



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 90

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, November 3, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Fall 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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

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
Annie Blake	Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

Yukon Legislative Assembly**Whitehorse, Yukon****Thursday, November 3, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.****Speaker absent**

Clerk: It is my duty, pursuant to the provisions of section 24 of the *Legislative Assembly Act*, to inform the Legislative Assembly of the absence of the Speaker.

Deputy Speaker takes the Chair

Deputy Speaker (Ms. Blake): I will now call the House to order.

We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Deputy Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Notice Paper. Motion No. 511, notice of which was given by the Member for Kluane on November 2, 2022, was not placed on today's Notice Paper at the request of the member.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In honour of the Project Red Ribbon and Mothers Against Drunk Driving tribute, I would like to welcome to the Assembly, Jacquie Van Marck, Cory McEachran, Lisa Martin, and RCMP members Rob Mason, Dustin Grant, Jolene Nason, and Natasha Dunmall.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I rise today to introduce some very special guests this afternoon from the Canada Summer Games and the Canada 55+ Games. We have in the audience today, Walter Brennan, David Boschman, Linda Casson, Nesta Leduc, Stella Martin, Adrienne Marsh, Sue Meikle, Tom Ullyett, who is my old colleague, Paul Warner, Don White, and Linda Profeit — and Barb Phillips' medals are here as well. We also have, from the Sport and Recreation branch, Trevor Twardochleb and Marie Cairns. Please join me in giving them a welcome.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I wanted to welcome some folks from Energy, Mines and Resources, but could I also please just welcome Tracey Bilsky from Sport Yukon. Not new to the Legislative Assembly but new here as the Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is Paul McConnell. Joining him is Michelle Crossfield, who is the senior advisor to the deputy minister.

Applause

Ms. White: Although he has been introduced, I would be remiss if I didn't introduce my dad, Don White, who is in the Chamber. We talk often about how we are a product of our environments, so if you ever wonder about how I am — as funny as I am — it is because of this man. He has taught me about forestry and about logging and about volunteerism and the importance of turning up for your community — if we could just welcome my dad one more time.

Applause

Deputy Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES**In recognition of MADD Project Red Ribbon campaign**

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to recognize the annual Mothers Against Drunk Driving Project Red Ribbon campaign.

Every year, this campaign runs over the holiday season. The holidays are, of course, a wonderful time of year and it can be easy to get carried away with festivities when alcohol is included alongside all the good food.

Unfortunately, the holiday season often sees and increase in the number of impaired driving incidents. This is why you will see the red ribbon displayed throughout your communities during the holidays.

This ribbon plays an important role. It is a small, powerful reminder to drive sober and to keep our roads safe. It also serves as a tribute to honour all those who have been killed, injured, or affected by impaired-related crashes.

Road safety is everyone's responsibility. Taking a stand against impaired driving begins with each of us, and we should feel empowered to take action if we see unsafe behaviour. The local MADD chapter has done incredible work here in the Yukon on raising awareness around this issue, and — let me be clear — this is a real problem in our territory, and while we have seen a reduction in the incidents since 2020, there is still much work to be done. In 2021, Yukon experienced a rate of impaired driving-related incidents that was over six times the national average. What this staggering fact cannot show is the emotional toll that impaired driving has had on Yukon families. The loss of someone loved — a parent, a sibling, a grandparent, an aunt or uncle, a cousin, a friend, or a child — cannot be undone. Each loss is completely preventable. We can prevent impaired driving by planning a safe ride home ahead of time, by calling a cab or offering to be a designated driver, by taking responsibility for your choices when impaired and not getting behind the wheel, and by calling 911 if you suspect that a driver is impaired. Every single one of us has the power to take action.

Our department will continue to support the work that MADD Whitehorse does to reduce the number of impaired drivers on our roadways through enforcement, education, and awareness. In addition, we will continue to implement Canada's road safety strategy, which includes working toward safe roads that are free of impairment.

Madam Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the Government of Yukon, I would like to thank the local MADD chapter — in particular, the current president Jacquie Van Marck and all of

the dedicated volunteers for their commitment to ending impaired driving.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the 35th anniversary of MADD Canada's Project Red Ribbon. Millions of red ribbons are handed out across the country for drivers to display on their vehicles as a pledge and a reminder to remain sober behind the wheel through the holiday season and well beyond.

Winter can be a nerve-wracking time to drive for a lot of motorists — not knowing whether other drivers have proper tires on their vehicles, not knowing what the road conditions are that you may face, and not knowing whether those who share the road with you are sober behind the wheel.

The Yukon's impaired driving convictions remain up to four times higher than the national average, and this, of course, is unacceptable. There is no excuse for impaired driving.

I would like to thank the Whitehorse chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving and local volunteers for their continued effort to eliminate impaired driving and to keep our communities safe. Thank you, as well, to our local RCMP M Division for the work that they do keeping our roads safe and to all those who have taken the pledge to drive sober.

If you haven't already, please get your red ribbon, tie it on to your vehicle, and show your support for this important cause. Never drive impaired or ride with a suspected impaired driver, and plan ahead if you know you will be drinking. Always talk to your kids about the dangers of impaired driving. Be there for them — take the call, no matter how late, and be the sober ride they need if you are asked.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Mothers Against Drunk Driving's Red Ribbon campaign. When it comes to the death toll of impaired driving, the numbers are heartbreaking. They are unacceptable. But, more importantly, each one of them is a person we have lost.

It's not only the people we have lost. I also want to talk about the people who are affected by impaired driving — the parents who get the terrible phone call in the middle of the night; the people left with lifelong disabilities, big and small; and the families and communities left with a hole where that person used to be.

It has to change, and so I would like to thank the many people at MADD — the staff and volunteers — who have led the fight to keep our roads safe, to support the victims of impaired driving, and to make sure that there are no more deaths or injuries resulting from impaired driving. Thank you for all your work to keep Yukoners safe.

Applause

In recognition of Team Yukon representation at 2022 Canada Summer Games and Canada 55+ Games

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I rise on behalf of our Liberal government to tribute two Yukon teams this afternoon: Team Yukon for the 2022 Canada Summer Games and Team Yukon

for the 55+ Games. This August, nearly 200 athletes, coaches, managers, and support staff represented us at the Niagara Games. They joined more than 5,000 Canadians from every province and territory. I was honoured to wave the team in at the opening ceremonies. Our incredible youth, the vibrant heart of our territory's future, literally glowed during that ceremony, and I have the photos to prove it.

Team Yukon competed in athletics, basketball, canoe and kayak, cycling, golf, soccer, swimming, beach and court volleyball, and wrestling. It was thrilling to have several Yukon athletes achieve personal bests against the country's top competitors.

Flag-bearer Mara Roldan rolled in to place fifth in the cycling road race. The men's soccer team beat Team Nova Scotia and Team Manitoba, finishing seventh overall, the team's best showing ever. Yukon volleyball athlete, Arcel Siosan, received the Canada Games Council's Pat Lechelt True Sport award.

Then, in late August, 143 classy and flexible Yukon athletes joined 2,500 other Canadians at the Canada 55+ Games in Kamloops. I attended their lively send-off in June and have reconciled the fact that 55+ Yukoners are, indeed, my people. Those enthusiastic Yukoners brought home an impressive 74 medals. Our caucus elder occasionally jangles a few of them at our Cabinet meetings.

Yukoners tackled 19 events, ranging from track and field and swimming to pickleball, slow pitch, dragon boat racing, and cycling with the nation's best. There was fierce competition at these games, and also swagger. We demonstrated our talent and skill, had fun, and formed friendships. Yukon was robbed of the coveted Spirit Award. However, I know we dominated end-of-day festivities. I am told our raucous kitchen parties were favourites of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

These games provide important social connection and friendship. It is critical to both physical and mental well-being, healthy bodies and minds. We are indebted to the incredible volunteers and staff who supported both Team Yukons this summer. Thank you, all.

There is more, Madam Deputy Speaker. In January, Yukon attends the 2023 Arctic Winter Games in Wood Buffalo, Alberta. In February, another Team Yukon journeys to Prince Edward Island for the 2023 Canada Winter Games. And, who knows, you may find a team Mostyn at the next 55+ Games in Trois-Rivières, Québec. After all, having no response to the caucus elder's jangling medals is becoming irritating. Thank you very much.

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Team Yukon — those who represent our territory in sport. This past August, the 55+ contingent of Team Yukon headed to Kamloops to take part in the 2022 Canada 55+ Games. Our representation was solid with close to 150 participants competing in 19 sports. I understand that 13 of those individuals were over the age of 80, which is impressive, to say the least. This year, Team Yukon brought home 74 medals — 20 gold, 30 silver, and 24 bronze. Congratulations to all the athletes.

Our thank you to the ElderActive Recreation Association, which offers a variety of programming for seniors and helps to organize and lead this Team Yukon to victory at the Games.

This year, the Canada Summer Games were held in Niagara, and I would like to recognize all those Team Yukon athletes, coaches, and support staff who travelled to Ontario in August to compete. Due to the pandemic, the 2021 games were postponed for a year, much to the disappointment of all involved. 2022 has seen the return of many gatherings and events, so it was wonderful that these youth had the opportunity to participate.

To the athletes, to be chosen to represent our territory at the Canada Games is quite an honour. Your skills and determination are what got you there, and having the opportunity to join and compete against some of the best athletes across Canada is something you will always remember. Congratulations to all those who participated in the Games, and thank you to all who helped to get them there.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to congratulate all of those who participated and supported Team Yukon at both the 55+ Games in Kamloops this summer and at the Canada Summer Games. Today I'm going to focus on the 55+ Games.

We are proud of each and every one of you who are showing younger generations that the love of sport doesn't have to stop as you get older, and if anything, it shines even brighter and, if the sound of your medals is an indication, it rings even louder as we get older. So, whether you participated, set a personal best, or medalled, the Yukon is proud of your accomplishments. Congratulations on your epic achievement.

Applause

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to provide Yukoners with an update, no later than at the official opening of the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre, on when the government will actually have any doctors working at this government-run clinic.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to complete the terms of reference for the MOU on the employment and protection of Filipinos under the Yukon nominee program that was signed with the Republic of the

Philippines so that it can be implemented for the benefit of Yukon businesses and the Filipino community.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support Yukon apprentices through active recruitment in Yukon government departments.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the City of Whitehorse to maintain a public trail around the perimeter of the Eric Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport.

Deputy Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fires and flooding

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yukoners came together and undertook extraordinary efforts to address threats of floods and wildfires in the territory this year. It was another difficult year. Climate change is causing more frequent, severe, and unpredictable weather, causing more natural emergencies around the world. The impacts are real and the Yukon is not immune.

This year, throughout the territory, we saw a record snowpack, rapid melt, and high groundwater. The emergency measures team supported 13 communities that experienced flooding. Around 60 fires threatened communities and transportation infrastructure in every fire zone in the territory. Our emergency coordination centre was activated on June 9 and worked with partners to respond rapidly as the situation developed. Our response was a collaborative effort, together with Yukon First Nations Wildfire, contractors, municipal and First Nation governments, residents, neighbours, and dedicated volunteers. Our sandbag machines ran continuously through June and July in Upper Liard, Ross River, Teslin, Carmacks, Lake Laberge, and Tagish, producing more than 286,000 sandbags and 6,350 superbags.

Municipalities and First Nations working with our team rose to the significant challenge that widespread flooding posed, saving waste-water treatment plants, roads, and homes.

The Yukon Housing Corporation deployed a flood recovery program to help Yukoners pay for damages to their property and possessions caused by this year's flooding. Those who have been impacted can still contact the corporation to apply for flood relief. The deadline for applications is November 25.

This year's record flooding was overlapped by two weeks of extreme storms that brought more than 21,000 lightning strikes and caused 136 new fires. Throughout the summer, the territory faced 274 fires, burning 175,000 hectares near communities, highways, and critical infrastructure in Watson Lake, Ross River, Mayo, Carmacks, and Beaver Creek. Wildland Fire worked with partners to protect homes, critical infrastructure, and communities threatened by 60 fires in

critical zones. Fighting these fires was not easy, but they were successful in keeping Yukoners and their properties safe.

