position is that the minister says we're going to get our partners to build this energy, which I guess would mean 90 gigawatt hours — that's just to maintain 90 percent, not actually to get to 93 percent — but there doesn't seem to be a mechanism in place to do that by 2030.

So, that's what I'm confused about. I'm just going to let the minister comment on that.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I don't want to be pedantic about this, but the independent power production program is not done. There is a piece of it that is done, and it is the piece that we think is the least — it's not the one that is going to provide the big results. When I say "done" — that's the standing-offer program — it reached the end of its time. We are in review on it, and we hope to bring something back. I don't want to rely on it heavily though, because I need the big projects — or let's call them the "mid-sized projects".

When I talked to BC, they would never think of these as big projects, but it is all relative — relative to the standing-offer program. The unsolicited proposals program is still there, and the call for power program is still there. They have not ended their part of independent power production.

Let me just quickly talk about projects that are on our radar screen right now. They are in a range of stages. I'm just going to slow down for a second. I have to say, I love having Marlow here.

We have the Mount Sumanik wind project. I have mentioned that Ta'an Kwäch'än is looking at pump storage. We have Drury Creek in Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation traditional territory. We have some run of river; we have a wind project in Na-Cho Nyäk Dun traditional territory; we have some work around biomass. There is one in Old Crow that is being looked at for biomass; around Teslin Tlingit Council; we have some private sector projects. So, there are a bunch of

projects that are underway right now. I don't know which of these will come to fruition or not, but we are working in support of these projects as we speak.

MLA Tredger: I will say that I am still not convinced that we are going to get to that 93 percent on the grid, but I hear what the minister is saying.

I want to ask a few more questions just about the plans around — YDC's plans for renewable energy. The Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative has been renewed this year, and I'm wondering why it has been decreased to the amount it is this year. I am wondering if the criteria for it have changed. I believe that it is a program that supports proponents at the very early stages of planning, and I wonder if the criteria for it have changed, knowing that what types of projects might be accepted later on has also changed.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative program was due to end, and we hadn't yet done the review that we needed to do to try to plan for what will come in 2.0, so we extended it this year to keep it going. In the meantime, we are doing that review. Then that goes back in to be considered through Cabinet and then ultimately through this House.

I think that what the member opposite is talking about is incredibly — it's a very critical point that is being raised. I am nervous about the amount of energy that we need against the projects that we have in front of us. I will say that we have had projects where we had worked in partnership with communities and they didn't come to life, for example, in Atlin where the nation is still trying to get it over the finish line, but it's just expensive — other projects that we have had, for example, in conversation or agreement with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation and then they changed their minds about it. That represents the challenge.

What I will say for colleagues is that I have been just absolutely amazed at all the nations who are coming forward and really working on this issue that today, compared to several years ago — we were working hard to try to drum up interest several years ago, and now I've got nations who are really leading the charge, and I'm impressed by what we have in front of us.

Can we make it in time? I don't know. Like, there is a lot of work to do, and every project has its challenges in front of it, so I don't want to sugar-coat the issue that we face. In order to get to all of this renewable energy, there is a lot of work that needs to happen and a lot of investment. I hope that we get there, and we are committed to doing that work in partnership. That doesn't mean that it will be easy to get there.

MLA Tredger: I know the — I understand that the standing-offer program is being reassessed and hopefully redesigned and that will take some time, particularly as it intersects with the grid-stability study. But one piece that seems to me that could be moved forward more or less immediately would be more battery capacity. I don't know of — I'm sure that it's not technically simple to connect batteries, but my understanding is that they don't present the same technical barriers as, for example, solar does — or wind.

I guess I'm wondering if: While we're waiting for more — a clear path forward on intermittent renewables, would YDC consider creating a standing-offer program that could start quite quickly specifically for battery capacity?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It's amazing how much these colleagues give me as information just in a little window, so I'll do my best to try to relay it all. If I forget anything, I'm sure they'll remind me.

The first thing to say is that I know that people see batteries as simple, but at this scale, they are not. I had a tour of the site at the south end of the airport off Two Mile Hill, and it was before there were even the batteries in there. I was like: Okay, okay, there is quite a bit to this stuff.

It is important that we do this first one and figure out how that works. There are several ways that the batteries will be used. They were originally designed with one of these ways in mind, but now the thinking is that there will be several ways that they are used. Number one is to peak shave. We know that we usually have these peaks in about an hour or so and first thing in the morning. Everybody turns on their toaster, runs their shower, and then the energy peaks. Toward the end of the work day, everybody comes home, turns on their computer, turns on their oven, and the energy peaks. What we can do is use the batteries to provide those peaks and then, overnight, we can recharge the batteries with the energy that we have there. Then what happens is that the capacity that you need drops, which is really important, especially in our winters.

The second way that they are going to be used now is that you could have wind — and it is intermittent and it's better in winter. You get more wind in winter, but you get some days when the wind is just not blowing, and you could take the batteries and turn them on and keep that fairly consistent. But there are going to be times when there is no wind blowing for a week, and you can't use the batteries for that, so that is when you would need the diesels to come in and back it up.

What you realize then is that batteries are very fast. They come on very quickly and they can be dispatched very quickly. They suddenly can make your thermal work better, meaning your diesels. So, your batteries can make your diesels more efficient. There are several ways in which we think of them as having potential.

