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HANSARD

Wednesday, March 30, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 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 — Emily Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

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Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
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Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
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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
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, March 30, 2022 — 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 Order Paper. Motion No. 358, notice of which was given yesterday by the Member for Porter Creek North, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as the action requested has been completed in whole or in part; and Motion No. 359, notice of which was given yesterday by the Member for Lake Laberge, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as it is out of order.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In honour of the tribute to Canadian and Yukon soccer, I would like to welcome to the gallery Fabian Glyka, president of the Yukon Soccer Association; Cindi Cowie, who founded the Haines Junction football club 14 years ago; and Carly Carruthers, who is a coach with Special Olympics Yukon.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would also like to ask the Assembly to welcome some individuals who are here today for our tribute to the Yukon Heritage Awards, both organizers and recipients. With us today is Sally Robinson, who is the president of the Yukon Historical and Museums Association; Cathy Hines, who is also a member and was there to help and organize last night; Janna Swales, who is an award recipient; and Anne Morgan, who is an award recipient and also previously an award recipient — I think that it was her second award from the organization last night. So, let's give them a warm welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Canadian soccer

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to pay tribute to the accomplishments of Canadian soccer over the past year. On August 6, 2021, many Yukoners woke in the early hours of the morning to see Julia Grosso's winning penalty kick in the Olympic gold medal match for the women's national team. It felt like a culmination of decades of potential.

This past weekend, the Canadian men's soccer team proved that we are not finished making our mark on the game,

as Canada clinched its first berth in the FIFA World Cup since 1986. It was as uniquely a Canadian success story as anyone could have dreamed. It included star player Alphonso Davies, a former refugee whose family made their home in Edmonton, and Stephen Eustáquio, who was born in the tomato capital of Canada but raised in Portugal and chose to represent his birth country as the midfield maestro. Of course, we have manager John Herdman, who led our women's team from 2011 to 2018 and embodies the fact that these achievements in Canadian men's soccer stand on the shoulders of the groundbreaking efforts made by the women.

The squad represents the new Canada that we all strive for — diverse, multicultural, representing all corners of our country together. It is truly a moment that all Canadians can be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, none of it would have been possible without the most important figures in Canadian soccer over the past decades, local organizers, coaches, fans, youth, and children. This is a hockey country — just, perhaps — but more Canadians play soccer in Canada than any other sport.

Canadian organizers and coaches volunteer time, and many operate on shoestring budgets with facilities that pale in comparison to our competition, yet they persevere and, in doing so, provide the platform for new generations to take our nation to the next level.

Here in the Yukon, we have our own stories emerging, with Yukoner Joe Hanson making his professional debut last week for Whitecaps FC2 and Yukoner soccer player Christine Moser, who was also just inducted into the Lethbridge Sports Hall of Fame.

We are home to a thriving soccer community that I am proud to be part of. I would like to recognize Fabian Glyka, president of the Yukon Soccer Association, along with Executive Director Andrea Fischer. Cindi Cowie, who I mentioned previously, founded the Haines Junction football club 14 years ago and is still a director and coach. Carly Carruthers and Ken and Jodi Binns give their time and energy to coach soccer with Special Olympics Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed in any way to these achievements. I and the entire Assembly, I am sure, look forward to cheering on our World Cup team with my fellow Yukoners later this year, watching Canada's soccer story unfold on the biggest stage of all.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to recognize the historic achievement of Canada's men's national soccer team qualifying for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

Canada last qualified for the World Cup in 1986 — the lone time we appeared in the prestigious world competition. The women's national team has, of course, achieved international success led by the legendary Christine Sinclair. But large participation numbers in boys' youth soccer across Canada has never translated to success at the higher levels, much to the frustration and consternation of Canada's soccer community.

So, for long-suffering Canadian soccer fans and the dedicated national fan club, The Voyageurs, World Cup qualification has been a long time coming. Canada's men's soccer roster now boasts international stars like 2020 Lionel Conacher Award and Champions League winner Alphonso Davies or Lille striker Johnathan David, who is expected to transfer to a famous club this summer.

It's also worth recognizing team captain 39-year-old Atiba Hutchinson, who has been balancing a European club career and national team appearances since 2003. Nearing 100 appearances for the national team, Atiba's appearance in the World Cup in the twilight of his career will be a well-deserved moment.

Canada's rise hasn't been limited to on the pitch. The success of the program coincides with the rise of former Canada hockey president Victor Montagliani, who ensured that both national teams were better funded. Victor left to take on the presidency of CONCACAF in 2016 and also sits as vice-president of the FIFA Council, both firsts for a Canadian. His review of World Cup qualifying in CONCACAF revised the format to be more competitive and no recognition of this achievement is complete without a nod to the coach, John Herdman. Herdman was recruited to coach the Canada women's national team in 2011, but in 2018, he made a surprising jump to the men's national team where he has shared a vision and brought pride to the players wearing the uniform. Herdman boldly declared to the Canadian soccer community that no one should be content with automatic qualification for the 2026 World Cup that Canada will jointly host with USA and Mexico.

Qatar 2022 was the target. Herdman and his players have delivered on that bold vision. This Friday, FIFA will draw the groups for the World Cup and real predictions will begin to be made on Canada's chances, but they have captured the imagination of a nation by qualifying.

We join Yukoners who are looking forward to watching the Canadian men's national team in November and December this year at the World Cup. Congratulations to the entire team.

Applause

Ms. White: On behalf of the Yukon NDP, I would like to congratulate the Canadian men's national soccer team on their qualification for the FIFA World Cup which was confirmed in a 4-0 win over Jamaica in Toronto on Sunday.

While the men's national team has a long way to go in trying to emulate the achievements of Canada's women's soccer program, this is a historic moment nonetheless. Until now, the Canadian men's team has only ever qualified for the World Cup once, and that was way back in 1986. This year, with a team that reflects the many strengths of Canada's diversity, the Canadian men's national team captured our imaginations with huge performances and unprecedented results. Not only has the team qualified for the World Cup, it is also likely to finish on top of the North American qualification table for the first time ever. Players like Alphonso Davies, Jonathan David, and Milan Borjan have become national

heroes and international stars, and we look forward to watching them compete at the World Cup this winter.

The Yukon has a proud and passionate soccer community, one that has seen great results in the development of more and more players finding success outside the territory in recent years.

The Yukon under-15 boys' soccer team secured a historic seventh-place finish at the 2018 national championships, and there are numerous young Yukon players at university level across Canada. In early March of this year, Joe Hanson of Whitehorse even became the first Yukoner to become a professional soccer player when he signed a contract with major league soccer's Vancouver Whitecaps FC2.

Soccer in Canada and the Yukon is getting stronger every day, and we hope that this result for the Canadian men's national team and the ongoing successes of Canada's women's soccer program will inspire even more young Yukoners to embrace the beautiful game and grow soccer in the Yukon for years to come.

Applause

In recognition of 2021 Heritage Award recipients

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 2021 Heritage Award recipients. Each year, the Yukon Historical and Museums Association presents heritage awards to recognize the individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to conserving and celebrating the Yukon's heritage.

Preserving our multi-faceted heritage is a significant and vital pursuit. This year's recipients are exceptional and exemplary in their enthusiasm, dedication, and passion to preserve, interpret, and protect Yukon's heritage legacies. The Annual Heritage Award was awarded posthumously to Art Johns in honour of his contributions and depth of knowledge of the geography and resources of the Carcross/Tagish traditional territory. He provided immeasurable assistance to the Yukon archaeological and historic sites programs and was an active participant in heritage planning and management.

The History Makers Award was presented to Bruce Mitford and Beth Hunt for their care and efforts to preserve, manage, and interpret the Lansing Post historic site. Since 1979, they have been diligent stewards of maintaining the historic cabins, tending the gardens, and welcoming visitors to the site.

The Helen Couch Volunteer of the Year Award went to Kaitlin Normandin for her dedication to the sector and her volunteer efforts on a number of boards and heritage committees, including the Yukon Historical and Museums Association, the Yukon Council of Archives, Hidden Histories Society of Yukon, and the Association of Canadian Archivists.

The Innovation, Education, and Community Engagement Award was presented to the Yukon Transportation Museum and Janna Swales for the project *Yukon Spin*. This was a popular pandemic-inspired digital wellness activity that combined the history of Yukon biking, home-based exercise, and interactive digital tourism.

And finally, the Heritage Conservation Project of the Year Award went to Jamie Toole and Anne Morgan for their conservation of the *MV Sibilla*. The *MV Sibilla* is one of the few largely intact British Yukon Navigation Company vessels still in the Yukon. The rehabilitated boat can now be viewed in Carcross.

The work accomplished by the award recipients is so important, and I thank each of you for your contributions. Because of your efforts, the Yukon is a richer place today and for future generations.

I would like to thank the board and staff of the Yukon Historical and Museums Association who continue to provide leadership in heritage programming and collaborative opportunities for Yukon museums and the cultural sector.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 38th annual Yukon Heritage Awards — five awards to seven dedicated community members and one organization for their efforts in preserving and sharing Yukon heritage.

On March 29, 2022, an in-person ceremony at the Beringia Interpretive Centre, as well as an online option, was held. The late Art Johns was awarded the Annual Heritage Award for his assistance to the Yukon archaeology and historic sites program. He loved to share his knowledge of the Carcross/Tagish traditional area, artifacts, and any discovery of historical value.

The History Makers Award to Bruce Mitford and Beth Hunt — having trapped and lived at the Lansing Post historic site near Mayo since 1979, they help take care of and maintain the site. With approval from Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, they have proven to be diligent stewards, helped with the management plan process, and now are duly recognized for their work.

Kaitlin Normandin was awarded the Helen Couch Volunteer award for her tireless work with the Yukon Historical and Museums Association. She also volunteers for other relevant boards and committees and, since 2021, is the secretary of the Association of Canadian Archivists. Kaitlin has an impressive CV. She has a master of museums studies and — a new one to me — a master of information.

Janna Swales and the Yukon Transportation Museum — the Innovation, Education, and Community Engagement Award for *Yukon Spin*. Janna recorded personal bike rides — 45-minute videos for at-home use. Realizing an opportunity for the unique revenue stream for the museum due to the pandemic slowdown, she took next steps, producing six videos from her recordings. With a timer, elevation and route maps, as well as Yukon historical facts, it recreates a journey and provides exercise — an awesome initiative.

The Heritage Conservation Project of the Year Award went to Jamie Toole and Anne Morgan for their conservation efforts of the *MV Sibilla* in Carcross, a great addition to Yukon's navigation history, as they ensured moving the vessel would keep the heritage character and preserve it for public viewing.

The Yukon has an incredible history and we say keep up the good work, Yukon Historical and Museums Association.

To all the award recipients, we are proud to honour you today. Thank you for all you do to make us understand the importance of doing something now to preserve and to those innovators who explore new ways to share what we do know. Congratulations.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the eight Yukoners and organizations honoured with one of 2021's five Yukon Heritage awards.

My colleagues have spoken about the award winners and I want to add our appreciation. In their work, we see creativity and adaptation to a new and challenging time. We honour lifetimes of dedication and the kind of knowledge that can only come from years of lived experience. We value the commitment of the behind-the-scenes work. Most of all, we celebrate people with a deep love for the stories of their home and the passion for sharing them. Thank you for bringing us these stories in all their forms. The Yukon is a richer place for your work.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have for tabling a CHON FM report affirming the conservative Yukon Party leader's support for confidence and supply agreements, including rent controls, greenhouse gas reductions, and safe injection sites — support at odds with that of Conservative leader Candice Bergen.

Mr. Kent: I have for tabling a report of the Task Force on School Bus Safety, dated February 2020, and its title is: *Strengthening School Bus Safety in Canada*.

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Kent: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to consider adding the following safety features to school buses, as identified in the 2020 Canadian Task Force Report on School Bus Safety:

- (1) infraction cameras to help prevent dangerous incidents caused by passing motorists;
- (2) extended stop arms to further deter motorists from passing while children are entering or leaving the bus;
- (3) exterior 360-degree cameras as a means of better detecting and protecting children and other vulnerable road users around the exterior of the bus; and
- (4) automatic emergency braking to help reduce the severity of a collision, or avoid it entirely, with consideration

given to exploring ways to pair this feature with other technologies for increased safety.

Ms. Clarke: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Child Development Centre to find a location that will accommodate all of their staff and programming in a single space and begin planning for a permanent space for them to occupy over the long term.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to work with cybersecurity experts and the federal government to immediately assess the vulnerability of our critical infrastructure, including our health care sector and electricity grid, and take the necessary steps to protect it from potential cyber attacks by Russia and others.

Mr. Istchenko: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Village of Haines Junction on options for a new pool in Haines Junction.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to dedicate a portion of the 2022-23 capital budget for upgrades to the north Alaska Highway.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that the pool in Beaver Creek is opened this year.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide a timeline and the mechanism to subsidize fertility treatments and fertility treatment-related travel for all Yukoners.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

COVID-19 testing at border crossings

Hon. Mr. Pillai: A few short weeks ago, the COVID-19 health measures in place at our borders were threatening to cause substantial delays for international visitors entering the Yukon this summer. The situation was particularly acute at the busy Fraser, BC port of entry, where large numbers of cruise ship passengers are processed while on their way to land excursions in the Yukon. The expected delays were so substantial that our tour operators felt that many Yukon excursions would have to be cancelled.