Emergency response and preparedness is a shared responsibility, and it is truly a team effort. A big thank you to our Wildland Fire and our emergency measures teams, Yukon First Nations Wildfire, our First Nations and municipal partners, as well as our partners from Alberta, BC, and Ontario for their mutual aid, personnel, and equipment.

When emergencies strike, we rely heavily on these people. They work long hours under grueling conditions to keep our communities safe, and they do it with dedication and professionalism. We all owe them a debt of gratitude.

Ms. McLeod: First of all, I would like to express our thanks to volunteers, first responders, emergency preparedness workers with the YG, and government officials, Wildland Fire Management, Yukon First Nations Wildfire, municipalities, First Nations, and all Yukoners who helped with both the fire and flooding season in 2022. Both seasons frequently overlapped. I know some officials are still on high alert as we see higher-than-normal water levels in the Southern Lakes region.

I would also like to thank my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, for getting out in front of this issue in a press release dated February 21. In that release, he called for the government to begin flood preparations alongside residents and learn from the lessons of a very hairy 2021 flood season. At the time, we also made nine suggestions to the government to help mitigate the impacts of the flooding season.

Can the minister tell us how the government worked with residents leading up to and during the flood season?

Teslin was on high alert for several weeks in June and July, as Teslin Lake pushed into the community. I know the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin strapped on his steel-toed boots and was on the front lines, filling sandbags and running equipment. Residents of Marsh Lake and Lake Laberge watched water levels for months, wondering if they would experience 2021 levels again.

Thankfully, those residents were prepared, and, in some cases, took matters into their own hands to secure their property. Carmacks residents were also on alert, due to a rising Yukon River and I know that folks in Upper Liard dealt with the rising Liard River. In Dawson, while there was no notable flooding, heavy rain resulted in some highway washouts, so residents there had to be on alert.

Now, I need to point out a concern brought forward by the Member for Copperbelt South, and he has been advocating for residents in the McConnell Lake area, down the Annie Lake Road. Those residents have been asking for help from the minister, as they dealt with flooding the past two seasons. Residents are desperate for a solution. The minister said that he flew over the lake this summer, so why won't he visit the properties on the ground, and why is he refusing to meet with the affected residents?

As for the fire season, there was an evacuation alert in central Yukon in early June, due to wildfire activity in the vicinity of Mayo, Keno, and the Eagle Gold mine. Thankfully,

that was rescinded a week or so later, without an evacuation order being issued.

While we wait for the final statistics, according to media reports, as of early July, we experienced upward of four times the annual average of wildfires over the past decade. So, I thank all firefighters, even those who helped from out of the territory, who helped to keep these wildfires from threatening our communities. We certainly appreciate your efforts.

In closing, as we know, it is never too early to begin preparations. Can the minister tell us if and when the government will begin preparing for next year's flood and fire season? I look forward to the minister's responses.

Ms. White: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. You only need to look at the supplementary budget to see the real-world implications of climate change — nearly \$60 million for Wildland Fire Management to address the increased fire activity near Yukon communities. With over 270 fires covering over 175,000 hectares, there wasn't a single community in the Yukon that wasn't affected in some way, and when was the last time that any of us can remember a high-water advisory being issued in October, but that is what happened this year. From culvert washouts that cut us off from the south, with flooding from the Upper Liard River north toward Carmacks, and west toward Ross River, communities have had a tough go this summer. From large-scale flooding in Teslin to the Yukon River blowing its banks in Carmacks, what was billed as a 100-year anomaly last year looks all too much like it was repeated again, one short year later. Melting permafrost, coupled with high precipitation, meant that we were faced with landslides, the likes that we haven't seen in recent memory, and all of these events are environmental, and all of these events can be tied directly to climate change.

So, how does the Yukon move forward? What measures is the Yukon government taking to help build the resiliency of Yukon communities to these climate events? Are there dike projects planned for next year, and if yes, in which communities?

As we talk about this year's number of wildland fires and the crews that were tasked with their management, what work has the minister — who has both the portfolio for managing wildland fires and protecting those who fight those same fires — done toward presumptive cancer coverage for wildland firefighters? It's one thing to stand here and thank them for their work, but words without actions are just words.

Can the minister tell us what actions he has taken to extend presumptive cancer coverage for wildland firefighters? Who has he consulted to date? When pressed to treat wildland firefighters as equal to structural fire crews, he said that the financial implications meant it was impossible. So, what research has he done since that point? It has been a tremendously stressful season for emergency workers, and I hope that the minister will do more than just send them a nice speech to show his appreciation.

Yukon's emergency workers and support crews from down south spend days and weeks away from their friends and families, and risk their health to keep us all safe. For that, I

know we are all grateful. We thank all of those community members, staff, volunteers, and others who got us safely through this year's emergencies.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the remarks and the praise for our very hard-working civil servants and communities, First Nations, and all the people who stepped up in this last year, during a very challenging season for both floods and wildfires. This is the second year that it has happened, Madam Deputy Speaker.

In 2021, when I assumed this position, this role, and faced some of the worst flooding we had seen since 2007, I went to the department. We didn't have a good read on what happened in 2007. We hadn't had many floods, and for the one historic flood we had, there wasn't an awful lot of information to guide our direction forward, and frankly, we hadn't done a lot of work in the intervening years to get anything done.

So, we took a lesson in 2021, when I remarked that I felt like the minister of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. We had COVID going, so there were fires, floods, plague, and pestilence. This year, we had, again, a really awful year — a lot of fires, a lot of flooding. In some ways, it was more challenging than it was in the previous year, and I can't thank and laud the Department of Community Services — in fact, many of the departments of the Yukon government that stepped up and provided the resources we needed to help make Yukoners safe. We were largely successful. A lot of that was through foresight and action, but some of it was just merely the luck of the way the winds were blowing or when the water fell from the sky — the rain.

The member opposite mentioned Teslin. I will say that Teslin did an extraordinary job this year. It was great to be down in the community last summer as they were putting up the sandbags, going down to talk to the folks who were putting those sandbags up — both the superbags and the smaller bags — and seeing how that community adapted to the flood. They did a tremendous job. So many municipalities did this year, and I really want to commend them all. Teslin certainly was extraordinary. They really do deserve some thanks and some credit for doing that. As a municipality, they really got on top of it.

Now, I am just going to quickly touch on the presumption that the Leader of the Third Party just mentioned. We talked about this last year, of course. There is a lot to that. If you are presuming that wildland firefighters are exposed to a certain carcinogen, part of the workers' compensation is to make sure that you take action to prevent exposure or the hazard that you are being exposed to, which would mean heavy equipment, breathing apparatuses, and that type of thing, with virtually no evidence of any of those cancers in the wildfire area. I think it behooves us to actually understand what is going on there before we saddle our wildland firefighters with enormous gear that would be very prohibitive during the summertime when they are out in the woods fighting these fires.

The other things are severe weather events, global warming, and climate change. We, as a government, are taking great strides to move the territory forward on that front through

the nation-leading *Our Clean Future* plan that we have, and also through our support of carbon pricing in the territory and our work with the federal government. Unfortunately, we have seen that the Yukon Party does not hold those values either. We are going to see more of this unless we take it seriously —

Deputy Speaker: Order.

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Atlin hydro expansion project

Mr. Hassard: We know that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has struggled to provide reliable information about the Atlin hydro project, so I would like to ask him to clarify a few things. Yesterday, he said — and I quote: "The information that I have is that the project is on track for 2024. There is still work going on to get it there."

However, last week, he said this — again, I quote: "The current projection is for the fall of 2025, which is roughly one year past the original planning timeline."

Can the minister tell us if he provided unreliable information yesterday or did he provide unreliable information last week?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: You know, yesterday, the Yukon Party rose to ask questions about Atlin. They talked about the original price as being \$130 million — something like that. I said at the time that number was wrong. I said I would look back into it and see where they were getting that number from. It appears to me that they have pulled the number for the hydro portion of the project, but not the transmission line portion of the project.

So, I asked Yukon Energy. I know that they also reached out to the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership. There was a dialogue that went back and forth. The original projected price of the project was in the range of \$250 million. As I said, the current costs, due to inflation, are in the range of \$315 million.

This is a very good project. I am disappointed that the Yukon Party doesn't support the Atlin hydro project. We think it is a good project, and we are very supportive of this project.

Mr. Hassard: So, the question was about providing reliable information on timelines. So, as I said, the minister yesterday — and I will quote again: "The information that I have is that the project is on track for 2024. There is still work going on to get it there." Last week, the quote was: "The current projection is for the fall of 2025, which is roughly one year past the original planning timeline." So, again, was the minister unreliable yesterday or unreliable last week?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will confirm the target date for the Taku River Tlingit's project, and I will report it back to this Legislature. I'm happy to confirm the appropriate date.

What I can say today is that the Yukon Party is throwing around numbers that have been proven unreliable. They continue to throw those numbers around, and I think that they should stand up and correct the record.

Mr. Hassard: So, still no response — yesterday, the minister told the media — and I'll quote again: "I think we are

all re-evaluating how much we've been putting in to try to close that gap." So, it is clear that the Yukon government is considering putting even more taxpayers' money into this project. How much more money will the Yukon government spend on this project?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will tell you what. What we are not going to spend money on is a liquefied natural gas plant. That's what the Yukon Party wants to spend money on. They believe that the future is in fossil fuels. I don't know if folks have noticed, but those costs are going up.

So, no, that is the wrong direction. Next generation hydro — wrong direction. I stood in this House and said in the past weeks, yesterday, and I will say again today that we support community-led projects. We are going to work with First Nations and get them an equity stake. I listened to Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership stand in the lobby of this beautiful building and talk about this important project and talk about it as economic reconciliation. We are behind the Atlin project.

Question re: Atlin hydro expansion project

Mr. Kent: So the minister has touted the Atlin hydro electricity purchase agreement, or EPA, between the Yukon and the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership, including in a ministerial statement earlier this year. I had some questions about the EPA for the minister.

The agreement notes that it has no legal force until certain conditions are met. One of those conditions is that THELP must submit to the Yukon a detailed funding plan. Then, on or before June 14, 2022, Yukon is required to give notice that it is satisfied with the funding plan and the financial viability of the project.

Can the minister tell us if the Yukon did indeed give formal notice that indicates satisfaction with the funding plan and financial viability for this project on or before June 14?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Again, I am disappointed that the Yukon Party doesn't support the Atlin project. The reason is — the Atlin project is a community-led, brownfield, hydroelectric, renewable energy project, which is going to provide us dependable winter energy at 13.5 cents per kilowatt hour, or at least that is the energy-purchase agreement that is in front of the Yukon Utilities Board right now. That price is a great price. That is why we are investing in this project. I think that is also why British Columbia is investing in the project. I think that is also why the federal government is investing in this project — because it is a good project for Yukoners.

Mr. Kent: My question was with respect to the electricity purchase agreement and whether or not a funding plan was received on or before June 14, but I will move on to another important condition of the EPA that must be met, and that is the approval of the Government of Yukon.

So, the Yukon Energy Corporation's submission to the Yukon Utilities Board says clearly that Yukon government approval is required. Section 2.1(d)(v) of the EPA conditions says that approval must be granted on or before 215 days after January 14, 2022. That would be around the middle of August.

So, did the Government of Yukon grant the necessary approvals by this deadline?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: These are really incredibly technical questions. I wish that the members opposite were willing to have Yukon Energy and Yukon Development Corporation come in as witnesses, but the Yukon Party voted against that happening.

I will endeavour to investigate the very specific nature of the questions and the very technical sense of it, but what I can say about this project is that it is a good project, and 13.5 cents a kilowatt hour is a great price. I'm amazed that the members opposite are not interested in that kind of energy price for Yukoners.

Mr. Kent: This is about the purchase agreement for the electricity that has been signed, and that last question was about Yukon government approval, so I'm not sure why the minister doesn't know the answer, unless he hasn't read the EPA.