The next thing to note is that when we did the microgeneration program, Yukoners just embraced it and took it up, but we didn't anticipate the challenges that were coming with that. With that success came some issues around the stability of the grid that we needed to address, so I think that Yukon Energy is just trying to be a little bit thoughtful before we get to that next step — careful when we put out a call for something if we are not ready for it. One of the ways to get ready for it is to see how this battery behaves so that we can understand if there are unforeseen circumstances that we don't know about. And even how to design the program — it isn't just that we could say: Yes, we will put out a call.

If you put out a call that allows us to have some visibility to what is going on, that changes, and we learned this through the solar. It was Solvest, which still has visibility in behind the

meter — which made it very useful to work with them on solutions around how we could improve the system with its relationship to our islanded grid.

A couple more points. I think that when we're planning the diesels right now that are in the plan in front of us, Yukon Energy Corporation is contemplating whether to put some battery in with those diesels. We know we need battery. We know that it can work to improve the thermal — the diesels — so they are looking at that and considering that.

Lastly, I want to say that there is some storage that we are keen on today, right now, and that is long-term storage. Batteries are shorter term storage and they are great, but what we really wanted, because it would be a game-changer for our islanded grid, is seasonal storage.

If we get pumped storage, which is pumping water up, holding it in a reservoir, and then bringing it down when you want it — and, yes, you lose something in that effort, but what you gain is very important. If it's pumped storage, we are super keen to go now and we tell First Nations that we are keen to go and we let them know that. So, that's the gambit on storage.

I will say as well that out there in technology land, wind turbines are not changing that much. The technology is doing its thing these days. Solar as well is pretty standard. It does change over time, but the space that is really changing rapidly is storage. It's so critical.

Everyone is trying to watch when to jump in and which technology to adopt. It's a difficult space to predict, and I think that Yukon Energy Corporation is keen to see us move forward in this area, but I think that they also want to make sure that we are doing diligence to get it right so that we don't have to have pauses in the future.

MLA Tredger: I will just add a couple of points. I know that they are keen to avoid pauses. You could probably argue about whether or not the standing-offer program is paused or if this cycle is just complete.

I think that there is a way to think about it that isn't, like: We have to have a program that is perfect forever. We could try things. We could put out a program and say that we are going to take three projects — or this number of gigawatts or projects — and then that's it, but it's something. It is something to get going. I know that there are lots of questions about whether peak shaving, daily storage, or coordinating with generators is the best option. I think that we are probably going to need all of them; I think that is probably safe to say. I just think that in an attempt to get it perfect, it takes a lot of time and we don't have a lot of time. I think about the pandemic and how government responded very, very quickly — imperfectly in lots of places, but it was understood that it was an emergency and it was better to do something, do something imperfectly, and I think that many, many lives across the world were saved because of that. I think about us being in a climate crisis and I think that we need to take that same approach.

I am going to leave that for now. I am almost finished, but I just want to ask a couple of questions about the grid-connect study that my colleague was asking about. Is there an expected completion date? I am wondering if the minister can talk a little bit about the scope of that project, because there are so many

questions that would need to be answered to understand if this project is viable — everything from the question that my colleague asked, which I think is a really good one, about whether BC has extra power to sell to us, although I understand the minister saying that it is also about exporting our own power. There are questions about the technical aspects of connecting our grid to, I think, a much more modern grid, largely. I think that there are enormous questions about the many, many First Nations and their traditional territories that would have to be constructed through in order to do that.

So, I am wondering which kinds of questions we are expecting the grid-stability study to answer, and when will it be finished?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will just begin by saying that I appreciate the point that the member opposite raised. I thank them for that point. It is a good point and I do agree with it. We have to get moving on all of this stuff.

Now, on to the grid-connection work. The project is envisioned as five years. At a high level, I'll describe three kinds of threads that weave through. The first one is about partnerships; it's about working with First Nations and finding opportunities and an equity stake in the project. That might be slightly different on the BC side than on the Yukon side, because we'll use our *Umbrella Final Agreement* and our final agreements to guide us. So, we have talked with BC about how that works on their side of things and how we should engage there. I mentioned that they are doing a project along the Stewart-Cassiar already.

The second thread that we're following is sort of a technical thread: What's the type of connection? How will it work? Of course, we need the two systems to talk to each other. That's where the Bothans get involved and do their technical thing. That one can also look at differences of route, although route is probably an important question for all three of these threads, and there are things like picking up communities — Watson Lake, for example. That question really becomes important.

The third thread that we're looking at is sort of the financial viability of a line: What does it cost to build? What are the economic opportunities that get realized as a result? Some of those will be things like providing power for mines. Some of those will be things like opportunities to sell power down to BC. So, there is a range on the fiscal side of that, and I think that part of that equation, which is a little bit difficult to understand — because where this originated and what I've heard out of much of the debate in the federal election that we just had yesterday is around infrastructure in the north, nation-building, Arctic sovereignty, and those sorts of questions, and how would this play into that? That's a very high level of how that work will proceed.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that.

I'm going to finish up my questions there. We have lots of other things to get through. I really appreciate the time today and the folks for coming in, and thank you to the corporation for the work they're doing. I really appreciate it.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation?