Two weeks ago, I spoke to this House about the matter of COVID-19 testing requirements at Yukon border crossings. Testing hundreds of cruise ship passengers in Skagway each

morning before crossing at Fraser was simply not realistic. Through a full-court-press approach of advocacy with the federal government, the pre-entry test requirement was dropped. Today, I have further updates.

I can now confirm that the random COVID-19 arrival testing will not be conducted at any of the Yukon's land borders or airports.

The COVID-19 arrival testing also threatened to cause delays that would have disrupted Yukon excursions. While certainly an important tool in monitoring COVID-19, random testing is only helpful in defining epidemiological trends with a significant sample size, and the traffic through the Yukon's points of entry falls well short of those thresholds. Additionally, I can also confirm that the pre-screening declarations filed by cruise ship passengers using the ArriveCAN app will be honoured throughout their journey, meaning that they will not have to be checked again at any of Yukon's borders.

Streamlining tourist arrivals is big news and a relief, as the Yukon tourism sector begins to once again welcome visitors from around the world to enjoy our territory. This is good news for our neighbours in Alaska, who we have missed seeing and hosting.

In making this announcement today, I want to thank our partners in the border working group, the Canada Border Services Agency, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, the White Pass & Yukon Route, Holland America, and the Borough of Skagway. I also want to thank Yukon's Member of Parliament, Dr. Brendan Hanley, for his expertise and dedication in advocating for the Yukon at the federal level, and federal Minister Jean-Yves Duclos for making this exception for the Yukon possible.

With these and other recent announcements regarding the international flights and border staffing, Yukon's tourism industry is set to rebound in the 2022 season. Our government looks forward to continuing success working with our partners to see our tourism businesses thriving, our economy continuing to grow, and showing the world what a spectacular destination the Yukon is.

Ms. Van Bibber: It goes without saying that the Yukon's tourism industry relies on visitors from outside the territory and from around the world. The more visitors, the better chance tourism operators are able to meet their bottom line. I am biased when I say that we certainly have the most beautiful area in all of Canada to feature for tourists.

Tourism, after all, is the Yukon's second largest industry besides mining. That is why I was pleased to sign a joint letter earlier this month, along with the Minister of Tourism and Culture and the Third Party critic, affirming our support for measures that would support this industry and attract more visitors to our area.

One of the measures outlined in the letter included border control. The letter called for the removal of testing for international air and land arrivals. I'm very pleased to hear from the minister today that random testing will not be conducted at any land borders or airports.

I'm also pleased to see the process streamlined for travellers once they are in the territory in that their pre-screening declarations filed by cruise ship passengers using the ArriveCAN app will be honoured throughout their journey. They can relax and enjoy their journey, knowing that the only way they will have to be tested is if they are showing symptoms.

Can the minister provide clarity of the ArriveCAN app and if Yukoners will need to use it for trips to Alaska, for example, during a day trip to Skagway? As well, there's the matter of one famous but uncontrolled border crossing between Alaska and the Yukon. There have been some questions about the use of the Chilkoot Trail this summer.

Declarations need to be vetted and processed by, or at, the official ports of entry, so that limits hikers to the Canadian side or the American side only. Can the minister tell us if he is working to also lift the requirement for the Chilkoot Trail so that hikers will be able to hike the entirety of the trail?

I'm also wondering if the minister can outline what will happen regarding testing for the Klondike Road Relay. Organizers could use help to help ensure that the event gets back to running the full course from Skagway to Whitehorse. I know that Yukoners and Alaskans look forward to this race. I would appreciate the update from the minister, and I am also very much hopeful that the Yukon will have a very successful tourism season.

Ms. White: I know that I'm not the only person who has missed our neighbours and friends in Skagway and Haines these last two years. The requirement to get a COVID test before coming back to Canada has been a barrier for many. Last weekend, I, like many other folks, was up in the Fraser Pass enjoying the mountains, and I was sad that, at the end of the day, I couldn't just zip down to Skagway to hug friends and support some of the businesses that I love so much down there, but starting on April 1, we'll be able to head down for a day, no problem.

This change at the border has far greater implications than just allowing Yukoners the ability to head to Alaska for an adventure. Coupled with today's announcement of removing even more barriers, Yukon's hospitality industry can hopefully breathe a sigh of relief. Skagway is expecting over 800,000 visitors this summer, and having a fraction of them visit the Yukon will be of huge benefit to local tourism businesses and Yukon's economy — or at least we hope it will.

One thing that we've heard over and over is that businesses in Carcross feel like the Department of Tourism is leaving them behind. The average turnaround time for cruise ship passengers in downtown Carcross is just 15 minutes — just enough time to line up for the bathrooms, take a picture, and get back on their way, leaving Carcross with few of the benefits and all of the cleanup.

In 2020, the Department of Economic Development announced that they would be giving money for tourism advertising in hopes to bring more visitors to the territory. A chunk of that money went to the White Pass & Yukon Route — in other words, Holland America. If the Yukon government is paying Holland America for advertising, could they not

negotiate longer stops at the Carcross train station to benefit all Carcross businesses?

As excited as all are to finally go to Alaska or to see our local hospitalities benefit, many are wondering: Where do we draw the line? We are by no means out of this pandemic, and the fact that the Yukon government has decided to stop testing doesn't mean that it's over. Now, with almost one million visitors expected to be getting off the boats in Skagway, how will we be monitoring the spread of COVID across our borders? From what the minister is saying, we just won't.

Although we're all excited to see the tourism industry breathe a sigh of relief with the reopening of our borders, the government needs to make sure that it's not a short-lived good news story. Folks are nervous and looking for direction.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'll start with some of the questions from the Official Opposition — actually, I will start by saying thank you to the members opposite. We work collectively, and I think that, in my opening statement when I said “for Carcross”, it really was this Assembly coming together in penning a letter, and we probably should be coming together more to do this. Certainly, I think it was an effective tool for us to work together.

I also think it's really important to touch on the fact that the border working group — we had a border working group that was in place, and these were key individuals who worked to come up with solutions. It was chaired by Denny Kobayashi from the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, who pulled it together; Blake Rogers, executive director of TIAY; Tourism Yukon was there; Sarah Marsh from the Department of Tourism and Culture for Yukon government; our Assistant Deputy Minister of Tourism and Culture, Jonathan Parker; Tyler Rose, who is with White Pass team; Denise McHale and Dale Colbran, both with Caribou Crossing; and Sharon Spicer and Mike Hardie with the Canada Border Services Agency; as well as Deputy Minister Justin Ferbey; Kari Erickson from Holland America; Kim Stavert, who is an advisor in my office; Jen Gehmair, who is with IGR here in the Executive Council Office; and Robert Furlong and Cathy Stannard from the Health and Social Services department at Yukon government, as well Robert Morgenstern.

So, all of those individuals came together and every two weeks were making sure that they could come up with solutions — again, Brendan Hanley, having his expertise and speaking with his colleagues and helping them understand the uniqueness of the Yukon and where to really be focused on — when you look at the epidemiological data collection versus what was happening in the Yukon, that was key. He needs to be commended because it was tireless work.

I will get back to you on the Chilkoot Trail to find out what the situation is this summer. My understanding, as well, for all of us, is that there are definitely some fish that are not safe in Haines. I think we have all been tied up for two years, and certainly we want to get there. But I can get back to the House. My understanding is that we will have to use our ArriveCAN pass, but let me get back. So, I certainly will get back to you on those two items.

I think, with the conversation and the questions concerning Carcross, I did speak with a local area governance team, with the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes in the last month, I believe — maybe a little bit longer — and they voiced their concern with me. There are millions and millions of dollars that are spent in Carcross, and I think it's important to say that. Although we can maybe see more impact there, there are some businesses that do have thousands of people who stay there and stay there for longer than 15 minutes. It is depending on the private sector and how they define the product that they want to have within their journey and visit. But I take the member opposite — we want to make sure that we get as much money spent in the Yukon — whether it's in Carcross, Dawson City, Whitehorse, or any of our communities. Certainly, I am always game to push those items.

We know that the situation is not over when it comes to COVID-19. We all have to be aware of this. I think we all are probably aware of events that have taken place in the last couple of weeks where COVID-19 has certainly spread quickly, whether that be at cultural or recreational events. So, yes, we all should stay very focused. At the same time, we want to use the best measures and the best energy and effectiveness when we are pulling data together. We don't believe that random testing at that border is key — also understanding that the cruise ship lines are second to none when they are monitoring this — and vigilant and monitoring this. Kudos to the tourism industry.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Yukon Fish and Game Association funding

Mr. Dixon: Many Yukoners in the hunting and angling community had hoped that the new minister in his portfolio might bring about a change from the fractious relationship the former minister had created. Instead, we unfortunately see more of the same. This minister has been quick to shut down hunting opportunities but slow to actually consult with those affected. He has been quick to toss out the decades-old process of outfitter quotas but slow to actually let outfitters know what this is going to mean for their season this year, let alone next year. And let's not forget the symbolic gesture that this government gave the hunting community when they cut the funding to the Yukon Fish and Game Association by a quarter.

So, perhaps the minister can start by explaining that decision. Why, in a \$2-billion budget, did the government think that it was necessary to cut the budget of the YFGA by \$20,000, other than to send an anti-hunting message to this community?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Actually, I have good news with respect to this specific question, but in any event, the Government of Yukon has a working relationship with the Yukon Fish and Game Association. Staff at the Department of Environment are in regular contact with the organization's leadership. The Yukon Fish and Game Association is an important partner in educating hunters and anglers and participates in fish and wildlife planning and other related meetings important to wildlife management.

We continue to support the association's operations through an annual funding agreement. While the annual budget for this agreement remains unchanged at \$60,000, the department is working with the association on an additional \$10,000, based upon a work plan, for a total of \$70,000 in funding for 2022-23.

We certainly recognize that the Yukon Fish and Game Association represents — I think that it is close to 2,000 persons, perhaps even more. I have met with the Yukon Fish and Game Association and will meet with them again. We certainly recognize and value the great work that they do.

Mr. Dixon: I would note for the minister that it still represents a cut in their funding two years ago.

Another reason that the hunting community has been concerned with this government's approach has been their singular focus on limiting opportunities for licensed hunters. They have refused to step back and take a more holistic approach to this issue, and it is not just me saying this, Mr. Speaker. Here is what the Fish and Wildlife Management Board said in their letter to the minister — and I quote: "Many First Nations and Renewable Resources Councils have expressed serious concerns over the continued 'whack-a-mole' approach and urge the government to look at moose management from a broader perspective."

So, will the minister take a step back, stop fighting with the hunting community, and take this advice from the Fish and Wildlife Management Board?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have no intention of fighting with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, but in any event, as we know, moose is the most harvested species by Yukon hunters and is an important species culturally.

In some areas, the combined licensed and subsistence harvest of moose is at, or above, sustainable levels, particularly in areas that are easy to access. Starting in the 2022 hunting season, moose hunting will change in three moose management units, as indicated.

When determining a sustainable harvest amount for a particular moose management unit, we use assigned space guidelines for the management of moose in the Yukon with other moose population information that is available. We combine information gathered from harvesters, First Nations, and community partners that results from our targeted scientific studies so that management decisions are informed with the best and most currently available data.

In 2021, the Department of Environment conducted four moose surveys for the lower Stewart River, the Teslin River, Sifton-Miners Range, and the Whitehorse south area, including Fish Lake, Wheaton River, and Mount Lorne. We are currently analyzing the data from these surveys, and preliminary results from the Sifton-Miners survey indicates the population is at risk of being overharvested there.

Mr. Dixon: One of the most notable aspects of the last regulation change was the considerable interest raised in the hunting community. The public consultations that began in December 2019 were packed, night in and night out. Many people remarked that this was the most fired up anyone had seen the hunting community in years. Unfortunately, the

consultations were cut short due to the emergence of the pandemic.

When the board made their recommendations regarding the South Canol permit hunt, they advised the minister to defer this proposal until the next regulation change cycle. This would, in their words, provide adequate time for the government to conduct consultations with First Nations, boards, councils, associations, outfitters, and the general public. The last minister rejected that recommendation, but this minister can correct that mistake.

Will he agree to defer these regulation changes until the next cycle to allow for proper consultation to occur?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As I have said in previous responses, I will always be guided by the best information that I receive from the dedicated wildlife biologists at the Department of Environment.

We have invested over \$700,000 in aerial surveys this year and we will do so again. The total amount to be invested in all surveys in general is similar from one year to the next, but it's about \$1.2 million for this fiscal year and \$1.3 million for the upcoming fiscal year that we're just about to enter.

There is obviously an abundance of moose in the territory, but there are problems with respect to abundance in areas that are easily accessible by road. So, I'm taking the best information that I am receiving from the professionals at the Department of Environment and we will govern ourselves.

You cannot have conservation and abundance at the same time in some areas. I will be guided by those opinions and I have every intention of continuing to engage with all interested stakeholders.

Question re: Contract procurement

Mr. Hassard: The previous Minister of Highways and Public Works introduced a change to the way that bids are opened and released in the procurement process. Previously, the practice was to publicly open the bids and post the bid prices on the government's website immediately after. This was open, transparent, and accountable. Under the new process, bids are opened behind closed doors and the prices are not released immediately. In some cases, the release of prices can take weeks and bidders are left hanging.

When we asked about this last year, the current minister seemed to not understand the issue, so I'll give him another chance. Will the current minister undo the change the former minister made regarding the opening of bids and posting of bid prices?