Another condition is the receipt of necessary approvals from the Government of British Columbia. According to the Government of BC's Crown lands application website, those approvals have not been granted. In fact, here's what that site says — and I quote: "The project is currently being redesigned. A new Development Plan will be submitted and will be posted for public review. A public comment period will follow. The re-submission timelines are unknown at this time."

It appears that many of the necessary conditions of the EPA have not been met by the deadlines prescribed in the agreement. Can the minister tell Yukoners what this will mean for the project?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: For Yukoners, I will take the energy purchase agreement and, if it is within my power to table that, I will table it here so that everyone can see it. I think it is a great price for Yukoners — 13.5 cents a kilowatt hour, firm, winter power, displacing diesel generators. Of course, the Yukon Party wants to build a liquefied natural gas plant. I say, no, that's the wrong direction for the Yukon. Clearly, they have a different vision for the Yukon — it is fossil fuels. That is not our vision. We will continue to work on this project, and I will share with the Legislature the energy purchase agreement.

Question re: Trades apprenticeship

Ms. White: Not everyone learns in the same way, and many students who have a hard time focusing in a classroom environment are naturally inclined to working with their hands. So, what if there was a way that we could support students and strengthen a critical part of Yukon's workforce? BC schools have a program called "Youth Work in Trades", where students, as young as 14, are able to turn hours worked in trades into credits and bank them toward their red seal certification afterward. A program like this would be highly beneficial in the Yukon.

Will the minister direct the Department of Education to work toward developing this type of trades program in Yukon schools for the benefit of Yukon students?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I stood yesterday and talked about our government's support for the trades, and I stand here today, as well, to reiterate that. This is our week to celebrate the trades

and technology throughout Canada. I am very supportive — our department is completely committed to working with all of our partners around enhancing Yukon trades. The Yukon apprenticeship program continues to support registered Yukon apprentices to complete their program requirements, in partnership with Yukon University and Alberta apprenticeship programs. I do think that there certainly are ways that we can enhance and encourage young Yukoners to be more interested in the trades. There is a lot to offer there, and I believe that our partners will continue to work together. I am certainly willing to have more conversations, as well, with the Leader of the Third Party around some of her ideas. I would like to do that, and we have said many times, in this House and outside of the House, that good ideas come from —

Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. White: So, I am so grateful for the pre-apprenticeship program at Yukon University, because it gives folks of all ages a chance to learn what they want to do, and become comfortable in the trade before going out into the workforce. It also ensures that employers are able to hire people with the knowledge needed to be a helpful asset to the company from day one.

Yukon government is the single-largest employer in the territory. Within their ranks, there are trades from carpenters to heavy-duty mechanics, and just about any other trade you can name. Any business with that many tradespeople on staff would have the capacity to train countless apprentices.

As we were told yesterday, there are currently 456 apprentices training in the Yukon, and today, we've been told again how much this government supports those trades. So, my question is: Can the minister tell us exactly how many apprentices currently work within Yukon government?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am very happy to stand and speak about trades in the Yukon. I 100-percent support Yukoners pursuing trades and technology. I think that this is an amazing opportunity for young people in the Yukon. I will just say, again, that I want to hold my hands up to all the partners. We have had a chance to do that this week in our tribute to trades. I know that there is a job and volunteer fair going on today at Yukon University. There are a lot of private sector, and a lot of partners, that are represented there. We are very supportive of the work that Yukon University is doing to support Yukoners who are going into the trades.

Yes, we have 456 registered apprentices; 117 of them identify as First Nation apprentices, and 52 identify as female apprentices as well. As we go forward on the questions, I will continue to build on that.

Ms. White: Although I appreciate breaking apart those numbers, what I wanted to know is, of those 456 apprentices, how many are currently employed by Yukon government?

For as long as I can remember, there has been a shortage of trained tradespeople in Canada and in the Yukon. The current shortage is leaving Yukoners out in the cold. There are so many stories of people wanting to get work done, but no tradespeople available to do it. This doesn't even address the shortages we can expect for folks accessing the new better building program.

Training for a trade is a lengthy, but rewarding, process; however, it does involve finding an employer willing and able to take on an apprentice. Unfortunately, becoming a journey person takes a number of years, and there are only so many tradespeople working in the private sector to take on apprentices. If the Yukon government were to take on more apprentices, it would fill gaps in staffing and get more qualified workers into the private sector.

Will the minister commit to working with Yukon University to get more apprentices into Yukon government?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, the majority of Yukon apprentices are employed by the Yukon's private sector. I was trying to find the number in my note; I knew it was here. We currently have five apprentices employed with Yukon government. There are two heavy equipment and transport technical apprentices with Highways and Public Works, two cook apprentices, and one baker apprentice with Health and Social Services. Do I think that our government could be doing more and should be doing more to encourage more apprentices in Government of Yukon? Yes, I do, and I'll continue to work toward enhancing that number.

I want to reassure Yukoners, always, that we are in support of trades in the Yukon. The Yukon apprenticeship program is a very important one. We continue to work with our partners. As I've stated, Yukon University is very supportive. As we transitioned from a college to a university, we maintained that ability to have that type of programming at our university and will continue to do so.

Question re: *Animal Protection and Control Act* consultation

Mr. Cathers: Since the Minister of Environment tabled animal control legislation, it has become clear that groups that are most affected by it were not properly consulted. The minister chose not to share the details of his proposed animal control legislation with people affected by it most. The details of the legislation have the potential to impact lives and livelihoods of thousands of Yukoners, including people who work with animals or have livestock. The minister has admitted there are problems with his legislation. He has also said the earliest it could come into force is spring, after the development of regulations.

A growing list of stakeholders have asked him to consult on Bill No. 20, including farmers, dog mushers, tourism operators, outfitters, and municipalities. Will the minister agree to listen, pause the legislation, and consult with the stakeholders who are asking him to consult?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We have listened; we are listening; we will continue to listen. Our consultation was thorough. The public input demonstrated substantial support to improve animal welfare standards and set control requirements across the territory. Without this act and its forthcoming regulations, the Government of Yukon will fail to address long-standing concerns of Yukoners about the enforcement of animal laws in the territory; we will fail to mitigate the risks that uncontrolled animals pose to public health and safety, the environment, and property.

Approval of the bill is essential to take the next step to develop the regulations. As I have indicated, the act will not come into force until the regulations are developed and passed. Critical to this is ongoing engagement with affected stakeholders. Their additional involvement and feedback will ensure the regulations reflect Yukon values and way of life.

We look forward to re-engaging with key stakeholders on the specifics, like standards of care for domestic animals, cosmetic surgeries, and exotics. Important stakeholders include, but are not limited to, veterinarians, pet store owners, the Association of Yukon Communities, the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon, Yukon Dog Musers Association, Yukon Outfitters Association, Yukon Agricultural Association, Growers of Organic Food Yukon, and the Klondike Farmers' Forum — but to name a few.

Mr. Cathers: When government receives a reasonable request from multiple stakeholders for consultation on details of legislation that will affect them, they should listen, unless there is a compelling reason not to. In the case of the *Animal Protection and Control Act*, they have heard that request from a growing list of stakeholders. Delaying passage of the bill until spring would not delay when it comes into force. The only reason that the minister and his colleagues have to refuse requests for consultation with farmers, other businesses, mushers, and municipalities is that they seem to feel they would lose face by doing that and have to admit that they misjudged the importance of consultation.

That is really not a good reason to refuse to consult. The Liberal government literally ran on an election slogan of: "Be Heard". Will they now agree to listen to Yukoners, pause, and consult on this legislation?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I personally have absolutely no concern with losing face with respect to this matter. I am concerned with having progressive, modern legislation for all Yukoners that protects Yukoners and moves the territory forward. This should have happened decades ago. The members opposite, the former Yukon Party government, had the opportunity on numerous occasions in their 14 years in government to do so. They chose not to. We have consulted.

Let me be clear — our engagement started in 2018, but continues to this day. We are still having conversations — still taking feedback — and formal conversations happen every week. The departments are in regular contact with all the stakeholders mentioned. As we move forward in the development of the regulations under the *Animal Protection and Control Act*, we will engage with affected Yukon stakeholders. I know that this engagement will also be thorough, as it has been so far. We will get it done.

Mr. Cathers: Even the Minister of Environment himself has admitted that there are problems with his animal control legislation. When I pointed out that section 41 of the act seems to make it an offence to walk your dog or ride your horse on public land, earlier this week, he admitted that they might have made a mistake. Two days in a row, he was unable to point to anywhere in the act that allowed these activities despite the prohibition in section 41.

On Tuesday, he said it might be a typo. Yesterday, he said he directed officials to look at the section and opened the door to the possibility he might need to amend it. We appreciate that, but it is becoming clear that this act isn't ready to be passed — especially not without consultation with the growing list of stakeholders asking for that.

Will the minister agree to listen, pause the legislation, and consult with the stakeholders who are asking him to consult?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We have had a fulsome debate in Committee of the Whole for five days, and we will go into our sixth day. We have taken the concerns under advisement, and I will report back to the House.

As far as amending legislation, the former minister for Copperbelt South amended his own legislation in Committee of the Whole in 2015. The former minister, the Member for Lake Laberge, has amended his legislation in Committee of the Whole as well. So, obviously, there isn't a perfection standard. When the Yukon Party former government was in power, they were in Committee of the Whole, there was legislation that was reviewed, and perhaps through the diligent questioning of members opposite, they pointed out a drafting error, and those had to be corrected as well. That's exactly what Committee of the Whole is.

In any event, this is strong legislation, notwithstanding what the Member for Lake Laberge is saying. We will move this forward. This is progressive legislation, protecting the animals and the citizens of all of the Yukon. It is overdue.

Question re: Affordable housing and land development

Ms. Clarke: It is clear that what the government is doing is simply not working. Yukoners are facing a Liberal-made housing crisis. This summer, a government-caused two-month delay to access Whistle Bend phase 6A lots limited the ability of the private sector to get housing to market. We know the minister also cancelled tendering phase 7 in 2021 and delayed those lots to market.

A confidential briefing note says, "Delays to Phase 6 completion (originally schedule for 2021, but now to 2022) triggered access issues to other phases."

Briefing notes show that phase 6B was planned to be completed in July 2022. Can the minister confirm if phase 6A and phase 6B have been completed as scheduled?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The issue before us this afternoon is lot development in the territory. It's something we've committed to do, and it's something we've done extraordinarily well over the last six years, and we're going to continue to do that. We know that the record of the Yukon Party in the benches opposite was less than stellar. We are taking a different approach. We are actually getting lot development done. We continue to advance Whistle Bend as quickly as possible, in phases. We see progress every year, releasing lots by way of lottery for private citizens and contractors before the spring start to the construction season.

In 2022, we have been working on the construction of lots in phases 6, 7, and 8 in Whistle Bend, and when complete, these three phases will provide another 200 lots to the market, on

route to our pledge of fulfilling 1,000 lots by the end of our mandate.

Ms. Clarke: Salamat. Earlier this week, I asked the government about their constant delays in getting new building lots to market. This lack of supply continues to push housing prices to record levels. So, I asked if the government had delivered on its commitment to tender phase 9 lots in Whistle Bend. The Premier failed to answer the question. The confidential briefing note says: "Phase 9 (and lift station) will be tendered in summer 2022, once Phase 6 is completed."

So, I will ask again: Can the minister confirm when phase 9 will be tendered?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I mentioned, the issue before us this afternoon is lot development. In fact, it's about historic investments in lot development and housing in the territory. We agree that lot development in the territory is an important matter for Yukoners. That's why we've increased our budget to \$30 million this year for new lots — \$30 million, Madam Deputy Speaker. As we move the territory forward, \$30 million is a lot of money.

The member opposite may not know this, but in their last year in office, the Yukon Party invested \$7.7 million in lots. We are nearly four times that amount. That's the big difference — we're getting it done. The members opposite ignored this and put us in a deficit, which we're now still trying to dig ourselves out of this many years later. This was an atrocious negligence on the Yukon Party's part, and we're moving the territory forward.