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

MLA Tredger: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$6,475,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$14,233,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$20,708,000 agreed to

Yukon Development Corporation agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*.

Department of Highways and Public Works — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Hassard: Madam Chair, I would like to begin by thanking the officials for being back today, and we will carry on where we left off.

The last question that I asked yesterday was in regard to the budget on the Alaska Highway and the fact that the 2024-25 estimates were \$15.862 million. The 2025-26 estimates were \$11.846 million, and the minister wasn't aware of the reasoning at the time, so I am hoping that he can fill us in a little this afternoon.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to be back in Committee of the Whole in Highways and Public Works' main budget debate.

With respect to the highway maintenance budget — and there may be follow-up questions, but this what I have so far — Highways and Public Works uses asset management principles to prioritize investments across the Yukon transportation network to ensure that we maximize the life of infrastructure and minimize the cost to maintain that infrastructure. Investing in infrastructure reduces maintenance costs down the road. For example, when we rebuild a section of the road, it reduces time spent patching potholes.

The 2025-26 O&M budget estimate for highway maintenance across all of Yukon's highway network is just under \$50 million, which, as I indicated yesterday, is very similar to last year's budget. This is made up of the following programs: highway maintenance, such as plowing, sanding and blading; BST aggregate production; signs; and lines. Highway maintenance work may also be funded on an as-needed basis should unexpected events occur, such as washouts or higher than average snowfall.

For the Alaska Highway specifically, planned spending has actually increased across the department if one combines O&M and capital votes. In addition to the \$11.84 million that is specifically identified in the O&M in the supplementary information document, \$10.25 million is identified for Alaska Highway work under the capital vote. The \$10.25 million allocated to the Alaska Highway in capital is an \$8.85 million increase over the 2024-25 main estimates and includes: \$8 million for highway rehabilitation under the Shakwak program; \$1.5 million for multi-use trail expansion around Whitehorse; \$750,000 for safety improvements at Sawmill Road — Sawmill Creek is something else — the Robert Service intersection and the Two Mile Hill intersection. The total Alaska Highway work identified in 2025-26 is \$22.09 million versus \$15.86 million in 2024-25.

As I have also indicated many times during the course of the Spring Sitting, there are also numerous other projects underway that will benefit Alaska Highway users, such as the Nisutlin Bay bridge and the Big Creek projects.

While I am on my feet, I also have an answer from Question Period today as it pertained to the goldfields. This government has always and will always support the placer mining industry and the Dawson goldfields. This spring, our highway crews once again performed early opening of these roads to allow miners to get to their camps to begin their season, which I indicated in my response in Question Period as well.

Today, Highways and Public Works has spent approximately \$285,000 on early season road openings for the Dawson goldfields, including the Top of the World Highway. This work includes contracts for removing glaciers as well as uncovering culverts for steaming. Over the course of the summer, Highways and Public Works will also be maintaining these roads and ensuring that they are safe for the travelling public and for the placer mining industry. In short, our investment in the Dawson goldfields has never ceased, and we will continue to support this important sector.

To the best of the department's knowledge, there has been no direction issued by the department to not steam culverts. HPW has been steaming culverts and typically spends in the range of \$300,000 to \$500,000 on early road opening in the goldfields. We are balancing our resources between early road opening and also maintaining the north Klondike Highway. In road maintenance, HPW may also have to deal with washouts, which, of course, occurred over the course of the last two or three seasons. Our crews are ready for this and work to have the road rehabilitated as quickly as possible.

In my time as Minister of Highways and Public Works, as I indicated in Question Period, I have received and Highways and Public Works has received e-mails asking for a continuation of the early goldfields opening and snow-clearing program. Highways and Public Works, Community Services, and Economic Development have teamed up to ensure that there is money in addition to the regular budget to open the goldfields.

I certainly stand to be corrected, but the information I have so far is that the prior Yukon Party government did not assist with early goldfield openings, but as I indicated, perhaps I stand to be corrected, and perhaps that was part of the Yukon Party policy at the time and they did so.

In any event, we have been responsive, and we have also received e-mails in this and prior years from placer miners thanking Highways and Public Works for providing that additional service.

Mr. Hassard: I will certainly continue to disagree with the minister on his steaming this year, but I was hoping to leave that bad memory of Question Period behind us.

If I could just go back to the original question of the \$15.862 million last year, \$11.846 million this year — I guess I don't understand: Does the minister think that the \$10.2 million in capital is going to somehow offset that \$4 million in maintenance?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Investing in our infrastructure reduces maintenance costs down the road. For example, as I indicated, when we rebuild a section of the road, it reduces time spent patching potholes. In fiscal year — and the changes reported in the supplementary information schedule to which the member opposite is referring breaks down planned expenditures by highway — resulted from the methodology used in the application of non-direct highway maintenance costs, such as administration costs, safety and training, and equipment, among others. When these non-direct highway maintenance costs are removed, the maintenance budget per highway remained relatively consistent year over year. The department is conducting a review of the supplementary information by highway schedule in order to improve reporting clarity in future years.