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

The Yukon government posts construction tender bid prices as quickly as possible. Once a tender closes, the department reviews for compliance, confirms that the project can proceed within the budget, and then posts the bid. This usually takes between four to five days. When there is a delay, it is often because bids come in overbudget and it is necessary to determine if additional project funding would still represent value for the money.

Highways and Public Works ensures consistency and integrity of the procurement process by reviewing all public tenders for compliance before sharing bid prices. This protects the supplier pricing and ensures effective competition. If the tender is cancelled and the bid prices have not been posted, the Yukon government can retender as needed. If a tender must be cancelled and the bid prices have already been posted, the government cannot retender the same project with the same scope right away. Doing so would undermine competition, as bidders would know what the low price to beat was in the retender.

Mr. Hassard: Last year in the leaders' debate on the economy hosted by the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, a question from the Yukon Contractors Association was put to the leaders. In what appeared to be a foreshadowing of the current leadership struggles of the Premier, the former Deputy Premier attended the leadership debate for the Liberals. In response to that question, the former Deputy Premier said that it seemed like a good idea and committed his party to act on it.

Why did the former Deputy Premier make this commitment if the Liberals had no intention of acting on it? Will the current Minister of Highways and Public Works agree to reverse this decision and go back to the more open and transparent policy of public bid opening and posting of bid prices online?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As indicated in my prior response, the posting of construction tender bids is being provided as quickly as possible, with the usual turnaround date of four or five days. That is responsive.

In relation to the fantastic projects that we are going to get out the door this summer, we have \$15 million that has been earmarked for the 10-unit mixed-use housing in Old Crow. We have \$26 million in lot development. There will be an additional \$27 million for the fantastic work that is being done on Yukon Dempster redundancy. I had the honour to attend with my team at Highways and Public Works on the Dempster Highway in September of last year and saw the work that was being done. It is certainly a technological marvel. I look forward to going up again and seeing the progress that has been made.

We have \$10.8 million that has been allocated to Resource Gateway projects, primarily the Carmacks bypass for this year. We are also providing \$71.6 million for repairs and improvements to bridges and highways. It is a busy, exciting year.

Mr. Hassard: So, no answer as to why the former Deputy Premier made this commitment.

The fact remains that the government has changed its practice when it comes to opening the bids of tenders and posting of prices. That change has made the process less open, less transparent, and less accountable. We have heard from several businesses that would like to see the policy change back so that bidders on government work aren't left waiting for days and sometimes weeks to hear whether or not they were successful on a bid.

Will the minister agree to reverse this policy change that the former minister made and actually live up to the

commitment made by the former Deputy Premier at the leaders' debate last year?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I would just briefly reiterate my response. My first response was that my information is that those bid prices are being provided as quickly as possible and that the general turnaround time is four or five days. I can certainly meet with the member opposite if he has some constructive solutions as to how this system can be improved.

So, once again, in this budget, we are providing \$25.2 million for the construction of the new Whistle Bend school. We are providing \$2.2 million for digital learning technologies and infrastructure to help students thrive. We are providing \$1 million to continue work on the new school in Burwash Landing. There are exciting projects pursuant to the northern trade corridors fund so that the rebuild of the Alaska Highway is going from a tier 1 BST to tier 3 BST in a lot of areas, providing better load capacity for trucks so that they can run in certain parts of the north Klondike Highway with fuller loads, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions because of the need for fewer loads.

It's an exciting time in the territory this summer.

Question re: Species at risk

Ms. Tredger: Keeping with tradition, it's another Sitting and another question about the non-existent species at risk legislation in the Yukon.

From the Yukon Party to the Liberal government, over the years, lots of promises have been made, but nothing has been done. The Yukon still does not have species at risk legislation, and Yukoners want to know why.

The minister will probably hide behind the federal legislation, so let's be clear: Canada's species at risk legislation only covers federally regulated land in the Yukon, which represents about eight percent of the territory; the 92 percent left is up to this government.

What will it take for the Minister of Environment to bring forward species at risk legislation?

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

Most other jurisdictions have specific tools to list and conserve species at risk. Such legislative tools are also a priority for the Government of Yukon.

With foresight and planning, the Yukon has an opportunity to benefit from the hard lessons learned in other parts of Canada and the world and to prevent the endangerment of species, such as woodland caribou and grizzly bears, as our territory makes decisions about how to further develop our infrastructure and economy.

A timeline to complete a new legislative framework for species at risk depends on several factors, including determining how the new legislation would interact with existing federal and territorial laws and requirements. Completion will also require time and effort from our many partners. Respecting the current need to focus on more immediate priorities, we will continue to enhance our

knowledge and research so that we are ready when our partners are to develop this new legislation.

Ms. Tredger: Every time the government has been asked, we have been told that they are taking this issue very seriously. To quote a previous Minister of Environment, who is now the Leader of the Yukon Party — quote: "... we are looking to our partners and our neighbours who have legislation and examining what experiences they have had before we proceed with our own." And, to quote the current Minister of Environment both from the last time I asked and today — quote: "Most other jurisdictions have legislative tools to list and conserve species at risk."

It's like they are trading speaking notes from one bad government to the next. In the meantime, one thing is certain: Our species at risk are still unprotected. When will this government bring forward species at risk legislation?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We continue to work collaboratively with our partners in the territory, including First Nations, Inuvialuit, wildlife management boards and councils, interest groups, and other government orders on species at risk. The member opposite will know that the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) — that we are in the process of confirming their management plan for the eastern side of the North Slope. The western side of the North Slope is already substantially protected by the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, so a large swath of the northern territory is very much substantially protected. I thank the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) for their dedicated work, including Lindsay Staples, who was their chair for 33 years. So, that is certainly a success story.

Our efforts to ensure that species such as wood bison, woodland caribou, and grizzly bears continue to have viable populations in the Yukon are guided by management plans that the Government of Yukon developed with First Nations, Inuvialuit, the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope), as I indicated, and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board.

Ms. Tredger: The minister seems to be saying that it is not that easy to do, and of course it's not, but 26 years in the making is ridiculous. The last real glimmer of hope that Yukoners had about a species at risk legislation was in 2019, when this minister's predecessor said that the legislation was underway. Since then, it has been radio silence. Nobody knows where that draft legislation is, if it even exists, what negotiations with First Nation governments are underway, and what consultation with partners and experts is being done. It is like the government doesn't want Yukoners to know that they are not doing anything but at the same time doesn't care quite enough to actually do something either.

So, I will ask again: Where is Yukon-specific species at risk legislation and when will Yukoners finally see it?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: With respect to Yukon-specific animals, Yukon South Beringia is home to many rare, unique, and at-risk species found only in this region, including plants known nowhere else in the world and wide-ranging species at risk, such as caribou, grizzly bears, and wolverines. Currently, 43 species listed as being at risk under the federal *Species at*

Risk Act exist in the Yukon and another 10 species have been recommended for listing.

Species assessed and listed under the federal *Species at Risk Act* as threatened or endangered have legal protection and undergo mandatory recovery planning at the national level under the federal *Species at Risk Act*. The Government of Yukon receives funding from the federal government for species at risk research, monitoring, and stewardship, including \$343,000 for bats, bears, bison, caribou, and wolverine, and \$188,000 for boreal caribou. Much work has been done or is underway, but of course, conservation of these species requires an ongoing effort.

The Department of Environment has undertaken research and policy work, including a jurisdictional scan to review existing legislation, enforcement mechanisms, and management tools to address species at risk. This initial work has also included consideration that Canada and national conservation organizations may look to the Yukon to protect populations.

Question re: Whistle Bend school

Ms. Clarke: Salamat. As we have discussed several times, the Whistle Bend school is significantly overbudget and late. However, last year in their election platform, the Liberals promised to create a Whistle Bend school council by spring 2021. That promise is a year late. When will Whistle Bend get a school council?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. I'm always happy to rise in the House and speak about the important work that our government is doing. I am very proud that our government has made building schools a priority in our territory. We are building the first new Whitehorse elementary school in over 20 years in Whistle Bend. This will provide students a modern learning environment and support a thriving and growing community. We're very proud of this.

A school council and attendance area will be established for the new Whistle Bend elementary school in preparation for the May 2022 school council elections, and once established, they will participate in the selection process of a principal and exercise the other duties of a school council in guiding this school to become a reality.

We are very proud of this work and I want to thank all of the hard-working public servants who have worked hard on this. Again, I am very proud that we have \$25.2 million in this year's 2022-23 budget for the construction of this school. I am really looking forward to this new school council being established.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding

Ms. McLeod: Throughout COVID-19, Yukon municipalities assumed a number of significant roles and responsibilities to assist the territorial government in responding to the pandemic. These roles and responsibilities, along with public health restrictions, have had significant impacts on the bottom lines of municipalities. Through lost revenues, increased operational expenditures, and more, the

financial burden felt by municipalities was significant. In 2021, the federal government provided \$4.3 million to the municipalities through safe restart funding, but there has been no relief since that time.

Will the government agree to provide additional relief to all municipalities to assist with recovering from the pandemic?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to talk about the funding we are providing to municipalities across the territory as we move into a new era of the pandemic. The member opposite is absolutely right. Last year, the federal government and the territorial government contributed to provide kickstart funding for municipalities across the territory. I believe that the number was in the vicinity of \$4 million that we used to actually help our municipalities to come out of the pandemic. That money was very well-received. I do know that municipalities are asking for more funding. I actually had a meeting with the mayor this morning. We had a very fruitful meeting. I have been talking to mayors across the territory for the last several weeks.

I can say that the comprehensive municipal grant that we provide to municipalities was last reviewed in 2018 and resulted in changes to specific factors within the grant formula. These changes led to increased grant payments to municipalities each year since 2018. We are absolutely committed to making sure that our municipalities are whole and that they are doing well. We will continue to listen to and communicate with — talk with — our municipal leaders to make sure that they have the funds they need to run their municipalities. I will leave it there.

Ms. McLeod: The loss of revenue for municipalities could take many forms, including the loss of space rentals and the ability to conduct recreational programs; costs associated with starting up hockey or curling rinks only to have restrictions prevent their usage while still having to maintain the ice plants; or the loss of transit revenue — and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

If municipalities are unable to recoup some of these losses, they will be forced to raise property taxes or increase fees to prevent a shortfall. So, does the government think that it has already provided enough financial relief to municipalities or will it commit to provide additional funding to support those municipalities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said earlier, the comprehensive municipal grant is really the vehicle through which we fund our municipalities across the territory. It was reviewed in 2018. It has increased grant payments to municipalities in each year since 2018.

For 2020, Mr. Speaker, the comprehensive municipal grant totalled more than \$20 million in funding to Yukon municipal governments. At the request of the Association of Yukon Communities, Community Services is working on another review of the grant. The review, once completed, will provide guidance for the negotiation of a renewal of the comprehensive municipal grant for 2023 and beyond. I am continuing to talk with all of our municipal leaders to make sure that they have the funds they need to run their municipalities in a way that benefits all of their citizens.

These are Yukoners and they need to have the proper funding. I will say, Mr. Speaker, that this year, the amount of money we are investing in our Yukon communities is absolutely extraordinary. We are doing a 10-unit mixed-housing unit in Old Crow; we have a public works and fire hall building being built in Faro; we have Lapie River bridge replacement happening in Ross River; we have a fire hall being completed in Teslin; we have green energy retrofits in that community; in Watson Lake, we have the housing first project. There is so much work we're doing for municipalities, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to continue that work.

Question re: Whitehorse Emergency Shelter

Mr. Cathers: We continue to hear concerns from local businesses about the surge in criminal activity in the downtown core of Whitehorse. In particular, businesses in the area surrounding the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter have noticed an increase in crime since the government took control of the facility in 2019. Last year when we asked about the community safety plan for the facility, the minister said the government was exploring options to achieve the plan's goal of — quote: "Creating a safe and harmonious community for shelter clients, and neighbouring residents and businesses..."

However, we haven't seen any measures that do that actually taken by this government.

Can the minister tell us what actions the government has taken since last year to achieve the goal in their plan?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: All Yukoners deserve to live in communities that are safe. The Department of Justice is working with Yukon First Nation governments, federal and municipal governments, the RCMP, local organizations, and Yukon citizens to address crime in the territory through a balance of enforcement and prevention-based approaches.

Statistics Canada's annual national report on crime rates provides a valuable measure of trends in police-reported crime. The 2020 statistics show a slight decrease in the Yukon's overall crime rate, but increases in some offences related to drug trafficking, firearms, fraud, and aggravated assault and an increase in the youth crime severity index. This is well-known to the Department of Justice, as well as to the RCMP, which continues to work to ensure that there are adequate human resources and financial resources to respond to crime and public safety emergencies in all Yukon communities.

Increased visibility of police actions during the past year is in part due to the work of the RCMP's crime reduction unit, which I look forward to speaking of when I get on my feet again.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, talking points aren't action. The community safety plan released in 2020 highlights a number of the challenges. It says those include large and sometimes unruly gatherings outside the shelter, property damage, vandalism, theft, sexual acts, and littering within the shelter's proximity, as well as increases in openly shared public drinking and drug use, and the list goes on.

The feedback we've heard from neighbouring residents and businesses has been that nothing has changed since that report came out.