Ms. Clarke: The Yukon Bureau of Statistics showed that the average cost of a house had risen to \$701,000 by the end of September. Madam Deputy Speaker, earlier this week, the minister failed to answer another of my questions about providing more housing. We know municipalities are strapped for resources. We know that permitting and zoning have caused delays for developers. The Yukon government could budget to help Yukon municipalities with those costs.

Will the government help expedite the release of land and development of housing during the short building season by providing extra resources to Yukon municipalities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As this Liberal government moves the territory forward, we are making historic investments in Yukon housing lot development. The \$30 million that I mentioned in my last statement — the member opposite may not know this, but over the entire last term of the Yukon Party — their last term — they averaged just \$6 million in lot development, which was a million dollars less overall than their last year.

Our Liberal government has built strong, collaborative relationships with municipalities, private land owners, developers, and First Nations across the territory to speed up the development of lots and homes in the territory. In the last two years, municipalities across the territory have issued almost 1,300 permits for residential construction, a significant increase over the historic average. Over the last four years, we have seen an addition of more than 1,000 new homes in Whitehorse, which is a 60-percent increase over the previous four-year period.

The Yukon Party's record on housing is embarrassing. The Yukon Party sat on millions of dollars and refused to invest it in affordable housing. We are still paying the price for that Yukon Party's inaction on housing. We have tripled investment in lot development, compared to the Yukon Party. This Liberal government is moving the territory forward on this file. We will continue to do so.

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

Deputy 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

Deputy Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 20, entitled *Animal Protection and Control Act*.

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

Bill No. 20: *Animal Protection and Control Act* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 20, entitled *Animal Protection and Control Act*.

Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to stand in Committee of the Whole debate on Bill No. 20. Beside me, we have chief veterinary officer Mary Vanderkop, and to my right is Rebecca Veinott, legislative drafter.

Where we left it yesterday was that the Member for Lake Laberge had sat down and, I think, indicated that he may have finished his questions in general debate, although in fairness perhaps he does have a few more because, as I understand after the fact, we did not formally finish general debate, but I am certainly prepared, in consequence of that, to answer questions in general debate. I certainly look forward to getting to clause-by-clause debate and answering potentially similar questions,

as the Member for Lake Laberge has certainly asked specific questions about specific clauses during the last few days. So, my anticipation was that we might be going into clause-by-clause debate, but I understand that, procedurally, general debate has not quite finished, but I do look forward to getting to clause-by-clause debate.

Mr. Cathers: I would just ask the minister — he had indicated that he was going to look at section 41 and get back to the Assembly. He had acknowledged that there may be a problem with that section. One of his indications was that it might be a “typo” as he described it, but as we dealt with earlier, there were two days in a row where the minister was not able to point to anywhere in the legislation that created exceptions to the specific duties laid out in section 41 — specifically, that applies to whether it is legal to have dogs, horses, and other animals on public property.

I would just ask him if he could report back to the House on whether he has concluded anything regarding that section.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Deputy Chair, for the question. Yes, I would still characterize — after further review and discussion with both policy and my officials, I would now confirm that I would characterize it as a typographical error, and that we will be proposing a friendly, hopefully, amendment to section 41(1) when we get to that specific clause in clause-by-clause.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that indication from the minister, and I would actually just ask him if he could send over copies of the amendment that he will be proposing now, so that we, as well as the Third Party, could have the opportunity to review that. As the minister knows, it does take some time in reviewing legislation and changes to it, sometimes, to understand how different parts of the bill interact with each other. If we don't see that legislation before we get to clause 41, it is also possible that consequential changes or solutions that might be discussed might actually be earlier in the bill than section 41. So, just in the interest of providing that information to members and recognizing the fact, as the minister knows, that there is a reason the government is expected to table its legislation within the first five days. That is so that non-government members have a chance to consider it and understand it, in part. I would just ask him if he could — before we get into the line-by-line stage — just send across copies for all members of the change that he intends to present later.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: It's on the record now. I can direct now that the very minor amendment be provided to both the Yukon Party MLAs and to the Yukon NDP MLAs for their review. As indicated in prior debate, it is a very minor proposed change, but in our view — or my view — it does address the issue about allowing for, among other things — and I'm sure that we will have further discussion — other things responsible — primarily dog-owning Yukoners. I think that the member opposite talked about things like the Gunnar Nilsson and Mickey Lammers Research Forest, or other areas within Whitehorse or in the communities, if there is no requirement for that dog to be leashed, but that there are other requirements. We believe that the amendment meets that objective.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that undertaking for the minister to share the proposed amendment with us. As I noted, I would appreciate it if he could actually do that before we proceed into line-by-line debate so we can have a chance to review it and understand it. I would point out to the minister that one of the reasons why that is relevant is, for example, this section may affect things that are earlier in the act, including the definitions, depending on what the minister is proposing.

I would note, for example, that “at large” is a defined term early on in the legislation. I haven't seen the minister's proposed amendment, but among the solutions that we considered as possible changes to this section of the bill included use of the term “at large”. Consequentially, if the minister uses that term or others containing definitions, or something that is earlier in the bill, there may be a need to discuss the impact of that and potentially consider amendments to a definition or an earlier clause.

I would just ask him if he could provide us all with physical copies of the amendment that he will be proposing later on, before we get into line-by-line, so we can have an opportunity to review that information and then ask the minister questions accordingly, including earlier on in line-by-line debate.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Is the question that I get you the proposed amendment prior to the commencement of line-by-line debate?

Mr. Cathers: Yes, that is exactly what I am asking — if the minister provide that to us, and then if we could then have an opportunity to review that before we get into line-by-line debate, that would leave all of us — again, I don't know what is contained in the amendment that the minister intends to propose. That's the whole reason for it. Consequentially, I don't know if it will affect questions that we have earlier on in line-by-line debate. Having made that request, I would ask the minister to send over copies of that before we proceed to general debate in the interest of allowing us to do that. That would give us some opportunity to review that before we proceed to line-by-line debate.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I received some information, indicating that some MLAs do require, in addition to any clarification I would be providing today — they require some additional clarification with respect to a number of matters prior to getting to line-by-line debate.

So, in light of that, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 206, entitled *Second 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

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

Bill No. 206: *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Hassard: I thank the Deputy Minister of Finance for being here today with the Premier.

This morning at House Leaders, the Member for Copperbelt South indicated to House Leaders that we would be asking questions about Highways and Public Works today. Hopefully, the Premier is ready to go with that and has done his homework and studied up on things.

I guess the first question I would ask is if the Premier is aware, or has the government met with the Governor of Alaska regarding anything in general, I guess, but particularly in regard to Shakwak funding? Are there any negotiations underway? Is there anything he could update the House on in regard to Shakwak?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am not aware of the latest meetings with the governor. I do know that also, not only Highways and Public Works, but Economic Development is reaching out to officials in the state as well on a plethora of different topics. I have obviously met with Governor Dunleavy in the past. We have discussed a lot of different topics during COVID and during the opening up of the borders, as well, having conversations about everything from tourism to federal funding. The bipartisan investment law is a different way of formulating the funding for the States, one that we are hoping gives a lot more control to the State of Alaska, as opposed to Washington, DC, and that was basically a lot of the conversation I had with the governor.

We spoke in-depth with the governor about how we can access those bipartisan investment law pools of money, including the RAISE program. I do know that Highways and Public Works officials met with the consul general office last month. Over the summer, the minister met with the US consul general as well.

We continue to work with the Alaska department of tourism to peruse other funding opportunities, including, as I said, the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity program, RAISE for short. This grant is a US merit-based discretionary funding program for infrastructure, and our application process says that highway reconstruction is a priority, of course, with sections of the Alaska Highway being impacted by permafrost between Beaver Creek and Destruction Bay.

Mr. Hassard: Could the Premier tell us if Highways and Public Works has a role in dealing with the Skagway port, or is that strictly under Economic Development?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Of course, it all depends on what ends up happening. We have had an awful lot of conversations about municipal responsibilities, assets that would go on to municipal land, and a whole conversation about what that means, as far as

ownership of assets — mining companies' participation in that as well — and until more decision is made, it is hard to say at what level, moving forward, Highways and Public Works would be involved with the specifics of a to-be-determined solution. When it comes to the Highways and Public Works department and their engagement with the State of Alaska, they will continue to do that good work on behalf of our government when it comes to access into and out of the State of Alaska.

Mr. Hassard: I received a question from the Member for Kluane. He was wondering if I could ask the Premier so we could get on record — “the Yukon dedicates to veterans” sign, north of Haines Junction. Unfortunately, it spent more time lying in the ditch, rather than standing, as it has been a little damaged by high winds, I guess, or not permanently put in place. So, he was curious if it would be possible to have that sign erected as a permanent structure, as has been requested by the highways crew in that area. The hope, of course, is to have that done in time for Remembrance Day, as I am sure the Premier can appreciate.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't have that information at my fingertips. I would ask the member opposite if he could just send an e-mail to the minister responsible and he can probably give an update on that.

Mr. Hassard: Certainly, we will get that e-mail off, but I would just hope that, since the minister is listening, maybe the Premier could whisper in his ear, just as a reminder — if we could have that done before Remembrance Day, it would certainly be much appreciated.

I have a question around vehicle inspections. About a year ago, the government changed the rules on people who were allowed to do commercial vehicle inspections — that they could only be done by red seal mechanics. So, they gave a year's grace period for people who were certified inspection people, but not red seal mechanics.

So, quite a few people asked and brought it forward, and said, “We've been certified for X number of years. Suddenly, we won't be allowed anymore. Why would the government want to take away our ability to be able to do this?”

It's particularly important in rural Yukon, as the Premier can appreciate. There is not an abundance of red seal mechanics in every community. So, when we have the opportunity to have other people certified and able to do it, it makes life a lot easier for a lot of people.

So, the government has said that the course could be challenged, but it requires the person to take six weeks of schooling. Obviously, in a community like Teslin — I will use it for an example — there is a young fellow there who has been doing these certifications for quite a number of years, but he has a family and a full-time job, and this is just kind of a side gig for him. So, for him to take six weeks off of work and leave his family to go to Whitehorse to take this training, it doesn't really make a lot of sense for the few hundred dollars that he is going to make every year off of it. But, by taking that person or that ability out of the community, now we run the risk of commercial vehicles being on the road without proper certification because it's not that easy just to phone a red seal mechanic from Whitehorse and say, “Hey, I just realized that

my truck — my inspection runs out next week, and we're in the middle of a job, and I need to get this done." You don't always get those people at the drop of a hat. Obviously, they are very busy too.

So, I was wondering if the government would consider either extending the grace period or looking at other options for people who — you know, maybe if you have been certified for X number of years, or you can prove that you have done inspections on X number of vehicles without any infractions or without doing anything wrong, you could be considered to be able to continue on with being certified to do these commercial vehicle inspections.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do remember, even when the member opposite was in government, a conversation about red seals at that time. There were changes in the procedures when they were in government, and I remember the member opposite speaking exactly about this. You have an awful lot of people in rural Yukon who have the expertise. They may not have the time to go get red sealed. If they did, their expertise of 20- or 30-plus years alone would probably give them enough to teach the class, as opposed to getting the certification. I don't disagree with the member opposite in that.

I can say, knowing the people who work in the goldfields in Yukon, the apprenticeship being a third-generation placer miner and being able to work through with the guidance of maybe your father or mother teaching you — this is very instrumental and comprehensive training when it comes to the field of heavy diesel mechanics or working with boilers or whatever you have.

Also, the importance again — we talked today about apprenticeship programs. We need to do more. We absolutely need to do more. I have seen really dedicated, rural government officials working in different departments — maybe they have a son or a daughter or somebody else going up through the high school system — and we've seen initiatives where the leadership from those individuals as parents or as friends and family doing the apprenticeship program, but when they leave the government or whenever something else happens with the kids — the kids grow up and maybe go a different way — we see a loss in more apprenticeship opportunities.