Mr. Hassard: I don't see how reducing a budget by 25 percent or 24 percent is maintaining or keeping it similar. I guess, you know, Yukoners are left wondering how we're going to fill the potholes this year. Are we going to leave them all until next year and add extra? I don't know. It's a very strange statement to make regarding a 25-percent decrease in

budget for the Alaska Highway, but I guess we're not going to get a response.

The minister talked about gold roads, so I have to go there just for a second. I put a motion on the floor regarding the Duncan Creek Road and roads in the Mayo mining district area. I'm wondering if the minister could provide us with an update on whether those roads are being opened in the goldfields for those placer miners.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I'm advised with respect to the Duncan Creek Road, which is in the Mayo district and not part of the early season opening program, that Highways and Public Works will be opening this road as per the standard maintenance procedures, which will occur in May of this year.

Mr. Hassard: Just for clarification, could the minister tell us: Is the Duncan Creek Road never opened until May?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As it pertains to the historical time for the opening of the Duncan Creek Road, I am advised that, as conditions permit, Highways and Public Works has been able to open this road early in some years; however, I am advised that this is not the case this year.

Mr. Hassard: Moving on, I have a question regarding the boat launch at Minto Landing. I am wondering if the minister can tell us who owns that boat launch and who is responsible for maintaining it.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Just for clarification, the question is about the boat launch at Minto Landing — if someone actually owns it and who is responsible for the maintenance thereof?

Mr. Hassard: That is correct. The minister has actually written a letter to the Selkirk First Nation development corporation telling them that they own it and are responsible for it, so I just wanted clarification on that.

My apologies — the minister actually wrote the letter to my colleague the Member for Porter Creek North, not to the Selkirk First Nation, but the letter did say that the Selkirk First Nation development corporation was the owner of that boat launch.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will certainly look back on that correspondence. I must concede this afternoon that I don't have much recollection of having penned that letter, but I pen a lot of letters.

I do have some information here. I certainly hope that I can also receive some additional information.

I recognize the boat launch's importance to the community and the need for responsible shared use of the area. I have been advised that the Selkirk Development Corporation owns the barge and is responsible for maintaining the barge landing, which includes the boat launch. Although the boat launch is not under the jurisdiction of the Government of Yukon, officials from the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources are working with the Selkirk Development Corporation to determine a solution for the repair of the landing.

Once again, I apologize if I did pen this letter at some point. This file is not ringing a bell as it pertains to Highways and Public Works.

Mr. Hassard: I am wondering if the minister could provide us — obviously not today but by legislative return — the information as to who was responsible for the maintenance

of that boat launch so that community members can deal with that department or those people in order to try to have it cleaned up or fixed up a little bit.

I will just give the minister a chance to respond to that.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, I will certainly seek clarification on this issue and respond to the member opposite as requested. We will clarify this situation — hopefully to the satisfaction of both the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and the Member for Porter Creek North.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that commitment from the minister. I have some questions a little closer to home for me, in the Teslin area. The first one — I have asked for a few years in a row about vegetation control between Johnsons Crossing and Teslin or Johnsons Crossing and Lone Tree Creek, in particular. Last year, there was a tender released. A company came from Watson Lake, did some of the work, and then it turned winter and they went away. I see on the tender management site that there are now two vegetation control tenders out for the same area.

I am curious if the minister could provide us with some clarification as to why that is. The first question is: Did the contractor give up the contract, or was it pulled from them? Why did Highways and Public Works then decide to put the next set of tenders out in two rather than just in one?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I will endeavour to get the specific answer, which I believe was: Was the contract in the fall relinquished? And then also: In the spring, are there now two contracts that are being substituted for one prior contract in the fall? I think yes. But first perhaps, just for Yukoners, I would like to provide a bit of background with respect to the brushing and roadway safety improvements that have occurred.

The safety of the travelling public is a priority of the Department of Highways and Public Works. Throughout the year, our crews and contractors are out brushing, improving lane markings, and installing and maintaining roadside barriers. Vegetation control plays a key role in keeping road signs visible and reducing drifting and accumulating snow on the road. Frequent brushing also increases visibility for drivers, helping them to better see wildlife and avoid collisions.

Since the launch of the roadway safety improvement program in 2019, HPW has installed over nine kilometres of new barriers, painted approximately 3,500 kilometres of highway lines, and cleared approximately 4,200 kilometres of vegetation in the right of way. The program has completed approximately 66 percent of Yukon highways to date, allowing for strategic revisiting of areas with mowing equipment. Regular revisiting areas with mowing equipment costs half as much as heavier brushing, providing cost-savings on completed areas moving forward.

The contract that the member opposite is referring to was concluded at the end of the season based on the progress achieved. Challenging terrain in the project area, particularly the steep slopes, affected the pace and performance of the work. The two brushing tenders that are referenced by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin are structured as smaller contracts to ensure that they are manageable and accessible to local contractors.

Highways and Public Works supports small- and medium-sized businesses and continues to create opportunities that encourage local participation in seasonal maintenance work, including vegetation control that does keep our roads safe.

The work to be performed for vegetation control in the areas referenced by the member opposite are for kilometre 1265 to kilometre 1286 and kilometre 1286 to kilometre 1295. The member opposite likely knows, but the tenders close on April 30 and May 5.