Will the minister agree that more needs to be done to achieve the goals in the shelter's 2020 community safety plan? Will the minister actually begin to take real action to address the commitments contained in this community safety plan?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think what is incredibly important is to speak about the services and the community that's provided by the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. Many of the individuals who spend time there or receive programming through that process do so because they have really no other place to go. We work extremely hard and the employees at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter have compassion and care for those individuals. They provide services for those individuals. They work to make sure that those individuals have housing and food and that they have programming and services that will ultimately serve them to have a better life — have a healthier life — and to deal with the trauma that is often part of the reason that they are spending time there or street-involved in the first place.

The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter provides an amazing service for our community. What I can remind the members opposite is that they planned to build the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter but had no operational maintenance funds in any budget to do any programming there. A building is not a place of safety and we have provided that.

Mr. Cathers: The government's own plan notes that the problem got worse after they took over the shelter in 2019. That plan also acknowledges that the change in policies at the shelter caused problems in the surrounding area, including property damage, public drinking and drug use, theft, and the list goes on.

The community safety plan includes a number of action items in response to the growing number of negative behaviours and incidents that resulted from the shift in programming introduced by the Liberals three years ago. Those include analyzing the potential of expanding Yukon government security services to include the shelter and exploring the feasibility of implementing a community program to provide a uniformed presence in and around the shelter. It is also clear that the RCMP need increased resources.

Can the minister tell us what actions, if any, have been completed from this plan? Will she acknowledge that the steps taken to date have been inadequate and that more action is needed?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is important for Yukoners to know, particularly those who live in and around the downtown area, that increased visibility of police actions during the past number of years is in part due to the RCMP's crime reduction unit, which responds to territorial policing priorities and targeted enforcement efforts to combat serious, drug-related, and organized crime. This is also an incredibly important piece of the substance use health emergency.

Our government recognizes that we must respond to crime in our territory not only through enforcement, but also through community-driven, prevention-focused initiatives to address underlying causes, and community safety planning is part of that system. Providing a compassionate place in downtown

Whitehorse for Yukoners to receive food, shelter, and programming is also a part of that plan.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 203: *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Yukon Housing Corporation

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Good afternoon, everyone.

As Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to outline the spending requested as part of the second supplementary estimates for 2021-22.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff and the board of directors at the Yukon Housing Corporation for their hard work and dedication. They are working hard to make more affordable housing options available for Yukoners while continuing to deliver innovative housing solutions.

Before I begin my address, I would also like to acknowledge the officials who will assist me today: Mary Cameron, president of Yukon Housing Corporation, I would like to state has worked tirelessly with her team over the last year that I've had the opportunity to work with her. I'm

honoured to be able to work with her. She is so, so professional and such a hard worker. And, as well, Marcel HolderRobinson, director of finance and risk management at the Yukon Housing Corporation.

We have asked a lot of our finance team. You will see now and — in the weeks to come, we will talk about the mains. You will notice that there is exceptional spending and a very robust budget. It's not easy to steer, but it has been steered so professionally. I thank them both for being here today.

Our supplementary estimates will provide Yukon Housing Corporation with an opportunity to be responsive and proactive to the emerging housing needs as we strive to find practical housing options. We know that healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities are a priority for this government, and this can only be achieved if Yukoners have homes that fit their needs, are affordable, suitable, and are adequate.

The budget continues to work toward these goals. However, we know that the continued pressures from the COVID-19 pandemic have increased challenges for housing in the Yukon. Lumber and construction costs have increased dramatically, not just in the Yukon, but across Canada. We also continue to experience the significant demand and competition for the labour force in the construction sector — a trend that we expect to continue for the near future.

This supplementary budget reflects our government's response to both our current challenges and how to address solutions that are tied to our key guiding housing strategies. The housing action plan for Yukon and the corporation's five-year strategic plan are bringing the future into focus.

On all fronts, we know that we have more to do as we work with our housing partners on stabilizing the affordable housing market. Although the housing landscape continues to change, we remain committed to fiscal responsibility, and we continue to adapt, mobilize, and find solutions to these fluctuations.

Like many jurisdictions across Canada, the Yukon is experiencing a high demand for housing. Most recently, we saw the Yukon's population increase over the last five years by over 12 percent — the highest growth rate across Canada. Although we can agree that this is great for economic development, it also comes with a need for housing. As such, we are also seeing increased demand for Yukon Housing Corporation's community housing stock, which continues to exceed the supply of our units. Our wait-list continues to grow. One of the ways that we are responding to these challenges is by working on the goals of Yukon Housing Corporation's strategic plan and supporting our housing program priorities, which has resulted in over 600 newly constructed affordable housing projects and initiatives. In addition to the corporation's strategic plan, our approach has further addressed the goals and objectives of the housing action plan for Yukon, the Safe at Home plan to end and prevent homelessness, the aging-in-place action plan, and the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report.

However, we know that this is but one of the housing activities in the territory, and that is not enough. If we are going to be successful in resolving housing issues, it will take all partners in the housing field to work together.

From the Housing Summit in October 2021, I can tell you that our housing sector partners are indeed working on responses to the need. From First Nation development corporations to the City of Whitehorse, private developers, and NGOs, we know that housing solutions are underway, and I look forward to our next discussions at the June 2022 housing connections summit.

As such, in our financial year 2021-22, the corporation balanced the need to address emerging priorities while also supporting existing and ongoing projects.

Our first pillar was “Housing with Services” of the housing action plan. A key example of this work of the Yukon Housing Corporation, in partnership with the Government of Canada and the City of Whitehorse, is to support the Safe at Home Society’s renovation of the High Country Inn to provide our territory with 55 supportive housing units. Located at 4051 4th Avenue, the project will receive \$10 million through the northern carve-out of the National Housing Co-Investment Fund and \$5 million under phase 2 of the federal government Rapid Housing Initiative. These two funding streams allowed for the acquisition and the coming renovation of the property into stable, secure, supportive housing for women, youth, and indigenous Yukoners who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

More specifically, Yukon Housing Corporation, with the City of Whitehorse’s endorsement, entered into an agreement with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to administer the Rapid Housing Initiative fund contribution for this project. This one-time payment of \$5 million to the Safe at Home Society is partial payment for the purchase of the High Country Inn and is fully recoverable from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation under Rapid Housing Initiative 2.0.

Second was rental housing. Under pillar 2, “Rental Housing” — in particular, non-market housing run by the Yukon Housing Corporation — the COVID-19 pandemic has posed significant challenges within the housing market. This is why the budget reflects a decrease of \$1.1 million under the northern carve-out. These funds have been moved to the next fiscal year to better manage the pandemic’s challenges, including increases in raw materials and labour availability.

Despite these challenges, Yukon Housing Corporation proceeded with the scoping and design of some community housing projects that are slated for construction in 2022-23. The associated scoping and design costs are managed within the existing 2021-22 budget as part of the government’s 25-percent contribution.

Our third pillar is “Home Ownership”. This is something we’ve discussed quite a bit here in the Assembly. We know that Yukoners are experiencing challenges in home ownership, and we recognize that housing affordability and availability are primary difficulties for many Yukoners seeking stable housing. Again, reflective of pillar 3, “Home Ownership”, of the housing action plan, this budget demonstrates an increase of \$300,000 to the rural home ownership program. It is the type of funding initiative that not only better aligns with the home ownership commitments in rural communities, but also allows Yukoners the ability to purchase or build their own home. Since 2020, the

rural home ownership program has successfully supported 18 Yukoners to realize their dreams of owning their own home.

Again, some milestones — we are also excited to share with you some of the significant achievements over the past year. Several of our Yukon Housing Corporation community housing projects under construction will be completed in 2022. This includes our project at 4th Avenue and Jeckell Street, Yukon Housing Corporation’s new 47-unit housing project at 4th Avenue and Jeckell Street that’s estimated for completion in late spring 2022. This addition of this multi-unit building to the corporation’s community housing stock supports the addition of a healthy and vibrant housing community in Whitehorse.

Also, three triplexes in Mayo, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse, which are partially funded by the federal Rapid Housing Initiative, are well on their way to be completed later this spring. These new builds will contribute nine units toward supporting affordable community housing options for Yukoners. Yukon Housing Corporation’s Housing First residence was a major change in the approach to housing for the Yukon and the north and successfully addressed a long-standing gap in our housing continuum. That is why I am pleased to share that we are embarking on the next Housing First project in the community of Watson Lake with construction beginning in the summer of 2022.

As well, we’re moving forward with data and analysis that the corporation uses for the community housing needs assessments to ensure that the housing solutions are relevant for each community while addressing the identified gaps that come from the individual community housing needs assessment. These assessments are a tool used to guide and identify housing priorities for the communities. The community housing needs assessments are the start of work with communities on housing solutions. From there, consultations with the communities through direct meetings and open houses will commence to review the next housing options that will be designed and built. The communities of Watson Lake, Teslin, Carcross, and Dawson City are each involved in the design stage of housing projects.

In November 2021, we launched the fifth intake of the housing initiatives fund. To date, through four successful intakes, the housing initiatives fund supports approximately 470 total housing units that are being built by First Nation governments, First Nation development corporations, developers, contractors, community organizations, NGOs, and the general public. I am pleased to report that the fifth intake of the housing initiatives fund received 29 project applications. This is just another example of the robust housing development year ahead of us. I commend the commitment from the community developers to work together to develop affordable housing for Yukoners.

In conclusion, the changes to our supplementary estimates have enabled the Yukon Housing Corporation to be innovative, resilient, and responsive to housing needs in the territory. Our people-centred approach to wellness helps Yukoners thrive, and we are committed to new initiatives that will help Yukoners find the housing support that they need. We will continue to provide housing options by building on our partnerships, by

exploring innovative approaches to help address housing supply solutions, and by making strategic investments for healthy, vibrant, and sustainable communities.

We would not have gone this far without the people behind the housing solutions for Yukoners. I would like to close by applauding all the housing development community partners for stepping up and delivering on housing solutions and to thank again the staff and the board of directors at the Yukon Housing Corporation for their hard work and dedication to making more affordable housing options available to Yukoners.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you to the officials who are here today. I have many, many questions, but I will save them for the mains.

Ms. White: Today I have a guest appearance in the housing file, which I am super excited about.

I am just following up to the reference that the 4th Avenue and Jeckell Street housing complex will be open in late spring 2022. Can the minister be a bit more specific? I think we're in the middle of spring, so are we talking about the end of April or are we talking about May? I would say that June becomes summer. So, if he can be a little bit more specific — and I won't hold him to it, but I'm just curious as to what "late spring" means.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just for the record, hold me to it on this answer or — okay.

So, we're looking at the end of June or mid-July — that is where we're at right now. Mid-July — probably having most folks in there. I think there are some discussions that have occurred around just ensuring that we support individuals when they move in. What we've seen to date, in any of our buildings, is to have a staggered approach so that you don't have a number of individuals all coming in at the exact same time.

Again, I can just touch on a little bit of information about that build out. It is 47 units in total, which we've talked about, and included are a mix of bachelor suites and one-, two-, and three-bedroom units supporting various household needs, including 10 units built for low-barrier and accessible housing.

Of course, this will require some operational changes including amending eligibility for the Yukon Housing Corporation units by adopting the affordable housing income limits. As previously stated, the broader tenant configuration will house Yukoners with low to moderate income together, while also ensuring that those who need supports receive them.

The 4th Avenue and Jeckell Street building will be the first to adopt this new mixed-income and mixed-use allocation model.

It will be used more broadly through other Yukon Housing Corporation buildings as units become available through time. The current buildings that generally house seniors will remain so for the time being. These changes come with the Yukon Housing Corporation staff's continued attention and commitment to safety and security for all tenants. This will be further supported through the existing and new partnership agreements that are required under the community housing framework.

I also want to thank the Leader of the Third Party for discussions and advice on some of these issues. We know that there have been some flags, because this is a bit of a new type of housing configuration and it is very diverse in the people who are going to make it their home. I think that one of the things that was shared with me — we have had some folks reach out to us and, as identified by the Leader of the Third Party, people who have good advice and have been around the housing continuum for a long time. So, we are contemplating any advice we are getting from community members. Again, because this is something that is innovative, we want to ensure that all individuals there are going to have a strong quality of life, that they are supported, and again, that their safety and happiness are paramount.

I look forward to further questions.

Ms. White: I am glad that I asked for clarification, because I would refer to mid-July as summer, so if I had been holding on for late spring and we rolled into July, I am not so sure how I would have responded. So, summertime — mid-summer, that will open. The minister just referenced that there are bachelor units, one-, two-, and three-bedroom units, and well as 10 low-barrier. Can he give me the breakdown of what those are? I'm just looking for the numbers of those units.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will get back to the member opposite with the exact breakdown on those units.

Ms. White: I thank the minister. Really, if he is able to send that to the critic for us, that would be great. I am sure that I will just look over her shoulder for it.

Something that happened was kind of — I don't want to say "emerging issue", because it wasn't emerging at all. But we saw a lot of seniors buildings, some in the downtown core and some not in the downtown core, dealing with vandalism and theft. The Housing Corporation — I'm grateful to say — started installing cameras. I know that there was a whole process of having to go and making sure that it was okay through information and privacy, but can the minister update us on that? Particularly, I took a fairly what I thought was a hilarious photo, when I was up at 600 College Drive, of a beautiful camera that had been newly installed covered in something that there's no way a camera lens could see out of. That's when I realized that, although there were cameras installed in the building, they were not yet operational.