I will say, though, that I do take this to heart. I have some other questions, as well, about the certification process. I know that I have been bothering the Department of Highways and Public Works with stuff on this capacity. It brings me to the modernization of the act. As we know, the *Motor Vehicles Act* rewrite is in place right now. We are moving on that. I have directed the department to do everything that they can to expediate the timeline on this while ensuring that we get it right for the current and future needs of Yukoners. In these conversations is where we get to have that debate of what we have been doing in the past and what makes sense to modernize. What makes sense as well, as far as making sure that our roads are safe — that's an extremely important part of this conversation — and making sure that, if we do certify, the departments do so with the best interests of all Yukoners in mind. I know that the department is meeting with industry to

discuss permitting and also exemptions as well as other things, like electronic logging devices.

They are also meeting with industry — I believe it's later this month — in November. They are very active in trying to work toward some solutions to these concerns. On the principle of it, when it comes to the specifics that the member opposite is speaking about, it's hard for me to disagree that there are definitely people in rural Yukon who have huge expertise, but maybe not the red seal certification.

Mr. Hassard: It is not just rural Yukon. There are certainly people in Whitehorse who are in a similar situation. It's maybe just a little more challenging for rural Yukon.

I want to ask the Premier some questions about the Nisutlin Bay bridge. Obviously, it is the largest capital project in Yukon government history. It is certainly an important piece of infrastructure.

I have asked the Minister of Highways and Public Works in the Legislature during Question Period about permitting. I certainly didn't get any answers in Question Period, but the minister later on spoke to media and said that all of the permitting was in place.

I have a motion on the floor asking for the production of papers to provide that information, but I'm hoping that maybe the Premier could just give us an update in the Legislature today about which permits are in place and which permits they are currently still waiting for.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am not sure if I can give any more information than the minister did, after listening to the debate the other day here in the Legislative Assembly. We can all agree that this is an absolutely critical link along the Alaska Highway. It's an extremely important landmark for the member opposite's community.

I hope we can all agree as well that projects that have been done in the past — not only do we have an obligation to making sure that our roads are safe, but we also have an obligation to reconciliation when we take a look at the ways in which things were built well before any of us were in this Legislative Assembly. This particular road — that bridge and the Alaska Highway — all has a history to it.

I am very proud of the work that was done to get this project to fruition and to do so with partnerships, as well, when it comes to recognizing the importance of reconciliation when we build back.

We do know that, in the spring of 2019, the Teslin Tlingit Council signed the project charter for the bridge replacement. Through that charter, we have been working together to design and build this structure — a structure that can accommodate an increase in traffic, while also improving access to pedestrians and cyclists.

I don't know, Madam Chair, if you have ever tried to drive a motorbike on that bridge, but it is quite interesting, to say the least. The project will provide a significant positive impact — economic impact — to the territory, and also an impact to reconciliation, when it is done as well — and a huge impact to local businesses in the community of Teslin. I know that the member opposite's family does a lot of work in these fields, so

I understand why this is extremely important to the member opposite.

The \$159.68-million contract was awarded in May, and that was to Graham Infrastructure. There were open houses that happened in May as well. The department is working collaboratively with the community. The bid prices did come in higher than anticipated, due to current economic circumstances and a high premium on steel and other materials. We hope that the member opposite supports us moving forward on this project, because it is extremely important.

We know that the department is continuing to engage, like I said, with the Teslin Tlingit Council, and also others — the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, for example, on implementation of the *Fisheries Act* authorization. The next implementation working committee for the bridge — that is a standing meeting — is later on this month.

That is about all I have for an update in general debate on this project. I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

Mr. Hassard: Of course, I have been critical of the government for not ensuring that permitting was in place months and months and months ago. This project was awarded in May. There is still no activity anywhere near the water yet; the work can't proceed. I am told, by a lot of people, that it is due to the fact of a lack of a water licence. Again, I would hope that the Premier would at least know if the water licence is in place and when it was issued on the largest capital project in the history of all governments, not just his government.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do believe the minister did say, in the Legislative Assembly, the water licence for the project was issued, and that was issued this summer. The *Fisheries Act* authorization, as I said, was also issued just recently, and it was in October. As far as mobilization, site preparation, construction camp, and project office set-up, pit quarry development for rock — for granule and rock production — is progressing. So, this is all work that has been completed to date by the contractor. There is also planned work by the contractor for the fall to continue, which are things like temporary work, such as a trestle bridge construction, which includes the pilings and building access ramps; also, civic work, such as cleaning and grubbing for the new alignment. I do know that the department is working with the contractor to assess and potentially adjust the work plan, based upon the *Fisheries Act* authorization conditions.

Mr. Hassard: So, just to confirm — the Premier said that the authorization from Fisheries is in place now to move forward with the trestle bridge and the pilings — correct?

Hon. Mr. Silver: So again, the *Fisheries Act* authorization was issued in October, and then the rest of what I talked about is giving an update of what the actual contractor is doing. Whether mobilization or site preparation — is all under the authority of the act, or the water licence, or these things — I can't speak definitively as to which things I just listed are in the *Fisheries Act* authorization, but that authorization has been given, and so has the water licence for the project, which was issued in the summer of this year.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that answer from the Premier. It is good to hear that it is finally getting moving.

I am curious if the Premier could tell us — when we talk about capital projects now, we talk about the importance of looking at these projects through a climate lens. I am wondering if the Premier could tell us what options his government has looked at in terms of reducing the carbon footprint of this project.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't necessarily have anything specific as to what the department did in the context of the environment for this specific project, other than to say that it's extremely important that, as we build, we need to consider the environment in everything we do.

For example, if you are going to build something back, you can't be relying on old standards, because we are not just replacing things. We have to consider the effects of climate change; we have to consider the effects of reconciliation. Even if we were looking at just replacing something, that wouldn't be the cost. There are other costs on a shorter-term basis to identify climate change, which to me, circumvents longer term costs, when it comes to our climate.

I don't have anything else more for the member opposite specifically as to how we connected those two for this specific project, but the minister would be the best source of information for that particular question.

Mr. Hassard: I will just remind the Premier that we don't have the option of talking to the minister about this, as the department isn't up in the supplementary, so that's why I'm asking these questions of him. I appreciate what we can get.

I am wondering, since we are talking about bridges, if the Premier could give us any updates on the status of the Big Creek bridge — a status report on that.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will push back a bit. General debate is absolutely not the only time where members opposite can get in touch with ministers. They can write letters, e-mails, and we do our utmost to make sure that those are responded to. There are other avenues in which the members opposite can reach out to our officials. Again, this is general debate, so you are going to get general responses.

The Big Creek bridge — as the member opposite knows, it is ending its useful life, and it needs to be replaced. The bridge is west of Watson Lake on the Alaska Highway, so you can imagine how important it is to our transportation network. It's currently under construction. The replacement bridge is currently under construction beside the existing bridge. During our inspection, as the member heard in the Legislative Assembly when he asked the question of the minister, they found some defects on the new structure. So, the department is working with the contractor to do an assessment of the bridge and to resolve any of these issues in a timely manner.

Mr. Hassard: I am wondering if the Premier could talk to us at all about the \$250,000 that the government had budgeted for the Dawson bridge. If he could give us an idea of who has been consulted and when the consultation took place — just some things like that, I guess.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, with this particular project, I know that there were conversations with the Department of

Highways and Public Works, and the municipality, and I believe, the First Nation government — I will clarify that later — and supplementary conversations therein.

You can imagine that there would be some concern from both governments on this project — for example, where it would be, and what the defining characteristics are of the federal money and the flexibility therein — and also, bigger conversations from the community of West Dawson, and, as the community expands, bigger questions as to what we are going to do with waste water, timing of a bridge — if that happens. Those would be some of the conversations that would be had with the actual other governments in the community.

But, as far as public engagement, I am not aware of any public engagement right now. If I am wrong on that, I will update the member when I get to speak with the minister.

Mr. Hassard: Would the Premier be able to tell us how much of that \$250,000 has been spent — as the Minister of Finance?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the Minister of Finance, no. Again, we do the budget parts, and then it is the departments who then start the spending part, and I don't have that at my fingers — as far as whether or not they spent all of the \$250,000 or not. But, again, it can be another thing that I can endeavour to get back to the member opposite with after I talk with the department.

Mr. Hassard: I would appreciate it if the Premier could get that information back for us.

I have a couple of questions regarding the winter road to Old Crow. I am curious if the Premier can tell us if his government anticipates doing the winter road again next season.

Hon. Mr. Silver: This is an important conversation for you as well, Madam Chair. The previous winter road that was January 5 of this year — and was opened to authorized traffic on February 24 of this year. It was closed on March 25 after supporting 67 truckloads of materials to the community to support a number of community infrastructure programs that are happening there. The goal is always to construct a winter road based on need. This year is no different. There is a need to construct a winter road, and the project is funded through a two-year transfer payment agreement with the Vuntut Gwitchin government.

I believe that the plan is to move forward. Of course, when making decisions like this, consultation is extremely important. I know that Minister Clarke is going to be meeting with the Vuntut Gwitchin —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Member for Lake Laberge, on a point of order.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier just made reference to one of his ministers by name, which, of course, is contrary to our Standing Orders. I would ask you to remind him of that, Madam Chair.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm not on the point of order — I am just saying that, yes, I messed up, no problem.

The Minister of Highways and Public Works is meeting with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation to discuss the winter road over the next week to begin planning.

As you know, Madam Chair, we partnered with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation to build and maintain the road last year, and we will do that again this year.

Mr. Hassard: I am wondering if the Premier could give us any insight into whether the projects in Old Crow that are being undertaken currently in Old Crow — if there have been any significant cost increases to those projects. I know that when the winter road closed, within days, pipe for pilings, in particular — and we've seen loads of insulation — were actually hauled to Fairbanks and then flown in by airplane. I am curious who covered those extra costs and how it has impacted the projects.

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, the design/bid contract started with a \$44.8-million increase — if we're talking specifically about the wellness centre or the tenplex. So, we know that the contract that went to Ketza, for example, started at \$44.8 million, and that did increase to \$49.5 million, with an additional change order pending. That would bring the total cost of the contract value to \$53.5 million. As far as the specifics about specific piping, I don't have those numbers, and I don't know if that's what drove the costs. But, based upon the increases in the project, the Government of Yukon has been responsible for covering the cost of some increases.

Mr. Hassard: From \$44 million to \$50 million — almost \$54 million — is fairly significant. So, I would hope that the Premier would know what has caused those costs to go up.

I have a question regarding the hill on the north side of Lewes River bridge. Of course, there was a tragic incident there a couple of years ago, and the government had talked about widening the road through there. I know that I saw equipment there doing drilling and getting soil samples. There was talk of engineering taking place for that expansion.

So, I'm curious if the Premier can update this Legislature on whether any work is planned to be undertaken on widening that section of road and, hopefully, reducing the chances of something like that happening again.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will go back to the member's comment that the Premier should know more about these contracts. We look at about half a billion dollars' worth of capital projects. I think I would get a grain of sand here — that I don't know every single increase of every single cost. Also, this is general debate, so I'll keep my comments general.

If we do get into more specifics, there is always an opportunity to reach out to the department and to write them and ask them the specific questions.

There are examples of shipping materials in the contract. It is structured as a cash allowance, and the contractor is paid for shipping needs, if that is what the member opposite is looking for. The majority of the increases, actually, to the contract value had been — increased shipping budget for materials from Whitehorse to Old Crow. There is inflation happening right across the world right now. Changes to market conditions and a higher than estimated total number of loads have resulted in significantly higher total shipping costs.

A lot of the cost overruns that we do see — including other projects throughout the Yukon — follow a very similar trend in that we had to deal with supply chain issues due to COVID-19. Also, through the illegal conflict in Ukraine, we are seeing inflationary conditions as well.

With any project, unanticipated events may occur that result in change orders. All of the change orders are subject to departmental oversight, and due process is always followed — I can say, as the Minister of Finance. This year, the effects of supply chain disruptions, as I said — inflation, changes to market conditions — have resulted in higher costs for most projects.