With respect to vegetation control, the Government of Yukon uses a request for qualifications process as an efficient way to quickly and effectively tender vegetation control contracts to a list of pre-qualified bidders. The initial 2022 to 2024 qualified source list successfully included 30 companies. A new five-year qualified source list was tendered in February of 2025 and became active on April 1, and 13 companies qualified through the February procurement. Throughout the five-year term of the qualified source list, there will be regular opportunities for additional businesses to be added. The next onboarding opportunity is planned for May.

In 2024, the Government of Yukon awarded \$2.8 million in vegetation control contracts to 15 companies and completed 564 kilometres of work. Depending on the size, projects are offered by direct award, invitational, or open tenders to the full list of qualified companies. Kudos to Highways and Public Works over the course of the last approximately six years. I think that we may be into the seventh summer of the roadway safety improvement program.

In my travels around the Yukon, I would certainly anecdotally say that the vegetation control program has been quite effective, and kudos to Highways and Public Works for planning it in a way that leaves one with the opportunity going forward, where it is done effectively, to be able to mow roadsides instead of getting in with heavier equipment and chainsaws, which is more expensive and more time-intensive.

It seems that this program that was commenced under the leadership of the former Minister of Highways and Public Works, now the Minister of Community Services, seems like an effective program.

Mr. Hassard: I thank the minister for that information. I am wondering if the minister could tell us: Since that contractor left the job unfinished, how much did they actually get paid for the work that they did?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will endeavour to get, if possible today, the dollar value. The department is just working on that response to the question.

Just briefly, I have some further information with respect to vegetation control which may be of interest to Yukoners listening at home this afternoon.

Vegetation control is completed through contracts and through memoranda of understanding with First Nations and municipalities. Each contract contains detailed specifications for vegetation control that include stem height, clearing widths, steep slopes, riparian zones, inside curves for sightline distance, and salvageable wood, which is available to the public.

Brushing must meet or exceed specifications set out in the “preventing wildlife injuries from right-of-way vegetation

control". These specifications were recommended by the Yukon Department of Environment, the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, and the Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee.

With respect to engagement and opportunities, which I've talked a little bit about already, but prior to each field season, letters are sent to property owners who live close to planned projects to inform them of upcoming brushing and mowing work. The letter directs owners to an online platform that outlines the locations where vegetation control is anticipated to be taking place, shares the specifications of planned vegetation control, and explains the benefits. For the 2025-26 season, the online web page is live, and letters were sent to owners in March of this year, 2025.

Just briefly then, with respect to roadway safety improvement, in 2018, Yukon's primary highways were assessed for vehicle hazards. This assessment led to the development of a Yukon roadside barrier guideline, which includes a system to identify hazards across the highway network.

The roadway safety improvement program will schedule maintenance using our highway classification guide, which considers traffic volumes, type of use, and other socio-economic factors. Just seeing whether I have a response to the specific question. With respect to the contract that the member is referencing with respect to the work that was done in the Teslin area — I think it's in the Lone Tree area — I'm advised the actual spend on the work was \$203,876.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that information as well.

A couple of questions regarding the Nisutlin bridge. Now, we know that the pre-load was put on the abutments, and that pre-load is certainly there to cause the abutments to move so they can see how much settling or how much sinking there is before they take the pre-load off. So, I'm curious if the minister can tell us if the movement in those abutments was within normal parameters, or is there any concern in how much movement there is in both the north and south abutments?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Madam Chair, I will endeavour to get the question with respect to the pre-load answered in today's session. The team is looking to provide that answer for me.

With respect to the bridge itself, I will just provide a brief outline as to the work that has been done so far and then, briefly, the work plan for the summer of 2025.

With respect to the Nisutlin Bay bridge, milestones completed today include: the construction and use of the temporary trestle bridge and coffer-dams; the construction of six piers and two abutments, involving the driving of 58 permanent piles with the combined length of 1,801 metres and the pouring of 3,000 cubic metres of concrete between the piers and abutments; the installation of 52 girders totalling 1,935 metres in length; the installation of 32 bearings comprising four bearings per abutment and pier; the placement of 504 precast panels on the bridge deck; the pouring of the bridge-deck ends and the infill between the precast panels totalling 373 cubic metres of reinforced concrete; the installation of a utility conduit; the placement of 16,000 cubic metres of preload material on both the south and north abutments; and the

construction of fish offsetting areas on the south and north sides. A smaller crew worked on the project during the 2024-25 winter season focusing on the removal of the trestle spans, construction of curb form works in preparation for the spring pour, and preparation for the 2025 construction season.

Graham Construction for the 2025-26 work plan — Graham Construction's summer construction team are now on-site to begin work. The 2025-26 fiscal year includes the complete removal of the trestle piles, construction of cast-in-place concrete curbs and approach slabs, the installation of deck waterproofing, bridge drainage pipes, deck drains, luminaires on the bridge, bridge expansion joints, bridge guardrails, bicycle railing and pedestrian fences, precast concrete roadside and median barriers, completion of electrical work, production and placement of armouring rip-rap, construction of a snowmobile bench, completion of the north and south earthworks and road-related works, culverts and spillways, then a plan to open the new bridge to traffic at the end of 2025, and then at some point, beginning the demolition process of the existing bridge.