Can the minister update us on that issue?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We're working with the Department of Highways and Public Works right now. The privacy policy is going to be submitted to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, for those who are listening. The member opposite, representing the constituents who live within that area at 600 College Drive — part of the — the thing that we have to be very cautious about is — we have our hardware and our infrastructure installed, but we have to be able to have that sign-off so that we're not collecting images of individuals without making sure that we're following the laws of Yukon.

I will say as well that there has been a lot of different scenarios that have occurred, both at 600 College Drive, which we have spoken about a bit, but also in the downtown core, where in some cases there has been some mischief around some

of the seniors buildings, but in other cases as well, which becomes difficult. You have tenants who are living in these units and are, in some cases, giving access to family members and those family members, at some times, don't always follow the rules the way they should and that has led to some challenges in some of our buildings.

What I can report to the Assembly is: In every one of those cases where there have been significant complaints, I have reached out and, in some cases, have spoken directly with either tenants or family members of those tenants. Part of what I want to be doing — we were kind of cautious because of where we were on COVID — is spending time as well in my role but going with our teams to make sure that we heard first-hand.

I think that's important that those tenants get a chance to speak directly to the individual responsible for the Housing Corporation. Certainly, that is going to be some of the outreach that we do, now that we're in a bit of a safer situation coming out of COVID and having the ability to bring people together.

So, once we hear from the privacy commissioner, we can report back. I think we're going through different timelines for all of our buildings. I don't believe they are all at exactly the same pace. It's something that I'm more than comfortable to report back to the Assembly.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that answer.

I honestly think that it's a good way. As an example, 600 College Drive, back in the day, had a camera above the door. It was the most watched television channel in that building. People always knew when I was coming, because they saw me come through the door. So, I understand the privacy issues.

I also know that there has been more than one Yukon Housing Corporation building that has had theft of government property — furniture, hardware — things that should not have been stolen from a building have been taken, and so I think this will just make people feel better.

Along the lines of that safety though is having a working buzzer system. I know, for example, that the buzzer at 600 College Drive is often down. So, what is the corporation's policy on repairing buzzer systems?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: That's pretty detailed. What I can say is that — and I think in the interaction that we've had where the Leader of the Third Party is advocating on behalf of constituents, we have been, within the Housing Corporation, extremely responsive just to be able to go. One of the things that we looked at was there were some concerns with a lack of lighting. I will commend the team — I think, within probably 24 hours, we were back and we had somebody on-site.

I wouldn't just narrow it down to the mechanisms for the buzzer. I think what we need to always be doing is ensuring that when clients reach out to us, whatever is happening — whether it's a buzzer, it's a lighting system, our camera system, or the garbage can has been taken or there is a challenge with some of the items that are normally shared-use within those facilities — that people reach out to us and that we respond efficiently.

It goes without saying, though, that over the last two years it was very difficult because we were balancing the safety, support, and comfort of our clients, but we were also ensuring that we followed the direction of the Public Service

Commission in how we deployed our staff. In many cases, of course, in the early stages, there was a lot of staff who were at home. They were isolated and working from home and that gave us a bit of challenge when normally we would have our folks out there quickly. We didn't have the same capacity that we normally did, and that is something that we all felt badly about, but at the same time, we were trying to balance the structure, rules, and policies that were in front of us.

With that, I am pleased — anytime members of the House do hear from clients about any sorts of challenges or gaps in the infrastructure that is surrounding them and that is affecting safety or quality of life, please reach out to us. I think that our team has been extremely, extremely responsive, and again, we are always going to ensure that we get out there as quickly as we can. I will say that, in some cases, it is important to understand that if it is a very technical fix or the capacity that is used — the technicians who are required — may just not be in Whitehorse. That sometimes brings other challenges. What I think about is not so much the buzzer system, but for anyone who has had to oversee buildings with elevators, that could be a real challenge, depending on who you source the elevator infrastructure from and who the technical supports are from — whether they are subcontracted here in the Yukon or you are looking to fly somebody in.

We do our very best at all times. We know that, especially in our seniors buildings, these are people who have contributed so much to the Yukon and we respect them immensely. We are always going to do our very best to look after their needs.

Ms. White: I do thank the minister for that. The reason why I bring up the actual door buzzers is that it is a concern — it is a safety concern — and it is not just — I am using 600 College Drive because I can speak very directly about it — but I can tell you that I attend seniors buildings in not just Whitehorse but outside of Whitehorse. The reason why the buzzers are so important is that if you have poor mobility and you live on the third floor at the end of a hallway and someone calls you and the buzzer doesn't work, that means you have to go from your apartment to the elevator, down the three floors to the front door to let your friend in — so it becomes a safety issue as well. Highlighting the buzzers — in the case of College Drive — it opened to Yukon Housing in 2007 — it is 15 years old. It was designed as athletes' housing for the Canada Winter Games.

In some cases, technology advances, and in some cases, it will just kaput. I could say that, in our recent tour of the new Challenge Cornerstone building, the buzzer system — the security system — is very cool. If that is the cutting edge of what it's going to look like, I guess I'm just urging that we look at that for safety purposes.

One other thing while I have you here is that when we talked about the reconfiguring of where the current Macaulay Lodge is — we've talked about how it's going to go out for that tender — I don't disagree with that at all, but I did have a really interesting conversation with a senior friend after that. The senior friend highlighted to me — he said that Yukon Housing still has an obligation to seniors, because a senior can't necessarily afford what median rent is these days, and they

don't necessarily have that option to move into private market rentals because they can't afford it. His concern was that, when we were talking about it: Well, what about seniors? He also had the question: How many seniors are we expecting to go into the new Jeckell building? The reason why he highlighted that is that, because of the Yukon Housing Corporation's 25 percent, it means that someone who is on a fixed income with maybe only one pension — the Canada pension, for example — is still able to afford to live, but if you had to pay private market rates, you couldn't.

So, his real encouragement for us was to make sure that we take into account seniors when we plan buildings in the future because his point, which is definitely reflective of my experience as a kid, is that grandparents didn't stay in the Yukon. They migrated south. We went to go visit our grandparents. Now grandparents live here, and in some cases, grandparents are moving here because this is where they want to be when they get older, which I really appreciate. He urged us to make sure that we consider seniors in our construction, our building, and our numbers.

The last question that I will ask — because that was a lot of talking without many questions — is: What is the current wait-list for seniors right now? Actually, what is the current wait-list, period?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will start with Macaulay Lodge — just that conversation. Our approach on that was that we wanted the most efficient approach. My sense and our team's sense — and what I've tried to share with everyone that I'm working with — is, of course, a real sense of urgency.

Understanding processes that would happen, we knew that Macaulay Lodge was in a position where there had to be a demolition. What we first contemplated was that, if we could actually look at demolition and have — either through partnership or the same entities, also be the developer. I guess the rub, you would say, was the fact that we knew there was a potential for some remediation that had to occur. We don't have a complete scope of what that is. I think it was a tank fill-up. It wasn't something that was too robust, but still, we knew that if somebody was going in post-demolition and then wanted to develop it, it could be really problematic if they couldn't pass their environmental one or if there was some liability to the lots. That is, of course, why we've gone with the approach that we have.

In our work at the Housing Corporation, our approach is that we're not vacating the field, I will say, when it comes to the complete continuum when it comes to aging in place and providing different opportunities. We have supported — and we've had a bit of dialogue — a private sector solution. I would say that if we had all the pieces together, right now, we would be also supporting the Vimy project. We have not stopped working. I haven't answered any questions in the Assembly about it. It has been brought up a couple of times just where it is. But we have continued to be right there with the Vimy team throughout their process. I think I can say that they are very close. We are continuously monitoring the resources that we have. I commend the stick-to-itiveness of Ranjit Sarin — and his leadership there — and others on that project. I think we're

going to continue to be looking at all kinds of different models. We understand that we need to be looking at a diverse set of options for individuals.

In many cases, we're getting our direction from seniors who are out there and who are coming to us, whether they are seniors who are comfortable with looking at a private option, seniors who are comfortable with looking at an option that has been provided by an NGO, or folks who are going to continue to want to come to us.

You touched on our wait-list. Our wait-list in December was 453, and for seniors it was under 200, but I want to be very open with the House: That has gone up. At times, we're at 475 people on our wait-list. We have had a very high wait-list, but I will also ask my colleagues in the House — because it makes for great questions at Question Period to sort of "I got you", but the reality is — what we're finding — a couple of things. Number one, my team and I are trying to monitor, with our data, how many people have just moved to the Yukon. You have to have a health care card in order to come to Yukon Housing Corporation and apply. As we have seen really dramatic growth in our population, and we have talked about this — I'm sure that folks might be getting tired of it and it might be a little redundant, but we're leading in the growth of states, provinces, and territories, really, in the G7, and that's significant.

We have seen cities grow faster than this territory, and the one city — if anybody listened to the news early this morning, they talked about what's happening in Halifax, this immense growth, and prices are really outpacing people's abilities.

Here in the Yukon, we have seen big growth. We have to be respectful of people's private information, but we're trying to see where the trends are. One of the trends that we are trying to keep a handle on is: How many people who have just moved to the Yukon in the last two years, for opportunity, are now coming to Yukon Housing Corporation first? How many people — and that's one of the things we're trying to extract.

The other thing that we're seeing — and this is more through our discussions with individuals. We're finding out that we have seniors who have housing, but they know that the housing wait-list is long, so pre-emptively — they might be seven years away from needing to access Yukon Housing Corporation — they are applying now. So, that is also exacerbating our numbers on our wait-list.

Thirdly, we have many individuals who are receiving our rental benefit — about 200 people. We've talked about that a bit. We're not at a wait-list, but it's 200 people, and we have a good portion of those individuals who have an appropriate spot to live. They may not have all the services and wraparound — and exactly the ecosystem that a senior wants — but they have a spot, and we're supplementing the rent with a benefit.

The list, just as a number, I don't think tells the complete story. When you're in a position of the level of growth that we've had, you're going to have these pressures, and from a national conversation on housing, we also know.

So, I think that's important to share with you, but I also want to be able to give you accurate information about the pressures that we are seeing. We've gone up on months and we continue to go down. What we're looking at is — I think the

key will be what happens in 2022. I'll be here to speak to this, and it's my responsibility to provide you with that information, but once we see Jeckell open and we see our continued work with Boreal Commons, which is very big, completing out our work with Da Daghay, what happens then to our list? That's really what's going to be interesting.

I think we've debated a little bit around our views on seniors housing. So, what does happen from a private position? Does it fill the need? That's what our view is, but that is going to be based on cost factors, which we've talked about.

So, I think in 2022 we're going to learn a lot. We're continuing to learn a lot. We're going to try new things.

When we get into the mains, we're going to discuss the housing trust and concepts like that where we can help people build equity in assets and then be able to transfer that while still keeping — transfer what they've earned, we'll say, or what they've saved in that relationship with that asset into something else, but yet continue to make sure that those houses through the trust are attainable. I commend the folks who are taking that on.

We'll have lots to talk about, but again, those are some of our thoughts, at least.

I think the crux of it is — I know I've expanded on what you were looking for — but I will say we still understand that there is a portion of our seniors who need us at the table with them.

Ms. White: Just for clarification, you need to be in the territory for three months to be able to get a Yukon health care card. Do you not need to live in the territory in the Yukon for 12 months before you can apply for Yukon housing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, it's one year, yes.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that clarification.

So, prior to the 2016 election where the minister joined this Assembly, what we saw was some really tragic situations happen where seniors were pressured to sell homes that they were in before they could apply to housing. What we saw then is we saw people who were safely housed become unsafely housed because they sold the only place they were at, because they were told that they needed to do that to get on the wait-list.

I appreciate that the minister said that in some cases people are seven years away from needing housing. I will say that in some cases they are seven years away from being able to get housing. I have to tell you, I encourage people to apply for that wait-list when they own a home that they can no longer care for and they need that. I know that they are safely housed, although they can't maintain it — if they sell that asset, what happens to them before they move? I am telling you right now, based on what I learned here when I first got elected, I encourage seniors not to sell homes until they are offered that unit. The reason I do that is because we can take people who are safely housed, they sell that asset, and then they become insecurely housed. That can be a tragic thing. I just wanted to put that out there. We may have a difference of opinion on that, but having supported people who have sold their house and then had nowhere to go, that was an awful time.

I want to say thank you for the opportunity today. A big thank you to the officials who are here. I always appreciate the

ability to have these conversations. Of course, I want to thank people at the Yukon Housing Corporation office. In my years, I have had a lot of support and have really seen people go above and beyond to support Yukoners in need, and I appreciate that.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would just like to clarify that I am not in disagreement with the member opposite on that topic of people holding on to their houses. Where I wanted to get to with our team and with the Assembly was that it always sounds very salacious when there's a number out there. There are always these interactions in the Assembly during Question Period where it's a big number. There is a big number, but I also want to disseminate that data and provide it to you. I want our team's feet to be held to the fire around our work ethic, our innovation, our ability to execute, our ability to listen to folks, and our ability to partner. Inevitably, I don't get to identify how we are graded, but I think that those are the things that we are really focused on.

I want to be able to provide you with the information as best as I can, because that is what we really have to do. The Leader of the Third Party has been a proponent focused on housing and making sure that people have had what they need, and when they haven't, she has gone out to fight for those things and for what they need.