We do a five-year capital plan. Five-year capital plans are based upon our ability to balance budgets and also to work with the federal government. These things will change based upon those conditions. What we try to do is to make sure that we move forward on projects, even if there are some increases in costs because of these conditions. Take a look at the context of the years in which we are building. These are years where, because of COVID, we have seen maybe a little bit more of a slowdown in other areas of the economy. We have seen consumer demand switch, based upon limited mobility during the pandemic — especially internationally. People spent in different areas. Our markets fluctuated. What we decided to do as a government was have a strong capital build, and projects like this came in overbudget. We made the decision to still move forward with them. I think that it was the right decision to make, including bridges like the Nisutlin Bay bridge.

Mr. Hassard: I just thought that it was interesting that the Premier was rather dismissive of nearly \$10 million, so that is why I asked the question.

Then the question that I asked further was regarding the hill on the north side of the Lewes River bridge, and I did not hear anything on that, Madam Chair.

Hon. Mr. Silver: The member opposite isn't getting my tone at all — never dismissive of over-costs — and I certainly wasn't dismissive of those — more dismissive about — not dismissive at all. I am hoping that the member opposite would give me a little bit of leeway in that I don't know the dollar-by-dollar indexing of every over-cost in every project of a capital budget that is in the hundreds of millions of dollars, especially in general debate.

When it comes to the horrific accident that did occur a couple of years ago, which the community of Yukon is still reeling about, I do know that there is design money, and it is being included in the next year's capital planning, to address engineering concerns that are at that site — so that is probably what the member opposite is seeing there with any of the actions at that corner, as he drives home from sessions. We are definitely aware of the concerns of activity, and definitely working to adapt this area, and so, more to be said on that as the work comes in and continues.

Mr. Hassard: I certainly look forward — as many others do — to seeing that work progress.

I had a question regarding licence plates in the Yukon. Now, as the Premier is probably well aware, we no longer receive stickers for our licence plates. So, I am wondering how

the government plans to monitor licence plates. If you don't have a sticker, obviously no one — the RCMP, in particular — wouldn't know if your registration was up to date or not; so, I am curious if the Premier can give us some insight into that. Does the government plan on setting up cameras to maybe regulate or control certain things?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We're certainly not the only jurisdiction in Canada to be going this way. I also know that, as we were going through this process and looking at it, the number of licence plates that you can actually see in winter conditions is very minimal. If you are infringing on any of the laws that are posted by the speed laws, then, of course, you have an obligation to show your registration and your licensing.

I think that this is a good move, especially when it comes to the overall work that they're doing to modernize the department. The work that they're doing on your ability to not even have to go into Motor Vehicles and see the amazing workers there, but actually do your work online — this is also a helpful step in that pursuit. Again, looking at all of the pros and cons of this system, we felt that it was important for us to move in a way that reduces some of the red tape a bit and streamlines things. I know that, talking to some of the employees when I was down there — I just had a birthday, so of course, my licence was due — they were pretty jazzed that these stickers were gone.

Mr. Hassard: I have some questions for the Premier regarding FTEs in Highways and Public Works. I am curious if we could get an update on numbers of FTEs and how they compare to last year. Are there more or less?

Hon. Mr. Silver: If we go back to the 2021-22 mains, the Department of Highways and Public Works would have had a 774.8 dedicated FTE count. Then, if you move forward to this current year's FTEs, we have increased that number by 7.8. Some are term, and some are permanent. We put 1.0 in *Our Clean Future* initiatives, 3.0 FTEs for airport equipment operators, 1.8 for ferry services, one for flight path implementation, and one for IT security.

Mr. Hassard: I thank the Premier for those numbers. Would the Premier be able to inform the House how many of those positions are not filled?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't know that number at this time.

Mr. Hassard: I'm wondering if the Premier would be willing to provide that information through a legislative return, or however is easiest for him? The reason that I ask this question is that we hear quite often that the camps — highway camps, in particular — are having trouble staffing all of their positions, especially with mechanics, in particular. I know that Highways in Dawson City, in particular, has been challenged with keeping mechanics on staff, so we had hoped that the Premier would be able to agree to get us those numbers, just so we can see them.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I could definitely look into that and see if I can get those numbers for him. I do agree that, when it came to some unforeseen closures that we saw in my community, that was due to some staffing issues on the ferry, and it was on a reduced schedule this year. It is very difficult in this modern climate that we're in right now in Yukon, having the lowest

unemployment rate in Canada — a booming economy. We've been seeing shortages everywhere.

When I worked with other governments, we hear of staffing shortages there. I'm dealing with it in my departments, as well, as every department does. So, it's something that we're aware of. We want to avoid any unnecessary — in the specific cases of the staffing shortages in Dawson, it's extremely important that we don't burn out our crews. They work extremely hard to have the *George Black* ferry into operation as quickly as possible and to avoid any unnecessary wear and tear on the remainder of the season — that's always a consideration, as we're taking a look at hours, human resources, and also providing the service that is completely necessary.

Typically, the ferry is reduced to 12-hour services by mid-September, and that kind of helps, as far as staffing for the ferry goes. I understand that there are staffing shortages in a lot of different sectors. Every time I go out on official business, either with the Council of the Federation or other responsibilities, I'm trying my best to drum up some business, I guess, to maybe get some people to move to the Yukon, and the other Premiers are usually telling me to back off, because they're experiencing similar shortages right across Canada.

Mr. Hassard: So, we talk a lot about climate change. So, I'm curious if the Premier can tell us how much fuel is used each year by Highways and Public Works maintenance — or Transportation Maintenance?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I certainly wouldn't have that information at my fingertips in general debate, but I'll endeavour to get back to the member opposite.

Mr. Hassard: When the Premier is at it, if we could get how much greenhouse gas emissions are produced by Highways and Public Works Transportation Maintenance at the same time. And also, maybe the Premier has this at his fingertips, as Minister of Finance: How much carbon tax is paid for the fuel used by Highways and Public Works Transportation Maintenance?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We can take a look in to see if I can find those numbers for the member opposite. I will add, as well, that the money we do pay as a government, we do not rebate ourselves in the carbon-pricing mechanism. That money goes on to other governments, like First Nation governments, municipal governments, businesses, and also individuals.

Mr. Hassard: So, in last year's budget, in the briefing binder that we're able to get, Aviation and Transportation Maintenance talks about \$6 million in expenditures, but the actual details of it have been redacted. So, I'm curious if the Premier could tell us what those \$6 million in expenditures are, since we're not able to see that.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Aviation money is a very general question. I might need some more information from the member opposite. The aviation system is obviously essential for connecting our communities, building our economy, and linking Yukoners together and to the rest of the world as well. We have 23 registered aerodromes and five certified airports, so we have been making significant investments into aviation over the past few years, including upgrades to equipment and

facilities, so I might need more information from the member opposite.

In the 2021-22 fiscal year, we spent \$19.4 million on capital projects. In 2022-23, we are forecasting to spend about \$56 million on capital projects. This year, we are also upgrading the parallel runway for the Whitehorse airport, which will allow us to move forward with the construction of the main runway. The parallel runway is expected to be operational later in this fiscal year. We are prioritizing operation and maintenance and capital spending based on a number of factors, safety being the most important. In addition to that, regulatory requirements are in there as well. Costs, traffic volumes, impact to communities, and impact to the industry are also considered. I am really not sure — in all of that redacted line or note that the member opposite has — so if he gives me a little more information, I might be able to either respond here, if it is a general question, or, if it's more specific, I will have to get the answer from the department.

Mr. Hassard: I will have to go back through my notes to find which page or which line that was in particular. I didn't write it down.

The Premier talked about the work at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport here in Whitehorse. One of my questions was about the runway improvements, so I appreciate that I got that answer before I even had to ask the question. One of things that we have asked in the past and haven't received a response to is: Where is the government at with regard to restaurant services in the Erik Nielsen International Airport? I am curious if the Premier could give us a bit of an update on that while he is talking about that particular building.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am not sure if I have too much more information. I think he asked for expansion on some of the Whitehorse airport airside improvements as well. Just on that, the construction tender for the reallocation of the taxiway G was awarded and work started last spring. Anyone travelling would have seen the good work of Terus Construction Limited and Skookum Asphalt — approximately \$21 million worth of work there. Construction began this spring, with completion expected this fall.

Planning for the reconstruction of the main runway, as I said, is currently underway. Just to remind members, in the summer of this year, pavement friction results for the main runway began to decline to levels that triggered remediation action. We worked on that.

In September, just two months ago, industry expert Skidabrader Group LLC provided a surface texture treatment, which has restored the main runway to acceptable conditions — so, just to give the member opposite a little bit more information on the question that he didn't ask.

Also, the food services at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport were put on hold, as everybody knows, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The folks who ran that place were very nice people who seemed to always remember who you were. I was very fascinated to watch those folks, sitting at tables and talking to people. I really liked their scrambled eggs, by the way.

With the removal of the state of emergency on March 18 of this year, the department was engaging with the highest ranked proponent to provide food services at the airport — hopefully later this year. The food and beverage options will continue to be available within the gift shop. Vending machines are nearby as well, and there is a nearby hotel — the Taj Mahal. If anyone hasn't been in there yet, it has fantastic food. Again, we really want to see the food services back to at least what we have seen in the past, if not something better.

Mr. Hassard: I am sure there are plenty of people who would be happy to see the restaurant back in operation at the airport here in Whitehorse.

Since we are talking about airports, I had a question regarding the Old Crow Airport. In the budget, it said that there was \$400,000 for runway improvements in Old Crow. So, I am curious as to what those improvements might have been, and if they were, in fact, completed or not.

Hon. Mr. Silver: During the winter months, we have on-site daily maintenance coverage at our certified airports in Dawson, Mayo, Old Crow, Watson Lake, and also Whitehorse. There is also aircraft movement. Surfaces are cleared, as well, on a timely basis — on a priority basis. Also, other ground-side surfaces need to be cleared as soon as possible, after the runways. I don't recall anything else specific, past regular maintenance, for this line item, and if I am wrong on that, I will let the member know as soon as possible.

Mr. Hassard: It was actually in the capital budget where it listed \$400,000 for runway improvements for Old Crow. So, it was not just for maintenance.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will have to get back to the member opposite if it is a capital-specific asset. I can't recall what that would be specifically right now.

Mr. Hassard: Moving to street lights, Madam Chair, I am wondering if the Premier could provide us with any updates on street lights and crosswalks in Watson Lake, as well as the street lights that were anticipated to be put up in Stewart Crossing — if that, in fact, has been done, or where we are at in regard to those two projects in particular.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do know that in August of this year, the department received an approval in principle from the federal government for \$1.1 million in funding for improvements for Watson Lake through Infrastructure Canada's active transportation fund and that Highways and Public Works officials will be returning to Watson Lake — hopefully soon, if they haven't already — to further discuss plans with stakeholders. The department has also engaged with ATCO to develop design and implementation plans for the new street lights along the Robert Campbell Highway. It is expected that construction work will begin there in 2023.

Also, as far as the lighting, the lighting has been installed, as far as I know. Testing functions for lights have been along — the member opposite asked about more up in my neck of the woods, so I do know that for the Mayo bridge, the testing functions for lights along there have been completed. That is about all I have right now for an update on lighting in rural Yukon.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate those updates. Since we're talking about the Premier's riding, would he be able to update the House or let us know what work is being done on the Klondike Highway near the Dempster Cut-off. Obviously, the road was closed this fall, as they had some landslides. Obviously, there is a possibility of instability still in those slides. Is Highways and Public Works or the government doing continued testing on those hillsides? Do they anticipate building any retaining walls or permanent structures to keep that road from being closed again?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I was remiss to mention — again, I talked about the Mayo bridge, but the Stewart Crossing lighting — that's now installed, and it's working. It has been completed — just from the member opposite's previous question.