The department is actively monitoring the abutments as the preload is removed. We have a consulting engineer on-site to oversee this. This is from the team here: Currently, we are working with the contractor and consulting engineer to ensure that the bridge opens on schedule in the fall of 2025. Technical experts are currently assessing the situation. I can advise that the bridge abutment experienced a shift that did require design adjustment to maintain progress and keep the project on schedule. The change ensures that the work continues to meet the highest safety standards. The Yukon government will continue to closely monitor the bridge throughout construction.

Mr. Hassard: Madam Chair, I am curious if the minister has given any thought to actually leaving the old bridge in place for the time being just to ensure that the movement isn't, in fact, significant enough to cause problems.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: This might be the briefest response we will get this afternoon, but yes.

Sorry, the question was whether there was consideration for maintaining the old bridge in place, and the answer is yes, to make sure that — as I indicated in my previous response, we will want to ensure that the work continues to meet the highest safety standards, and so, in that respect, yes. I will receive advice from the department with respect to the bridge, but if it's deemed that the old bridge ought to remain in place for slightly longer than was previously planned, I will certainly receive that advice and direction from the professionals and engineers who are overseeing this project.

Mr. Hassard: I know that the contractor who is going to be removing the old bridge intends to be here the first week of August to begin that work, so I'm wondering if the minister has a timeline on when the decision will be made to move forward with that demolition or to hold off.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The plan is to proceed with the demolition of the old bridge upon the satisfactory completion of the new bridge. HPW will monitor the situation throughout the summer and make a decision as required.

Mr. Hassard: The question was: What was the timeline on that?

Obviously, there are people relying on work in the community who want to know when they can anticipate this work moving forward or this work being stopped.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am advised that the schedule for completion of the bridge is still on schedule and HPW will continue to work with and engage the community with scheduled updates as they become available. The current timeline is to demolish the old bridge upon completion of the new one. HPW does plan to complete — or Graham, with HPW as the owner, plans to complete the new bridge by the fall 2025. I am advised that the project is currently on track, but certainly, I have heard the member opposite's concerns.

Mr. Hassard: Another question that I have regarding the Nisutlin Bay bridge project is the rip-rap that the minister talked about earlier. My understanding is that Graham will no longer be accessing rip-rap from the pit at the top of the hill just south of the Nisutlin Bay bridge and now may be hauling it from Whitehorse. I am wondering if the minister can confirm this for me and explain to me why they would haul that rock 115 miles rather than two miles.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: If I could just have clarification from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. I understand the current source, but I am just wondering — I didn't quite catch where he was asking the secondary source might be — just for my benefit and also the benefit of the persons here who might be assisting me with the answers.

Mr. Hassard: That was Whitehorse.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Madam Chair, I am advised that HPW is in discussion with the contractor and that, at this point, no decision has been made on the sourcing of the rip-rap yet, but HPW is looking at the best available option for the project requirements.

Mr. Hassard: I am wondering if the minister could provide us with any reasoning as to why it wouldn't be sourced where the rest of it has been, or is there something wrong with the material? Are they out of room? Is there no material left?

There has to be a reason that they would explore going elsewhere.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will endeavour to get that answer to the member opposite while I am on my feet. I know that the team will be working to get that information to me.

Briefly, for Yukoners listening at home with respect to the Nisutlin Bay bridge, approximately 3,500 cubic metres of concrete is being used for the bridge. That is nearly 1.5 Olympic-sized swimming pools. Material for the new bridge includes concrete for the piers and decks, steel for the girders and structural components, and wood for temporary structures, like the temporary bridge deck. There are 52 girders in total, making the bridge very strong and stable. They are made from weathering steel, which develops a rust-like appearance after exposure to protect against corrosion.

As I indicated previously, the new bridge has six piers and two abutments. Piers support the middle sections of the bridge and are in the water, while abutments connect the bridge to the land. The piers each contain around 410 cubic metres of

concrete and 71 tonnes of steel. Each abutment has about 235 cubic metres of concrete and 22 tonnes of steel.

Briefly, the project is in its third year, and the Teslin Tlingit Council continues to work with the Yukon government to make improvements to the implementation of the Yukon First Nation procurement policy to help meet its original intent.

The Government of Yukon is grateful to Teslin Tlingit Council for their ongoing participation in the implementation of the Nisutlin Bay bridge project. We continue to look at continuous improvement and incorporating the lessons learned from all projects into recommendations to strengthen the policy moving forward.

With respect to the rip-rap, I'm still looking for an answer to the member opposite's question, which I believe is: Why is there consideration being made to source the rip-rap elsewhere? I don't have that answer quite yet.

Madam Chair, I'm advised that there are very limited sources of aggregate in the Yukon that meet the requirements, which is why aggregate from the Whitehorse area is at least being considered for this specific portion of the project, which I'm advised equates to less than 2.5 percent of the aggregate needed. To this point, the rip-rap has been sourced from the 1238 pit.

I believe I have notes on this about the rip-rap. Just briefly, this project will use approximately 100,000 cubic metres of aggregate for the various components. This does not include asphalt. All the granular material for the roadwork is locally sourced so far. However, the Nisutlin Bay bridge project will require approximately 2,400 cubic metres of coarse aggregate for the cast-in-place concrete being used. The small amount of coarse aggregate for concrete work will likely come from Whitehorse. The aggregate being used in this concrete has specific requirements to ensure the structural integrity of the bridge, and as I indicated previously, there are very limited sources of aggregate in the Yukon that meet this requirement, which is why aggregate from the Whitehorse area will be used for that specific portion of the project, which equates, as I indicated, to less than 2.5 percent of the aggregate needed.