I think that we are in agreement on a lot of these pieces, but again, those are the things that we are trying to do. We are also going out and trying to ensure that we have a broader sort of a macro view of what is going on in housing. So, we are cross-referencing building permits. We are looking at where new density is being done in each neighbourhood. We are really trying to get a broad scope and I think that this is something fairly new as a lens to look through what is going on in Yukon.

I have to say, the other thing, going from community to community or in Whitehorse, we have also offered is: Who wants to build housing with us? To date, I can say that we haven't turned folks down who want to work with us on building housing. Sometimes there are little hiccups where they want to build and maybe they don't own the land, and maybe we have to work through that or there is something within the scope and criteria from Canada that they have to meet, but I think that is rare.

I think that we will have a very robust conversation around housing when we get to the mains. Again, I thank the officials for all your work. I really, really appreciate it. We have asked a lot of the Yukon Housing Corporation and they have been meeting the challenge.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation?

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

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous

consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$4,200,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$4,200,000 agreed to

Yukon Housing Corporation agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Justice

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would very much like to have Members of the Legislative Assembly help me welcome John Phelps, Deputy Minister of Justice, and Luda Ayzenberg, who is the director of Finance, Systems, Administration and Records for the Department of Justice.

I'm pleased to present the Department of Justice Supplementary No. 2 for the 2021-22 fiscal year. This supplementary budget funds projects that are vital to the improvement of our justice system and the services it provides and continues the work that was presented in the 2021-22 main budget.

The Department of Justice has continued to work toward a justice system that is accessible and easier to navigate for Yukoners in a fiscally responsible manner, while also responding to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which have been significant.

Our objectives have remained clear, and we will continue to work with our partners to ensure that the justice system is administered effectively, supports Yukoners with quality community-minded programs and services, and finds ways to make our communities safer.

The supplementary budget operation and maintenance expenditures include the following: increases to judicial

compensation; funding for the justice partnership and innovation program; strengthening safety, access, and justice for Yukon victims of crime; funds for outside legal counsel; and RCMP wage increases and incremental funding requests.

Supplementary capital expenditures include funding for the new office and morgue for the coroner and strengthening safety, access, and justice for Yukon victims of crime.

The 2019 Judicial Compensation Commission, sometimes known as the "JCC", recommended increases to compensation for the Yukon's judiciary. Recommendations from the Judicial Compensation Commission concerning judicial remuneration are binding under section 17 of the *Territorial Court Act*. I should note that they apply to the territorial court judges.

The supplementary budget also contains a one-time increase of \$590,000 for outside legal counsel support. These funds are used to contract the services of outside counsel when needed. In addition, there is almost \$1 million in costs related to a document production for the *Mercer et al* case, filed in June of 2020, challenging the COVID public health measures.

The justice partnership and innovation program supports the modernization of the justice system, as well as effective responses to changes that affect Yukon and the Canadian justice policies.

The Government of Yukon has allocated a time-limited increase of \$150,000 to support the Community Wellness Court. This program is 100-percent recoverable from the Government of Canada. Additionally, our government has directed a time-limited increase toward strengthening safety, access, and justice for Yukon victims of crime. The time-limited increase to the operation and maintenance costs total \$625,000, a portion of which will go toward three full-time equivalent positions. Additionally, capital expenditures of \$60,000 will enhance testimonial aids for children, youth, and vulnerable victims and support the development of child-friendly and culturally safe interview and support spaces. This funding is fully recoverable from the Government of Canada.

The RCMP, which is contracted by the Government of Yukon to be our territorial police service, has finalized a collective bargaining agreement that included a 23.5-percent salary increase for RCMP regular members. To address the salary and benefits increase for RCMP M Division, regular members, and regular members serving in support of the First Nation and Inuit policing program, our government has directed an ongoing increase of just under \$1.9 million. Beyond this, the Government of Yukon has also directed an ongoing increase of just over \$1.1 million in incremental funding increases for the RCMP. This includes an ongoing \$1-million increase and a time-limited increase of \$105,000 for watercraft replacement.

Finally, I would like to make mention of an increase of \$70,000 for the design phase of the new morgue and coroner's office. Construction of this project is set to begin in 2023-24.

I would like to recognize the hard work of everyone who continues to ensure that the justice system is administered for the benefit of Yukoners and thank them for their dedication and compassion. Yukoners deserve a justice system that works for them, is responsive, and is fair. Department of Justice staff and

employees work every day to make this a reality. The extraordinary demands that have been put on staff during COVID-19 for the last two years, which potentially will continue, has been so demanding and required so much of them. At every turn, they have risen to the challenge. Yukoners cannot really thank them enough. Lots of this work will be unknown to them, but I have seen it every day for the last two years and want to take the opportunity to thank them truly for being so responsive and always keeping Yukoners at the centre of their work.

Our government continues to support good governance through relationship-building with our partners and we strive to provide culturally relevant services, foster safe communities, and encourage innovation.

I am very proud of the work of the Department of Justice and I'm proud to represent them here as best I can. I look forward to answering questions from the members opposite with respect to this supplementary budget.

Mr. Cathers: In the interest of expediting debate and moving on to the mains where we intend to ask more questions, I'll be saving my questions for Justice until that point.

Ms. White: I am delighted to be here in an area that is not typically my own.

The questions I have today on Justice really focus on the substance use health emergency and transition homes.

Background information — in 2009, I was the life skills coach at what was then the specific women's unit that is still on the correctional ground, which then became Takhini Haven — which, to the best of my knowledge, has been empty for more than two years. I appreciate that there has been the announcement that there will be a women's transition home and that it's going to go into that space, but why has there been a two-year gap of that building being empty without that being used?

Also, just as a reference, in my very first speech here in 2011, I focused on the importance of having a place for women to go when they leave corrections. That has been talked about at length in the last decade that I've been here. Why was that building empty for two years before this announcement was made?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. I will make reference to the building that is on the grounds of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre as "Takhini Haven". I think that we both know what we are speaking about there.

First of all, let me just say that this building, under the structure of the departments of the Government of Yukon, was a building that was assigned to Health and Social Services for the most part of the last few years. I can indicate that it was used for a mental wellness and substance use unit of the Department of Health and Social Services as offices for some period of that time. I don't have exact dates with respect to that, but it wasn't necessarily empty for two years. It certainly was used for part of that time.

It was transferred to the Department of Justice's responsibility in late 2021, understanding that we would be wanting to use it for supervised housing for justice-involved women. We will proceed to do that. I am very pleased to be

able to speak about the importance of this program. There were a number of program models considered. The goal was to determine gender-responsive, culturally appropriate, and trauma-informed services and supports for women who did not require high-security custodial care. Takhini Haven is somewhat ideal for that. There is still an element of custodial care, but the security, format, and layout of that system that is inside the Whitehorse Correctional Centre is not what is needed in this case. The goal was to determine supportive, safe, supervised community housing and the program has been developed to recognize the unique needs of women involved in the criminal justice system and will aim to support them as they transition from custody to the community, or provide for an alternative to custody, and support their participation when accessing services through Yukon's treatment courts.

Discussions with our partners, local stakeholders, and subject matter experts increased our understanding of how we can support the unique needs of justice-involved women in the territory. We will be providing supervised community housing for justice-involved women at Takhini Haven. I am just looking quickly to see if I have a date. Maybe the deputy minister can remind me of when we think that this is going to happen.

The other notation that I have, which I had forgotten to mention, is that when Takhini Haven was turned over to us, we knew that the plan was for this program to be run from that location. There were, and are, some renovations that are necessary for that space to make sure that it is meeting the needs of this program. The expectation is that it certainly will be in this calendar year, probably closer to the fall, but we are hoping for it to be sooner.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that. I guess the concern that I have with being told that it was used as office space is that we have been in a housing crisis since 2011 and it is five bedrooms. When I worked there, it was used as housing. So, it is mostly that if we talk about a one-government approach, that this has been critical, so much so that the John Howard Society has a transition home in E-block, which is now designated as not a part of the correctional facility, although it is still on the land and it is still in the building, so there is that aspect of it.

Just in reference to the men's transition home, is there any plan on finding a location that is removed from the correctional facility itself?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Certainly, conversations happened at tables that I was at with respect to that being designed for five bedrooms, or in that space, when I last toured what is known as Takhini Haven. It was a very long time ago and it was dormitory-style bedrooms — it wasn't separate bedrooms, so I am not sure of the actual design.

Of course, the difficulty with using it or assigning it for any kind of housing, other than this project — which is why it is ideal for this project — is that it is inside the grounds of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. So, a housing option is not appropriate or was deemed to be not appropriate even though there might have been five beds that could be there. That is why this program will be well-housed there.

I just wanted to make reference to the John Howard Society, because for more than 60 years, they have been called

the John Howard Society. They have recently changed their name to Connective — I think Pacific branch or Pacific unit of what was formerly the John Howard Society. That's not by way of correcting the member opposite, but there might be information or materials that would not necessarily compute, because certainly I have had trouble getting used to the new name, but they both have the contract for the men's facility, providing the same kinds of services.

I think it's important to remember that the services that are provided by the Connective with respect to supervising men who are community-housed and ultimately women, is that they're required to be there by court order. That's the security and the opportunity for them to receive the services there, including a number of programs that will increase life skills and coping and some mental health services. They have an opportunity to cook some of their own meals and to live in a community space, but to have individual spaces, which was never something that was available in what was formerly known as the "ARC housing", or the housing that was run by the —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you — by the services that were previously provided for there.

The incredible opportunity — some jurisdictions in this country don't have any of these types of programs. They provide such an important service for individuals who need some supervision, need some structure, need some skill development, but otherwise might be held in custody. Certainly, having worked in the criminal justice system, it was always a great option if somebody could go and reside at the supervised community housing and not be held in custody or get provided for a bail release to that type of opportunity.

We have never had those services for women. I am very excited that we will have them for women. There are no current plans to move the supervised community housing unit for men. It is operating quite well where it is. There has not been any impact on the community that we are aware of. We certainly worked very hard with the local community when the services were going to be housed there. There has not been an adverse effect on the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, and the program operators and those individuals who are availing themselves of those programs seem quite satisfied with the location. There is bus service; it is generally centrally located; individuals can come and go and yet still receive programming.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I agree that we need transitional services. I don't disagree at all. I guess one of the questions that I have — when you said "consultation with the community", as a representative of the community and a person who lives around the corner from it, there was never anything in my mailbox, and there was never anything in our community association. Maybe if the minister can expand on how that conversation happened with the community, it would be helpful.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will note that when the decision was made for this unit, which was not being used by the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, to be converted into the community housing for men, there were some renovations that

were going to occur, and ultimately it was done fairly quickly. Maybe Highways and Public Works would say quite quickly. I think we were certainly pushing for it to happen quickly.

The focused community outreach was to the college at the time — the university — and to Takhini Elementary School. We provided some tours to specific groups. I think Members of the Legislative Assembly were invited. I recall being there, I think, with a former representative for Whitehorse Centre.

The questions that arose, I think, were of concern, and rightly so, to the community. Ultimately, there was some comfort in the idea that there is an assessment component in the requirements for Connective to assess, not only their programming, but ultimately how it is operating in the community. What I can indicate is that with COVID, of course, there have been some data gathering and some assessment information that has been gathered by Connective, but we are going to emphasize that a full assessment needs to continue in, I don't know what — I certainly don't want to say "normal times", but maybe post-COVID crisis or COVID-focused time — to determine how the program has been operating. Are they providing the service that we have required of them? Are they providing the service to the men who live there? Are the men who live there achieving their goals in this transitional phase of their involvement with the criminal justice system?

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I did do a tour back in the day and I did know that they had reached out to the elementary school and, at the time, the college. But again, it's surrounded by a residential neighbourhood and there was no reach-out. I had made the suggestion at the time to the John Howard, and now Connective, that they do reach out to folks and to give a tour so that people could feel better. It never happened.

Hearing that there was community outreach leaves me questioning how and when, just because (a) I live in that community and (b) I represent that community and I haven't seen anything.

The one challenge, I guess, that I have — I spent two years working in corrections, and I did run a life skills program. I did run a cooking program. I think there were so many good things that were happening at the time for that women's unit, and there are so many good things that could have been built on it. Things change; the new facility opened and that program stopped. I was elected. I was never going to be a correctional officer because I'm not very good at punitive — I'm more of a cheerleader — so I was never going to transition over to that facility. But two years in corrections taught me a lot of things. It taught me how much better off people are when they have things to do and how much they are with programming, so all of those are really important aspects.

So, when I went up and did a tour of Connective — you know, the transitional housing — it was so starkly just like the other blocks in the building. I think it might be baby blue. Whatever colour it is, the point is that it is cinder block, it is tall, and it is echoey. I do appreciate that the renovation happened and that we took out the one-piece stainless steel toilets and sinks and put in ceramics — I think that is really important. There are still common showers — the showers are

on each floor in the corner — and there is no real privacy. But, more than that, what happens when someone leaves corrections and they are transitioning out is that they literally get walked out of one door — they carry their stuff in like a Tupperware container and they walk through a jail-height fence. It is not blocked — it is true that it is open — but it is a passage through jail fencing, and you leave behind your garden because you can't work the garden anymore because it is behind the fence, and you go toward a single-person entry door and you get left. The correctional officer brings you in, you get shown your room, you dump out your stuff, and then the correctional officer leaves with your container and there you are. You are in your new housing unit.