We're still looking at the stabilization of the slopes right now. As the member opposite knows, this was a record rainfall in the Klondike region, since we started keeping these statistics. So, I do know there was some drilling testing that was completed this fall, and that the department is still working on this, basically. They're conducting testing and assessing options to stabilize the slopes. Driving through there, it's very interesting to see the — of course, when you come down into the Klondike Valley from the lookout, from Tintina, and you finally get down into the valley a bit more, the road is very similar in design. It's very close to the banks there, as you hit on to the Klondike River for the first time in your journey. It's remarkable how, you know, over tens and tens of kilometres, the very similar effects happened right away.

So, again, by just looking at that and knowing the rainfall, I'm hoping this is the result of record levels of rainfall, but I won't speculate as to the cause. I do know the work is ongoing, and the assessment of options to stabilize the slopes is still ongoing as well.

Mr. Hassard: So, continuing with the north Klondike, I'm wondering — we've heard concerns that the tenders haven't gone out for further construction along the north Klondike this fall, because the government is not sure what there is going to be for funding for that part of the world next year.

And we know that with all of the issues that we discussed at length, about supply-chain issues, and labour force issues, it is very important for the contracting industry to have those tenders come out now, rather than next spring, so that they can actually move forward with getting supplies in place, whether it be culverts or geo cloth — you know, all of these different things that we have seen issues getting, due to supply-chain restraints.

So, I would encourage — or hope — that the government would be proactive in getting tenders out much earlier, rather than later, because waiting until spring could create challenges for contractors to actually get the projects done in next year's construction season. I know that the forecast showed one job, in particular, for the north Klondike for next year, but I am hoping that the Premier could provide us with a little more accurate information, I guess, as to what projects contractors can be looking at, or looking forward to bidding on, on that section of highway next year.

Hon. Mr. Silver: This is definitely a project that I am extremely happy about. We do our budgeting, and then we get funding from the federal government, as well, through the national trade corridors fund, which was extremely great to see. We are upgrading sections of that road that needed upgrading for years, and it just never happened. We all know how vital a link it is for tourism, but, again, for industry, getting up to a certain classification of road is extremely important for those folks as well. And so, through that national trade corridors funding, the Department of Highways and Public Works did an exceptional job of getting that cash and upgrading critical sections of this highway. It is going to take time; it is a 10-year project. These upgrades are extremely important for safety, and also improving driving conditions.

You know, we definitely know in that first year to two, there was probably the worst rainy summers that definitely caused some challenges, but, again, driving through there right now and seeing upgrades — like, for example, the bridge just before Stewart — it's remarkable, the work that's being done, and even more remarkable, because for the most part, we get an awful lot of local folks doing this road. If there's one thing that Yukoners know how to do, it's to move dirt — based upon our industries. It's just exceptional work and exceptional pride, as well, from these local companies when they do this work.

This project is, again, why I'm so happy to talk about this. This supports over 800 jobs in the construction period. It will also provide our government an opportunity to strengthen our relationships and collaborate in our partnerships with Yukon First Nations, because we are using the First Nation procurement policy on this particular build as well.

By the end of the 2022-23 fiscal year, the construction of approximately 46 kilometres of road will be completed — a little more of an update. We also have already installed a digital messaging sign to make drivers more aware of construction zones. We've cleared vegetation in corridors, and improved a number of other things, like culverts, for example — massive culverts. A total of 209 kilometres between Carmacks and the Dempster Highway intersection will be completely reconstructed, and the department will expand the use of technology in the corridor that collects data on traffic, road conditions, weather — all of which will really help to improve the safety of that very long, winding road.

The department is also planning the development of electric vehicle charging stations along this corridor to support the growth of electric vehicles. The upgrade, right now, from Stewart to Dawson — that's 65 kilometres of highway — the Moose Creek bridge being rehabilitated, and the upgrade from Carmacks to Stewart Crossing will reconstruct 144 kilometres of highway between the communities of Carmacks and Stewart Crossing, as we continue down this road.

I agree with the member opposite — as much as we can to make sure that we have tenders out on time for the construction season, especially if we have local folks who are bidding in these processes. The first tender is planned for next month; it'll be out in December. The second one is planned just for a little bit later, in January. So, we're continuing to work on wrapping up this season of construction projects — that program — and

already turning to getting these tenders out in December and in January.

Mr. Hassard: The Premier mentioned the rehabilitation of Moose Creek. McCabe River was also listed this year for bridge rehabilitation. I am curious if we could get an update on whether that work will be done this year, or if that project has actually been either cancelled or delayed.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As far as I know, the tendering work on the bridge was early this year, in February, and the contract is already in place.

Mr. Hassard: I am well aware that the tender was released, bid on, and awarded, but none of the work has actually taken place to the best of my knowledge, so I was curious if there was a reason for that, and if the job has been delayed, or if it had been cancelled for some reason.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Not cancelled, no; it is awarded, and I believe that the completion date is for next year.

Mr. Hassard: I am curious if the Premier could give us some updates on the Gateway project. I know about the funding around the Gateway, and we know that the work was done in the Carmacks area, but if we could get some information as to what is next and when he anticipates that work to start coming forward.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I won't steal any thunder from the ministers responsible as far as what is happening next. We know that a lot of work has gone into the Carmacks bypass. Starting in the spring of 2019, that project agreement was signed with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, and that included a new road and a bridge, which allow the industrial traffic to bypass Carmacks, creating a much safer flow of traffic for residents. It's a pretty impressive project, actually. It is also helping to improve access to mining activities, enabling the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation to benefit from contracting, education and training associated with the project. It's an extremely important piece, for sure.

I do know that, in November of last year, Pelly Construction was awarded the \$29.6-million contract to construct the new bridge and new road. That work has been going on. I think the contractor was scheduled to complete approximately 80 percent of that work of the road and 60 percent of the bridge this construction season, and then the remaining work on that will continue next year, but the entire project is anticipated to continue until 2024.

As far as next sections of the roads — I don't have any updates for the member opposite as far as any announcements of any new projects on that. I won't go into details about how we got here with Gateway and the history of the project because the member opposite is well versed in all of that. It is extremely important funding, and it's great to see this money being spent as we continue to work forward — with our First Nation governments as well — getting access to roads and also moving this project forward.

As far as federal governments, this money came from two different federal governments, so it's a long time coming and I am really glad to see the money flowing, especially in this bypass project.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Hassard: I have a question for the Premier regarding rural roads and resource access roads. Of course, I know that these two particular funding pots have been very important to both my riding and the Member for Klondike's riding. The funding has been zero for these two line items this year, and we don't see any funding for those programs in the five-year capital concept, so I am curious if the Premier could maybe shed some light on why those two particular pots of funding have dried up, and if and when he anticipates that funding to be renewed.

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, just for folks listening at home, the objectives of the rural road upgrade program are to serve the transportation needs of Yukoners, to upgrade non-industrial rural roads in Yukon, whether currently maintained by YG or not — to upgrade rural roads based on requests and input from the communities, property owners, and other stakeholders and to accomplish the work with local contractors, where available. I know that a lot of folks up in the goldfields did some exceptional work in the past with this. We evaluate the projects on a geographical basis, to ensure that all regions of Yukon benefit from the program and also to develop a cost-sharing agreement for projects that are not in the current inventory of our Yukon government-maintained roads. You can apply for this program. Applications are considered for funding in the next fiscal year.

The 2022-23 program funding was reallocated to address flood mitigation requirements in various locations. We know that the resource access roads are the first link in the resource industry. This is an extremely important investment, for sure. I do know that the highway will be incorporating rural roads funding in the next year's capital plan, but the pickup in this programming was due to the flood mitigation responsibilities.

Mr. Hassard: Just to confirm, the Premier said that there will be funding in the resource access road funding pot for next year. I don't recall seeing it in the five-year — I will take the Premier's nod as a yes.

Moving on, we have talked at great length about brushing here in the Legislature — and the Premier brought it up a few minutes ago — and ensuring that the brush is cleared in the highway right-of-way for obvious safety reasons, whether it be line of sight or animals jumping out in front of vehicles.

In 2019, the then-Minister of Highways and Public Works talked about a new program and standardizing highway maintenance — and this is a quote from a news article: "In six years ... 'we'll have the entire network done, a total of 6,200

kilometres of road..." I know full well, as I'm sure the Premier knows full well too, that we certainly haven't reached that 6,200-kilometre mark yet. I am wondering if we can get an update on where we are in terms of this program. Are we going to hit that 6,200-kilometre mark by the end of the six years?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't necessarily have too much more of an update than what the minister has already spoken about in this conversation in the Assembly. We have implemented a roadway safety improvement program under the guise of safety and brushing. By brushing and improving lane markings, removing hazards in the right-of-way, and installing and maintaining road barriers — it's a bigger picture of safety improvement, which encapsulates brushing as well.

Since 2019, the department has brushed over 2,800 kilometres along Yukon highways. They installed over nine kilometres of new barriers and painted more than 3,000 kilometres of highway lines. When we consider money for safety improvement, there are also wildlife considerations. Obviously, anyone driving our roads know that this presents a real danger for our drivers, so frequent brushing obviously allows us to see wildlife better and hopefully prevent collisions. That's an extremely important part of why we do this work.

Last year, we put out a request for qualifications for contractors interested in bidding on vegetation brushing. These tenders were established — establishing a qualified source list of pre-vetted contractors. Having that pre-vetted source of contractors, as the member opposite knows, helps us to move the tendering process quickly and effectively as we provide the assurances that potential contractors have the capabilities to do that work, such as the equipment and the experience. It becomes easier in that process. We currently have 37 projects from this program. They are in various stages of the procurement process. Depending on the size, projects are offered by direct award or invitation or open tenders for the full list of qualified companies.

I do know also that Highways and Public Works sent out close to 1,000 letters to property owners who were nearby upcoming vegetation control — also an important part of the safety work that we do — directing owners to an online platform that maps the locations where vegetation control will be taking place and notes the specifications of planned vegetation control, and explains the benefits of that control as well. We are finalizing the inspections for the 2022 brushing season, and we will provide a progress update on that.

Mr. Hassard: If I could just go back to the rural road program for a minute, the Premier said that the funding had been put over into dealing with flooding. So, I'm curious why the government would have chosen to take and put that money into flooding yet come up with \$2.5 million or somewhere in that neighbourhood to redo the parking lot out here where we, as MLAs, park our vehicles. I guess I'm just looking for some kind of justification as to why the government building parking lot would have taken precedence over things such as rural road upgrades.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't think, necessarily, that there is a relationship between a parking lot and the need for the rural roads. Decisions are made based upon budget allocations for

capital projects through the Department of Highways and Public Works. I wouldn't say that it was prioritizing the flooding concerns that we saw with the parking lot here compared to other things. The funding for the rural road program will continue and, in the short term, it was delayed due to the need for flooding. So, these are decisions that are made by the department, and I don't have any more information on it at my fingertips in general debate as to why the decision was made to use that money for flooding.

Mr. Hassard: I think the interesting thing about that statement from the Premier is the fact that the parking lot was never in the budget. I guess that's what makes me curious as to why something that isn't in a budget can suddenly appear, yet things that have been ongoing would get defunded because of money going somewhere else, but I will move on.

I'm curious if the Premier could inform the House how much BST was done this year and a comparison as to whether that was more or less than previous years.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As far as a comparison of the years, I don't have that, but I do know that, on average, we resurface about 130 kilometres of BST and 10 kilometres of asphalt every year, and clear about 250 kilometres of highway right-of-way vegetation for visibility and road safety.

Mr. Hassard: Earlier, the Premier and I were discussing the winter road to Old Crow, and the Premier mentioned that the minister was engaging with the First Nation about the upcoming road. Could he just elaborate — I didn't write it down and I'm obviously not able to access the Blues yet — on what it was he was saying around the Minister of Highways and Public Works engaging with VGFN regarding the winter road?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As I said in answer to one of his questions earlier, the minister — I got called out for calling him by his name. The Minister of Highways and Public Works is meeting with Vuntut Gwitchin to discuss the winter road over the next week to begin planning.