I'll see if I have anything further here.

The most up-to-date request to change the source of rip-rap was made by the contractor, and HPW is currently reviewing that request in order to ensure that it meets our standards for quality and delivers value for money.

Mr. Hassard: The part that I'm not understanding from the minister is that the aggregate was sourced there up until a couple of days ago, and now it seems to have suddenly stopped. So, I'm curious as to why they would consider making a change. There has to be a reason. We know, you know, how many places that it's available in the Yukon — all of that — but it was used from there, sourced from there, and suddenly stopped. I'm curious as to why it suddenly stopped. Is the pit depleted? There has to be a reason that they stopped.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I certainly appreciate the query.

The most up-to-date information that I have from the team — the Highways and Public Works team — is that this was a recent request from the contractor and that HPW is looking into

the request. So, there will be — at least for me or for my deputy minister, there will be greater clarity soon.

Mr. Hassard: Can the minister tell us why — what the reasoning was for the request from the contractor? Is the material — did they feel that the material is not suitable enough or not suitable for what they're doing or what the reason is for that request? The reason that I ask is it just — and I know that the minister says that it's, you know, 2.5 percent of the material and on and on, and that's really irrelevant, but we're talking about the opportunity to haul material for two kilometres.

Whether it's one dump truck load or 100 dump truck loads, if you can haul it two kilometres as opposed to 170 kilometres — I mean, whether you're talking about the cost, the environmental impacts — I would hope that you would need a very good reason to make this change, so I am curious as to what is precipitating this request.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I think I will probably be aggressively agreeing with the member opposite as to some of what he put forward. If there is suitable rip-rap or suitable aggregate that is available two kilometres from the new Nisutlin Bay bridge, of course, it will be preferable to access from that source.

I would anticipate that it would be significantly more expensive. There will be significantly higher — a lot higher — greenhouse gas emissions and additional costs, so, yes, I absolutely agree with the member opposite on this topic. I will be briefed on this and then we will make that determination, but I don't disagree with the member opposite that there will have to be a fairly compelling reason to haul from Whitehorse to Teslin versus hauling from — I believe the member opposite indicated approximately two kilometres, and I guess I have been to one of the sites before — two kilometres away from the new Nisutlin Bay bridge. There will obviously have to be a compelling reason to make that alternate decision. The engineers and the professionals who do this for a living — including, of course, Graham Infrastructure LP — will have those conversations. The reason will have to be compelling, because it doesn't make a great deal of sense to transport the aggregate from Whitehorse, all factors being equal.

Mr. Hassard: I was still hoping that the minister would provide the rationale that — I would have assumed — would have come with the request to move out of that pit.

At any rate, we will move on. I have a question for the minister regarding — I guess we will call it the "failed" quarry out by Ten Mile Creek where the road was cleared, the pit was cleared, and then it has been abandoned. I am curious if the minister can provide the House with an update as to what Highways and Public Works intends to do with that area now. Is it completely abandoned and done forever, or do they still anticipate attempting to build a road into that area? What are we looking at in the future?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. The Ten Mile pit, located at kilometre 1258 of the Alaska Highway near Teslin, was initially developed to supply granular material for the project as outlined in the construction contract. Following extensive testing, it was determined that the granular material for the project would

instead be sourced from pits located at kilometres 1184 and 1238. The Ten Mile pit remains a valuable resource, with its materials earmarked for use in other Yukon government projects or construction activities in the region.

Additionally, 50 percent of the Ten Mile pit has been allocated to the Teslin Tlingit Council, which will oversee the development and management of their portion of the pit. Negotiations regarding the gravel reserve at kilometre 1258 with the Teslin Tlingit Council were paused temporarily but resumed in January 2025. These renewed discussions reflect the cooperative approach to ensuring the best use of this resource while strengthening relationships and fostering opportunities for local development.

It appears that Ten Mile does have utility as it pertains to the area for various construction projects, and as I have indicated in my response, discussions are ongoing with the Teslin Tlingit Council.

Mr. Hassard: Can the minister provide the community with some information as to who will be in charge of building the road to that pit and when can we anticipate that work being done?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Negotiations are underway with the Teslin Tlingit Council with respect to this area, and once negotiations are complete, we will be able to provide a schedule. Highways and Public Works will continue to work collaboratively with the Teslin Tlingit Council to ensure that we meet all commitments under our government-to-government agreements.

Mr. Hassard: I guess we're not going to get an answer to that one either.

A couple of questions regarding the Teslin River bridge. We see in the five-year capital plan that in 2025-26, there is \$4 million to \$5 million; in 2026-27, there is \$6 million to \$7 million. It just says "bridge rehabilitation", so I'm wondering if the minister could provide us with a little bit of detail as to what type of rehabilitation we are talking about. Are we talking about redoing the bridge deck again? Are we talking about the rehabilitation of piers? What is kind of the general scope of work that's anticipated for this \$10 million to \$12 million?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Teslin River bridge, located at Johnsons Crossing at kilometre 1296 of the Alaska Highway in the Yukon, was completed in 1944. The bridge was and still is a critical piece of transportation infrastructure in the region. Over the bridge's 81-year history, multiple rehabilitation projects have occurred, with the most recent project taking place in 2018 and 2019.