So, what I am asking is — when it was the Adult Resource Centre that was run by the Salvation Army, there was that space. I don't disagree; I don't think that it was in the best spot. You are talking about how accessible Takhini is for buses. I agree, but when we are talking about wanting to transition people back toward community and back toward those things, when you still live on the grounds of the correctional facility, you are still at jail. One of the criticisms that I had for such a long time about Takhini Haven as a group home is that, if you ask people at the group home where they lived, they said that they lived "at jail". It is still on the grounds of the correctional facility.

What I am asking — let's talk far in the future — is: Is there the hope or the expectation that we move that off? I understand that this is part of the requirement, and I think that it is really important that people have that option — to be able to be out on parole. That is really important, but it doesn't have to be on the correctional land to the best of my understanding. Is there a hope at one point of looking at more community integration? To be perfectly honest, it's near a community but it's not in the community.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I certainly appreciate the perspective of the member opposite with respect to this question. I did spend some time in the old Salvation Army house. It was known as "the ARC", which stood for Adult Resource Centre. I can say with my own experience, and certainly I'm not the expert in providing this kind of programming — but the current situation, I think, is far superior to that. We can recall that there was very little common space, and it was a crowded, small room with a couch and a television. There were no private rooms whatsoever available to individuals there. I don't think we need to get into a comparison of the two, but I think that, when we were faced with the idea that the location was going to close, our primary goal was to make sure that there was no disruption in the programming and no disruption in a place for individuals to go.

I can also indicate that Connective, the people who are contracted to provide this service — they are in fact the experts in providing this service. They have had 60 years of experience in all kinds of services and programs for individuals who are involved in the justice system and at various levels and parts of that justice system.

I appreciate more community integration. I will say this: I hope that there is never a period of time when we need that unit

at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre for the Correctional Centre, because frankly, the Correctional Centre is large. It is medium security but probably high security in many of the circumstances of individuals who spend time there.

Using a portion of that building for a progressive programming option for individuals who reside there — I appreciate that there is fencing — was not only a good decision, but it was one supported by Connective. Clearly, we will follow their lead if they are looking for something that is more community-integrated, but I can tell you that the long-term vision — and it may be past my days at this desk, though I hope not — is for the Whitehorse Correctional Centre to become more community-based in general and have other services provided for in that space and on that piece of land. I note, of course, as well that the youth facility is next door to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

It is all centrally located space and land that can be, and hopefully will be, developed to provide real, fair, just opportunities for not only reconciliation — the question mentioned the gardening options that are there — the outside space that has been developed, the central fire pit, and the four corners, four directions, that have been implemented there by First Nation inmates and supported by the directors of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. There is a lot of programming like the member opposite was involved in years ago, and it continues to this day because we completely understand the evolution of corrections. Certainly, in this territory, the evolution of corrections involves reconciliation and transitioning to home communities in a safe way where individuals who have spent time there are able to transition home and become contributing members to their communities.

Ms. White: Just as a point of clarification, I actually just reached out to my colleague, the former Member for Whitehorse Centre. She said that unfortunately, no — she was invited for a tour and she waited at the facility and no one was there. She wasn't actually able to tour that facility, which is unfortunate but may be better for those who would have given her a tour. I will let her know that I just said that in Hansard, but she will probably take a look anyway.

So, she did not get a chance to tour. I was the only one.

Again, I think when we talk about community integration — I look forward to seeing what that is.

Many, many years ago when we started, long before the new facility was built, there was a really groundbreaking report — the Beaton and Allen report. So, Chief Allen and Dr. Beaton wrote this report about justice and about reconciliation. The one thing they said is that there needed to be a sobering centre built in downtown Whitehorse. Unfortunately, what we got was an arrest processing unit and it's at the correctional facility.

Are there any plans to create an alternative to the arrest processing unit like the sobering space that was recommended by Chief Allen and Dr. Beaton?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think the member opposite is referring to a report that was done back in 2010 with respect to some recommendations. It made note, in particular, to the provision that's being mentioned here to a sort of a home, or a place, downtown where individuals who were intoxicated

could go to spend some time until they were not intoxicated or not of concern for their own safety and perhaps others.

I don't know that the processing unit that is currently at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre came as a result of that. I would have to do the research in the history, because I know that what we call "the APU" at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre came as a result of an inquest into a death of an individual when they were in RCMP cells. There were a number of things that happened, ultimately resulting in the current situation or the current services that are provided today.

But I think it's important to note that with *Putting People First* and the focus therein of providing the best possible services to Yukoners, including services that will improve their health — mental, physical, and otherwise — in conjunction with the declaration of a substance use health emergency — that all options are currently on the table for consideration. A number of partners have come forward — people who know me and the work that I do know that I often make reference to a spider web of solutions to any complex problem, because I think there are many, many, many. There is never just one solution and one solution wouldn't work anyway.

But we have seen the Kwanlin Dün First Nation speak about opening a residence for individuals who are struggling with alcohol and allowing them to reside there and hopefully change or improve their health as a result of that. I think that's an amazing idea. I know there have been discussions about a government running such a unit — those, as I've said, through the substance use health emergency work through the work with our communities across the territory. I think it is incredibly important that we rethink how we can deal with addictions, and alcohol and drug addictions, and that we must make progress in thinking of things in a different way for the purposes of meeting people where they are, providing the services that they need, and helping them get to a healthier lifestyle.

Ms. White: I do thank the minister for that.

The Beaton and Allen report is about acutely intoxicated individuals. It was after the Silverfox incident, I believe. But again, it was that there should be a sobering centre and not an arrest processing unit, and certainly not at the correctional facility.

One last thing before I end today: The minister referenced that there was an evaluation going on at Connective. One of the concerns that we had highlighted in previous Sittings was the fact that Connective is evaluating themselves. I just wanted to know if there is going to be independent evaluation criteria set for measuring the success of that program.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Certainly, Connective needs to collect data and evaluate its efforts, its programming — and in particular, their history is one of evolution and responding to people's needs. The John Howard Society had not operated here in the territory before that, although they have skills in smaller communities. We were wanting to make sure that they understood the Yukon way of life and Yukoners in particular.

Connective has gone — as I said, and this has likely been delayed because of COVID, but we will check in on the timing of this. Connective has also undertaken efforts beyond those of their own assessment and data collection. This is also required

by the transfer payment agreement or the contract that we have with them to establish an external review process, such as engaging Howard Sapers, the leading expert in corrections work here in Canada and an independent corrections expert. The discussions were that he would develop an evaluation framework for them. In addition to that, the information is that Connective hired three local independent reviewers to review program operations and to provide Connective with a written report.

Connective presented the findings and the recommendations from that evaluation on January 25, 2022 to officials from the Department of Justice, and the information has not yet been made public, because we have not yet had an opportunity to review it. I expect it to be satisfactory to meet the requirements of the transfer payment agreement, but because of the type of information they will have during COVID times, we will likely be extending that requirement. They will no doubt want continuing information as well. I should say that I don't know the full extent of Mr. Sapers' review, but we will look into that.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that. I guess one of the concerns is that — because now we are really talking about that facility — typically when you set up a program like that or you go into a contract, my guess is that you have criteria set out: This is the list of things that I need you to hit. My understanding is that Yukon government didn't have that full list of criteria set out when then-John Howard took on that responsibility — now Connective. So, I guess — and it is good to hear that Howard Sapers is doing some of that work, but how do we make sure then that the criteria that we need to be met is being met if we didn't set out the criteria ahead of time?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am not sure about the assumption that the government didn't have satisfactory criteria when this contract was made. The Government of Yukon was satisfied that the reporting requirements were built into the agreement and would provide the necessary oversight and information required to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Quarterly reports include the number of total residents admitted or discharged, the reason, and the length of the stay. It includes the programs that are offered and the number of Government of Yukon participants; the number of residents identified as meeting the criteria for a program or a group and attending the program or the group; the number of residents who start in comparison to the number of residents who complete a program or a group; a name and description of the cultural programs and the events that are offered during that period of time; the results of the resident satisfaction surveys; the actual staff complement in comparison to the staffing model that is employed by the recipient for the project — so, that is required; a list of emergency procedure drills that were completed; information about any inspection related to health, safety, building, or fire codes; the number of individual resident plans and discharge plans; the total number of failures to report or curfew violations that might occur; and the total number of misconduct reports, possession of contraband, or damage to property, as a list.

It will include all of those things but not be limited to those things in quarterly reports and ultimately, in the full evaluation,

as I noted, by the contractor themselves and then ultimately by an independent contractor — both a national expert in corrections as well as local independent reviewers who were asked to provide information and feedback.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice?

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

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$5,464,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$130,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$5,594,000 agreed to

Department of Justice agreed to

Deputy Chair: We will now return to Schedule A of Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any debate on Schedule A?

On Schedule A

Schedule A agreed to

On Schedule B

Schedule B agreed to

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Chair report Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 203: *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 203, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As I mentioned during the second reading, supplementary estimates like Bill No. 203 are great opportunities to take stock of the fiscal year and see how our commitments are benefiting Yukoners. These supplementary estimates showcase a Yukon government that is supporting Yukoners, all while improving on its forecasting and budgeting earlier on in the year.

With that, I will thank the Members of the Legislative Assembly who contributed and joined in the debate during the individual departments. With that, I will take my seat and go on to the vote.

Mr. Cathers: I will keep my comments at this stage brief. It should come as no surprise to the House that we will not be supporting this at third reading, since it is, of course, a confidence measure and we do not support or have confidence in the government.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's get to a vote.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are nine yeas, seven nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 203 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 203 has passed this House.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am pleased to rise today and to begin Committee of the Whole debate on the *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

As I spoke in second reading, Bill No. 204 focuses the government's spending to respond to the needs of the present, while also creating those strong conditions necessary for prosperity in the future. Our government is accomplishing this by investing in education, health care, social services, and also housing. We are investing in green energy and resilient infrastructure — all while producing a balanced budget.

Our 2022-23 budget, which includes \$1.97 billion in spending, has a record \$546.5 million in capital expenditures identified. This is a 26-percent increase from last year, nearly doubling the capital budget from just five years ago. Looking at the capital investments, along with our budget surplus of \$39.5 million, Yukoners can see how government is committed to building up the territory, all while showcasing our enduring commitment to responsible fiscal management, even in the face of COVID-19.

Our territory is in a strong position. Our economic support programs have been recognized as the best and most generous in the country. Our economy exceeded expectations throughout the pandemic and we had the strongest GDP growth in the country in 2020. We were one of only two jurisdictions in Canada to experience GDP growth at that time. We continue to have the lowest unemployment rate in the country, as we have had for much of the last few years.

This budget will make sure that all Yukoners benefit from the territory's historic economic growth. We are empowering the next generation by making lives more affordable for families and creating a resilient, diverse, and green economy that will contribute to health and to vibrant and sustainable communities across the territory. As I said in my initial budget remarks, the next chapter of the territory is one that ensures a prosperous future for Yukoners.

I will finish my comments here by again thanking all of the public servants throughout the government who worked so hard on Bill No. 204. I want to thank them for their professionalism and their resolve and, most importantly, for their commitment to the territory that everyone here calls home. I want to thank Deputy Minister Scott Thompson for his dedication and leadership in that pursuit as well.

With that, I welcome questions from my colleagues related to Bill No. 204.

Mr. Dixon: Given the rapidly declining number of days we have for debate, I look forward to asking questions in individual departments. As such, I won't have any questions in general debate.

Ms. White: Understanding that there are times when I have four-and-a-half minutes when we get to my departments, I actually do have questions in general debate today.

I am going to veer a bit. I was just looking at the Yukon Bureau of Statistics trying to find information, but I actually have questions about the makeup of the deputy ministers in comparison to the makeup of the territory. Again, I was just trying to find the statistics right now and didn't.

Let me start by saying this: This is not a criticism of any deputy minister. This is not a criticism, but when I look at it, there are currently nine men holding these positions and two women, right? Out of 11 deputy ministers — and I'm not talking about presidents of corporations, although I could add one more woman and two more men. I am talking about the makeup.

If we look at the makeup of this Chamber, for example, out of 19, seven of us identify as women. When you think about the population and you think that it's probably pretty close to 50:50. And so, I wanted to know — in consideration when the Premier and his ministers are going through and choosing deputy ministers — how can we have such a disparity between men and women?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would agree that, at the DM level, it is not a good balance and also not indicative of the balance from management to assistant deputy ministers as well.

It was interesting that we were just having this conversation with my chief of staff — who is a woman, for the record. When you look past — and I'll get these numbers for the member opposite. When you take a look at the ADM level, it's 46 percent female. When you take a look at management 2, it's 54 percent. When you look at management 3, it's almost 56 percent. Management 4 is 54 percent, and the list goes on from there. At management 5, it's underrepresented — it's 40.7 percent — but then at management 6, it's 72.7 percent.

So, I do agree that, at the deputy minister level, it is skewed to the side of more male representation, but that's not indicative of the trend of folks who are managing the departments from the ADM level through to the management levels as well. Those are good numbers there, but I completely agree with the member opposite.

Ms. White: Thank you, deputy minister. Deputy Chair — so many acronyms.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. White: It was just said that, if we add the Deputy Chair to the mix, then we would have one more.

I do appreciate that those numbers are so top of mind, and I do appreciate having this conversation.

That's good — those are good numbers. But again, when you look at the deputy minister level, that is the highest level in the public service. Those are people in charge of direction and taking the political direction and disseminating it. I just highlight that there is concern. I appreciate that the Premier echoed that, but I'm again highlighting my concern.

I guess the next question is: How does that get resolved? How does government address that? How does the Premier plan on addressing that? He recognizes that it's not ideal, so what are the next steps?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think that we look at things like the Pathways program, for example, making sure that we have upper mobility of folks who are willing to move up through that system. I think that we have proven that, like I said, at the managerial level and at the assistant deputy minister level. We always do strive at all of these levels to take into consideration making sure that we have a healthy balance. That's extremely important to us.

We do acknowledge that, right now at the DM level — it is not indicative of the leaders that are hopefully coming up through the system. As the member opposite knows as well, it's a big jump from going to management all the way to ADM. But then, going into that DM role, that's a whole other leap of faith as well because that, of course, is at the pleasure of the ministers and the Premier — at the pleasure of the Premier, as it's set out.

That's a hard leap for some folks to take. We would prefer having folks coming up through the system. I would say that we have a healthy balance of folks who have come up through the system. It has to be hard for folks who come up from down south or somewhere else and then come into a community and try to get caught up on how things are done in the Yukon — how First Nation governments work in the Yukon compared to nowhere else in Canada. There are a lot of really hard things to do to get caught up to those positions. If we could let the other person that's in this chair talk about his experience in that first year, it is like feeding from the fire hose. Luckily, there are some family connections for my partner that's here today with me at the deputy minister level.

But what I would notice as well is that it's important for us to see a good balance of local folks as well who come up through the government system, and there are huge benefits for that. I could talk about my chief of staff who came over from the Executive Council Office. What a huge opportunity for her to be in the seat that she's in right now, because, again, knowing how the Executive Council Office works, knowing the mechanisms of government, and really being a huge promoter of finding people inside of the public service in a balanced way to represent in higher positions — it is extremely important to have that type of leadership in our office as well.

It's a whole combination of things. It's gender balance; it's making sure that we do as much as we possibly can to instill in some folks that the upper mobility into that deputy minister position is something that we're looking for. I will say as well that we have had some folks who have been considered for some of these positions, and they've said back to us that they are not ready and haven't had enough experience in some of the core departments, and they want to then move through and kind of up their chops or their game.

I have to say that we do look internally as much as we possibly can, and I have been very happy with the results of that, for the most part, and happy with the honest dialogue of folks saying, "Maybe I am not ready right yet, but I might be willing to consider it later on." It is a tough job being a deputy minister — it really is — and we appreciate the work that they do. We do appreciate, as well, how willing folks are to move in a collaborative fashion, which may not have necessarily been the status quo in the past, but we have an awful lot of

interactions with just my two departments — of course, ECO, a central agency, but Finance really stepping up and allowing a lot more conversations to happen among government departments. That is extremely important to us as well.

I don't have one solid answer for the member opposite as far as what we are doing — as far as promoting a gender balance on those top positions — but I will say that we do have women in leadership programs. We also have, like I mentioned before, the Pathways program — and to take a look at the gender balance through those programs. I am happy with that, and I do know that we have three of our female deputy ministers who are working on mentoring as well — on the mentoring program.

We are doing what we can and are definitely trying to strive for gender balance — absolutely.

Ms. White: You know, I appreciate both the mention of the Pathways program and then the reference to leadership programs. I guess that one of the concerns I have is, knowing that we are where we are right now — is the Premier saying that there are not qualified women in the territory right now for those positions? He just shook his head — no.

I guess the question is that we have had two new positions put into Health and Social Services — two new deputy ministers there. We have seen some doubling up. We don't have a separate Minister of Tourism and Culture anymore. That was held by a woman previously, and now it is one of someone's three portfolios. There may not be an answer for it — and I appreciate it because we have had a good discussion about this — but I am highlighting this as a concern. I appreciate that it was echoed by the Premier. I was trying to decide where, in all those departments, I could have this conversation. I thought I was going to latch on to general debate. I am just happy to have that conversation and look forward to seeing some of those changes in leadership roles as opportunities arise.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, it is a great place to have this conversation. It is absolutely not because we don't have qualified folks. I did make reference to how, in the past, we have actually asked folks to move up to the deputy minister position. We have received back that they want to get more opportunities to understand all the different departments. Through the women in leadership program that is led by the three deputy ministers and also being cognizant of who is going through the Pathways program, it is our objective to make sure that we have gender balance. We were very blessed to have gender balance in the 33rd Legislative Assembly for the Yukon Liberals as well. I had three women and three men in the Cabinet positions, other than me.

It was very important to us to have not only gender balance, but balance of the population as far as indigenous representation as well. That is something that we are striving for not only as a government, but as a political party as well, when we go out to talk to people about who is going to be bidding for the honour of representing a community. Those things are extremely important to the Yukon Liberals.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause 1. The bill's schedules form part of clause 1. One of the schedules is Schedule A, containing the departmental votes.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Community Services

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm going to be relatively brief this afternoon. Let's get right into the questions. I want to say right off the bat that the Department of Community Services has done just an exemplary job in so many ways over the last year. I want to thank the civil servants within the department for all of their diligence and service to Yukoners over the last year, which has been eventful. It has been a tough year with all the files we have: flooding, fires, and the pandemic layered on top of that. It has been a very, very busy year and they have risen to the challenges and they have really shown extraordinary service to the people in the territory. I think that needs to be recognized this afternoon.

The department is working with a lens to reconciliation and to help build resilient, sustainable, healthy, and safe communities across the territory. We have \$116 million in the main estimates this year and just over \$107 million in operation and maintenance expenditures this year, which we will get into. The department, of course, builds infrastructure. It is responsible for sport and recreation, so we have all sorts of activity recently with the coming Canada Winter Games bid. We have land development as a central tenet of the department. We're going to be working very, very hard to get more land out to development for my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, to then start to get to the hands of the developers.

We're going to be working with First Nations and municipal governments across the territory to do that. We're going to have some cutting-edge, never-before-seen programs — or programs that have been seen before, I suppose. They're energy-saving programs, the better building programs, but they will be executed in a new way.

We're going to work with all of our municipalities to make sure they have not only more housing availability, but also more energy efficient properties. We have the Protective Services division, which of course incorporates Wildland Fire Management, the Fire Marshal's Office, Emergency Measures

Organization, and Emergency Medical Services. They have all seen a busy year. They're all seeing their roles shift and expand in certain ways. I really do think it's a testament to their service to Yukoners that we're seeing so much activity on these files.

So, I know there is a lot to talk about this afternoon, and I think we should just get right to it. So, I'm going to take my seat and let the questions rain.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you to the minister for his brief remarks. I want to welcome the deputy minister here to the Legislature today to help us out with some questions. Our time is very short today.

During the course of debate on Community Services, I have a number of questions in a number of different areas. Community Services is a department that deeply affects every Yukoner and every municipality in the territory. As such, programs and activities have a very profound effect on all of our citizens.

So, today, I want to start with psychologists. Can the minister provide an update for us on the development of regulations for psychologists?

We've heard from people in that community that it would be easiest if the Yukon government simply copied what Northwest Territories and Nunavut have done and develop an agreement with a province, like Alberta, to fall under their regulatory framework. Is this something that government would, or has, considered?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the question this afternoon. Before I begin — where are my manners? We do have, of course, the illustrious Matt King with us this afternoon, who raced over here to be with us this afternoon, so I really do appreciate his guidance and his presence this afternoon.

I have met with psychologists and I have heard from them directly on a few occasions, but I do know about their plight. I mean, they really do want to get some sort of oversight, so I am very — I understand the situation very well.

I have, of course, explored with the department the exact remedy that was proposed in our meeting several months ago. I thought it was a good one — the partnership program, the model. We have looked into that and we are continuing to explore that. The issue is that the advice we are getting is that it will require act amendments to make that possible, because our act is not like the NWT act. It is unfortunately a little bit more difficult than we had hoped, because if we could get a simple solution — not a simple solution, but if we could get a fast solution like that, it would be tremendous, but it doesn't seem like that is quite as easy in the territory as we had hoped.

So, we are still working on this, of course. I have had numerous briefings with the department since December and January. Work is currently underway to revise the *Health Professions Act* and improve how we regulate health care professionals in the territory. It is going to take — this project has been ongoing with my predecessor as well. We want to make sure that we have the tools in place so that we can regulate these industries well.

Ms. McLeod: Given that this, as the minister says, has been underway for quite some time, I wonder if the minister

can give us any indication of a time frame for activities going forward to move this forward.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are moving this forward and we are doing so as quickly as possible. As I said in my earlier answer, I do understand the issue. I understand and sympathize with not only psychologists who have represented to me, but there are other industries as well. We are looking to try to find a way to better regulate all of these professionals in the territory.

The Professional Licensing and Regulatory Affairs branch manages and supports 11 health professions and an additional 11 non-health professions, totalling approximately 5,700 registrants a year. The *Health Professions Act* has not been updated in a very long time. We are trying to do it so that we not only catch up and bring this frontier into the modern world — which is sort of the land that time forgot, which is what the psychologists are concerned about — but we also have to do that in a way that — when it comes to our legislation, because it is so old, there are often no real easy solutions. I am looking at this. I am trying to fast-track it as quickly as possible. I will continue my diligence on this file, because I do know how important it is to these professionals.

Ms. McLeod: I wonder if the minister has access to any kind of a work plan that exists within the department to guide this process?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Quickly, between September 2021 and March 2022, we have worked with the Yukon Medical Council and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association and two contract regulatory experts to assess the Yukon's current system for regulating health professionals. We've begun to develop viable options for improvement.

So, we have an internationally recognized expert on professional regulations whose recent work for the British Columbia government served as a basis for their ongoing regulatory reforms. We have met with the registrar and chief executive officer of the College of Alberta Psychologists to learn more about the support they provide to the Government of Nunavut and the Northwest Territories in regulating psychologists. We have also met with the vice-president of the psychological association of the Yukon to share information regarding the Yukon government's commitments in this area and to hear her perspective on the need for regulation psychologists.

What we're striving to do, and the mandate I have, is to help improve the *Health Professions Act*. Improving this piece of legislation is not an easy process; it's going to take a couple of years. We are working. There will be Cabinet decisions that need to be done and we are working on that file as we speak.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that. I may come back and revisit that, but I will leave it for today.

I want to have a discussion about flooding. Of course, last year being a pretty heavy flood year, there was a number of financial resources committed to mitigation and managing the floods. I wonder if the minister can give us a breakdown of the money that was spent in 2021 before we move on to the new year.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: To date, approximately \$8 million to \$10 million has been spent on the 2021 Southern Lakes floods.

Ms. McLeod: I believe the minister said that \$8 million to \$10 million was spent in 2021. It's difficult to hear the minister. Is there any sort of breakdown on that?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: My deputy is working with the department to get more detail. I can say that further assessments — here we go here.

We spent roughly \$400,000 on imported teams from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Yukon government and Community Services personnel amounted to about \$462,000. We had a contracted workforce of about \$700,000. Equipment rental was about \$1.6 million — that was heavy equipment. We had \$163,000 for equipment replacement. We had almost \$270,000 for transportation. Transportation for the military amounted to about \$128,000 — that was for buses to transport military to flood sites. We had helicopter time of about \$19,000. Fuel for non-vehicles was about \$9,000. Meals and travel were about \$427,000. We had materials which included about \$2.6 million for sand, rock, and poly, et cetera. We had miscellaneous services — that would be rentals, pump-outs, et cetera — of about \$1 million — about \$957,000. The total cost to date is \$7.7 million, and further assessments are underway for flood recovery and mitigation efforts in the amount of — the \$7.7 million is expected to increase.

Deputy Chair's statement

Deputy Chair: Can I ask the minister, in future comments, to speak up? I am not sure if it is the acoustics or the mic.

Ms. McLeod: We have, in recent times, asked the minister a number of very specific questions about different communities and haven't really received any answers. I know that I have written to the minister to ask about future plans for flood prevention and mitigation.

So, I wonder if the minister could please outline what the plans are for each of the communities that I was seeking information on, and they are Carmacks, Teslin, Mayo, Watson Lake, Liard, Marsh Lake, and Lake Laberge.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will say that this is still early months into this season. We know that the snowpack is well above normal across the territory, notably in central Yukon. Snowpack is one of several factors that will affect potential flooding. We are preparing a flood response throughout the territory.

The flood preparedness team has met with Teslin. Municipalities have control of their own emergency measures. We have met with Teslin. We have met with Carmacks. We are meeting with flood-affected communities in the Southern Lakes. There's a meeting tomorrow night as well.

We are working with local area councils and with municipalities to make sure that we have flood material prepositioned in the event that there is flooding, but we don't want to commit too much of it at this time until we know where the flooding is actually going to happen.

We have stockpiles of material in place to deal with this year's floods. We have been in touch with the army. We have

been in touch with the federal agencies. I have been in touch with Bill Blair and will be again. I'm talking to mayors. We are preparing every single day for the potentiality of flooding throughout the territory because there is a lot of snow.

The tale has not yet been told because we don't know how the melt is going to happen. We don't know what sort of rains we're going to have. There are other factors that are going to play into this. We're hoping for the best, as I have said before, and planning for the worst.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

The following written question was tabled March 30, 2022:

Written Question No. 14

Re: Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee (White)