In the summer of 2024, a consultant engineer conducted a full inspection of the bridge, including an underwater inspection of the piers. Based on the consultant engineer's recommendations, the Yukon government will be prioritizing concrete repairs on two of the bridge piers. The bridge continues to be safe for the travelling public, and weight or speed limitations are not required at this time. Work is underway to complete the repair design plans and to fulfill regulatory requirements.

Ongoing discussions are taking place with the Teslin Tlingit Council about the project and will continue to occur as the repair design plans are finalized and the permitting processes unfold.

Since the rehabilitation work on the Teslin River bridge in 2020, Highways and Public Works has performed regular inspections of the bridge piers to monitor known concrete damage on two of the piers. Based on the progression of the concrete damage and the need to ensure that the bridge remains a safe and resilient structure, repairs to the piers are planned to begin as soon as regulatory permitting is complete. The repair procedure is designed to minimize impacts to fish and water quality. A constructability expert is also providing input to ensure that the design is practical for the contractor who will ultimately be performing the repairs.

Just with respect to fish and possibly chinook salmon, the Teslin River acts as the migration route for chinook salmon returning to the Nisutlin and Wolf rivers and their tributaries. Staff are reviewing methods of isolating the piers for repairs that don't require disturbing the riverbed. As the repair design advances, a YESAB submission will take place this spring along with applications for any relevant permits.

An information session will also be hosted in the community to talk about the project.

We have allocated approximately \$4.4 million in 2025-26 in the event that construction work can be advanced this construction season after the design and regulatory processes are complete. As the member did indicate, in 2005, the bridge's roadbed was replaced and widened. At the same time, other structural improvements were made to help to strengthen the bridge.

Just a final fun fact: The bridge was built during World War II and is the only original public roads administration bridge that is still in use on the Alaska Highway.

So, yes, work is required, and it is with respect to two of the piers.

Mr. Hassard: I'm wondering if the minister could provide us with some information regarding the Teslin school. I know that we have talked a couple of times in the Legislature this session about a letter that was written from the mayor, so I'm just wondering if the minister could provide us with an update on the status of the Teslin school — where we're at, how much money they anticipate spending on it.

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

I have some information with respect to the Khàtinas.àxh Teslin school, and I apologize if it's not quite — the pronunciation is not quite there — and I will see whether there is any late-breaking information in light of the questions that the member opposite has asked the Minister of Education during the course of the Spring Sitting.

Highways and Public Works leases the Khàtinas.àxh Community School from the Teslin Tlingit Council and are currently working to finalize an upcoming five-year lease, as the current one-year lease expires this summer.

HPW works with the Teslin Tlingit Council to identify maintenance issues with the school and address them as quickly

as practicable, recognizing that the health, safety, and well-being of students and staff is a top priority. A roof and siding assessment report was completed in 2023, and planning efforts are underway for remediation.

The school is heated by a combination of biomass and an oil-burning system. Highways and Public Works has been working throughout the winter on converting the heat distribution within the school to provide steady levels of heat to the building occupants.

We are now in the process of upgrading the air handling units throughout the school to provide more consistency throughout the building. I would also note that, a few summers ago, I had the honour and privilege of attending the community of Teslin, which I have attended a fair number of times during my time in this seat. We entered into a heat-purchase agreement with the Teslin Tlingit Council for their biomass system. We had a very instructive tour of the biomass system around the Teslin school, which I gather is a district heating system for a number of buildings — certainly, that was impressive.

Highways and Public Works representatives and representatives of the Teslin Tlingit Council meet biweekly with the intent to finalize lease negotiations and address any ongoing maintenance priorities. Officials also started meeting biweekly in January of 2025 to discuss maintenance of the biomass system. Let's see if I have anything further here.

As part of the renewed lease agreement, Highways and Public Works and the Teslin Tlingit Council have collaboratively developed a comprehensive maintenance plan and schedule to ensure the long-term upkeep and sustainability of the facility, as I have indicated.

I will see whether there is anything further, anything late-breaking, with respect to the school.

I know that the Khàtinas.àxh Community School is also a priority of the Minister of Education, and I certainly look forward to travelling to Teslin in the spring and summer of this year to speak with both the Village of Teslin and the Teslin Tlingit Council with respect to this issue and other issues which, of course, will be of interest to their community.

I think we are getting close to the end of the day. This might be my last opportunity to be on my feet with respect to either Highways and Public Works or Environment in Committee of the Whole. I just wanted to thank members opposite for their insightful questions over the course of the last four years — the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, the Member for Whitehorse Centre, and the Member for Kluane — as we come close to the end of this Spring Sitting, which is likely the final Sitting of the 35th Legislature. I just wanted to put that on the record.

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

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale North that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled April 29, 2025:

35-1-200

Report on Subsistence, Travel & Accommodations of Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly 2024-2025
(Speaker Harper)

35-1-201

Twentieth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees
(April 29, 2025) (Clarke, N.)