Mr. Hassard: That's the reason I wanted to clarify that, because I thought that is what the Premier had said. I guess I have to ask the Premier — he said that it is going to happen next week. The Premier, I would hope, is well aware that VGFN is in election mode, so I'm curious as to how those talks will take place since, essentially, the government of the Vuntut Gwitchin is in caretaker mode. Will those discussions still take place, or will that be delayed now that the election has officially been called?

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, it wouldn't be with the chief — would be the answer — and the minister is meeting on the request of the First Nation. So, it was their request to meet next week.

Mr. Hassard: Can the Premier tell us who requested the meeting and who the minister would be meeting with then, since they are in election mode?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would assume that it would be done with members of their government, but I do not have that information.

Mr. Hassard: Would the Premier be kind enough to get back to the Legislature next week and inform this House who it is that the Minister of Highways and Public Works will be

meeting with in Old Crow regarding these negotiations or these talks?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, when we have bilateral conversations, it is two governments, so, if I can, I will.

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I appreciate that. I certainly hope that the Premier will be able to provide that information to the Legislature.

In regard to the winter road, previously there have been monitors from Old Crow — people hired to monitor the progress of the road — to ensure that no damage actually occurs to the land. So, I am curious if the government will be funding these road monitors again, should they proceed with building a winter road to Old Crow again this season.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, there is a reason for meeting, and those conversations are ongoing. I am not sure if the specifics of the arrangement, the agreement, have been solidified yet. I will say that if these monitors have worked in the past, I don't see any reason why we would not continue down that road, but, again, I am not involved in those conversations.

Mr. Hassard: When I was in Old Crow in September, it was certainly brought to my attention as a concern that, in the past couple of road seasons, there has been less monitoring of damage to the lands, so I think that the people of Old Crow would certainly like to see some assurances from the minister and from the Premier that they really work toward ensuring that monitoring is done, and done well. I would just encourage the Premier to hopefully have that conversation with the minister to ensure that, moving forward, that is something that is taken seriously.

One of the other things that we have heard is that the winter road has become a channel for importation of alcohol, which leads to bootlegging in the community. We know that Old Crow is a dry community. Can the Premier tell us if the government is taking steps to ensure that this doesn't occur, and what steps those might be?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, each year comes with different complexities and situations — temperature as well. There are lots of things that have to be worked out on the operational level to address everything from environmental concerns to ensuring oversight, as the member opposite is concerned about.

We do know that there have been different approaches in previous years, as far as the build goes. Previously, the government would fund the Vuntut Gwitchin government for the management and construction of the winter road. That was back in 2013-14. So, every year comes with different challenges and concerns. Hopefully, these conversations that the two governments are having together will address these concerns and make sure that every year that we work together as government, we have a better approach to a very, very important piece of infrastructure, albeit temporary.

Mr. Hassard: One of the 2021 Liberal platform commitments was to establish an internal Yukon government team that would work to maximize local food purchases through procurement. I am curious if the Premier could give us an update on how the government is making out with that particular commitment.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't think that would be under Highways and Public Works. That would be more of an EMR pursuit. I do know that a couple of ministers were working on this, but I don't have any new update for the member opposite today, as far as advancement of that particular commitment.

Mr. Hassard: We talked about brushing, and we talked about line painting. I am curious if the Premier can tell us — a couple of years ago, Highways and Public Works did a contract to supply concrete barriers, or Jersey barriers. They had talked about putting out a plan to show where those Jersey barriers were going to be installed and when.

I don't believe that we have ever seen a copy of that plan. I have asked for it, but I am curious if the Premier knows. I am sure the Premier notices when he is driving around the Yukon that there are gravel pits throughout the territory that have stockpiles of these Jersey barriers. I am curious if there is any update on what the plan is for installing those Jersey barriers and when they plan on installing them.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I don't think I have anything else to add, other than from the context of the brushing road safety improvement program, the one I spoke earlier about, that part of that money in that envelope is for maintaining the roadside barriers. That's important work to be done.

I agree; I do see them lined up on some of the roads as we go, but I don't have any updates for him as far as when those will be installed.

Mr. Hassard: I have a couple of questions regarding the First Nation procurement policy. I'm just wondering if the Premier can provide an update to the Legislature on how he feels that this new procurement policy is working.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would say that I'm extremely excited that we have a First Nation procurement policy. We now know that there are local contractors who don't normally bid on government contracts who are now taking a look at the requirements, taking a look at their ways of doing, and going: "this is something advantageous to us". We hear comments from the private sector, from also the development corporations in the First Nation governments, about recycling those dollars. We've heard folks call them "sticky dollars", because you have less opportunity, as you go into a bidding, to cut corners and to hire more people from down south who may not want to actually grow roots in this community. A healthy, capitalistic model is going to encourage a good percentage of both, but we've seen it — and the member opposite has seen it, as well — companies that might be not doing so well down south underbidding just to keep people in jobs — and probably not the best model.

So, I think there is a huge strength that comes from working together with the First Nation governments and with Yukon First Nation peoples and their businesses to provide active partnership right across the territory.

Is it perfect? I mean, every single new project is going to have growing pains — absolutely — but I see the exponential growth, year by year. I see the departments working together with stakeholders to make this better, and I think it's extremely important. With this initiative, we are providing huge opportunities for local businesses to participate in Yukon's

economy — specifically, First Nation businesses — ensuring procurement policies and processes are done in accordance with the final agreements.

Drawing down on these final agreements is an obligation that every single government should be undertaking if they are in the Yukon, and that is extremely important. This is just one of those activities that we are moving forward in accordance to the Yukon First Nation final agreements. We speak about advancing reconciliation; this is an extremely important part of it. Reviewing the relationships on a regular basis, as far as how we move forward here, is extremely important — making sure that we have a program that works and does what it is intended to do — renewing relationships with Yukon First Nations and respecting treaty and aboriginal rights.

So, we are listening to the public as well. We took a phased approach to the implementation of this important policy to ensure that all Yukon businesses, Yukon First Nations, and also Yukon government employees had adequate time to prepare for and to understand the policy.

There was an industry working group that was established, as well, to provide a forum for stakeholders to meaningfully engage in the development of what the process is, or just the tools that the government now uses to implement this policy. Change is hard — that is for sure — but, when people see the ability for us to, again, recycle those dollars through this policy into the Yukon, I think that it is very important and it is helpful for all Yukoners. I think that this is really important.

There is a six-month interim review of the policy that is posted on yukon.ca, so I would encourage the member opposite — if he hasn't already — to take a look at that. I will end there for now, because the question was pretty general — are you happy with the progress? I am. I know that there are always going to be issues. Change is always hard when we build from one system to another, but, again, with the original intent — and at every meeting that I had with the folks who were designing and developing this — it was talking about our opportunities to really strengthen the private sector here in Yukon and, at the same time, owning up to our obligations in the final agreements.

Mr. Hassard: So, we know that, when the First Nation procurement policy was first implemented, the idea was to ensure — or to attempt to ensure — that at least 15 percent of government contracts went to First Nation businesses. So, I am curious if the Premier can tell us how we are actually measuring that, and does the government intend to put out a report or anything at some point just to show Yukoners where, in fact, we have managed to get to in that regard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Just to quantify — the member opposite is talking about BVRs, bid value reductions. We definitely have heard concerns from industry representatives about the use of the bid value reductions — the BVRs. The Monitor and Review Committee is provided with monthly reporting on the impacts of these reductions, and we will continue to work with our First Nation partners to adjust those bid value reduction parameters, if that becomes necessary. They are important. They are an important way to meet the First Nation procurement policy objectives. They allow benefits to

flow to the entire Yukon economy, which is a win for all businesses in the territory. All businesses can earn bid value reductions for Yukon First Nation participation in those contracts. I do have some information about — per sector. As far as BVRs in services, that represents about 32 percent of these, construction is about 35 percent, and in the goods category, it would be about 32 percent.

A lot has happened over the past six months. Again, if the member opposite wants to go to the six-month interim review, there is some information there that can give him some updates.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that. I will certainly have a look at that. I have a couple of questions regarding the Dempster fibre project. We know that some concerns were brought forward from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government in Dawson.

We understand that the minister — or the government, I guess I should say — I'm not entirely sure that it was the minister. But the government has been talking to the First Nation government there to try to alleviate their concerns. I am curious if the Premier could give us a bit of an update on how those talks are going, what the government is doing to alleviate the concerns of the First Nation, and, in general, whether the project is on time, on budget, and how things are going in general.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I do know that more than \$25 million is budgeted for the construction of the Dempster fibre line. This year, in the mains, the federal government is contributing \$59 million to this project, and Northwestel is contributing \$15 million as an upfront payment on the 20-year lease with exclusive rights to operate that line. We do know that there were some concerns addressed by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. I believe the department has done a great job of addressing those concerns and getting back to the First Nation to hopefully alleviate any of their concerns and to address the specifics of that.

As far as timelines, I'm not aware of any changes in timelines as to whether or not they have been expanded from the last time the opposition has asked this question. I have nothing new to report as far as whether I would speculate about whether or not there are any delays on this project.

Mr. Hassard: One of the things that I had forgotten to mention when we were talking about the Whitehorse airport was the Whitehorse airport maintenance facility replacement. There was \$4.25 million in the budget, so I am curious if the Premier could provide any update on where we are at with the replacement of that facility.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't think I have too much of an update for the member opposite other than that planning work is underway for the replacement of the maintenance facility, which is absolutely critical for the operation of the airport. The new facility is being considered in a location that maximizes land availability for the private sector at the airport, which has been an ongoing concern and issue with some of the private folks who are accessing and using this airport for their business.

Mr. Hassard: I guess that is an update because, obviously, we're not spending — or I certainly hope that we are not spending — \$4.25 million on planning. I guess the update

would be that nothing is happening other than that they are still planning.

As well, the budget had \$200,000 allocated for the Whitehorse grader station. I am curious if the Premier could provide an update on where the government is with regard to planning and developing the new Whitehorse grader station.

Hon. Mr. Silver: We are talking specifically about the Marwell grader station. It is in poor condition. It is old — approximately 60 years old. The current buildings definitely have high energy use and maintenance costs — that's for sure. The department has determined that replacing the grader station is the most economical option and will free up valuable land that may be better suited for other types of development. It is a pretty central place in the core here of Whitehorse.

We are still determining where the new grader station may be located before we move this project forward. There are several possible sites. A final decision on that location will be part of the next phase of planning.

Mr. Hassard: Under the title of Green Infrastructure under Highways and Public Works, there is \$7 million allocated. I am curious if the Premier could give us a breakdown, a list, or an idea of what has been done and how much of that money has been spent?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am assuming that the member opposite is talking about the green infrastructure program. That started in 2020 with Highways and Public Works creating the program. It is a multi-year investment program. Of course, the aim is to reduce our carbon emissions and to improve the climate resiliency of Yukon government buildings and assets. I am sure that it is not a coincidence that the question about the Marwell grader station is right after this question about investments in green infrastructure programs.

Just for some information, 51 energy assessments were completed last fall to identify opportunities for building energy retrofits in our government buildings. We will assess 25 more buildings located in Yukon communities this fall. We are continuing to conduct a larger feasibility study to evaluate biomass, geothermal, and other renewable heating options for over 50 different sites around the territory. These assessments will result in the construction of several renewable energy projects over the next several years. The design for the first of these systems is planned for tender in the winter of 2023. The department has completed feasibility studies at four off-grid diesel-powered sites to transition to renewable energy. Construction of solar systems is underway at two of these sites, with the other two that are planned for future years.

Mr. Hassard: There have been some concerns regarding the Dempster Highway. Of course, it has been brought up here during Question Period, as well. I am curious if the Premier could tell us what the plans are, moving forward. We know that there has been very little in the budget for capital for the Dempster Highway for the past couple of years. There certainly hasn't been any increase to O&M for the Dempster, either. I am just wondering if the Premier can update us on the status of things with the Dempster, and if there are any plans moving forward.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am not sure if I will give much more of an update than what the minister has already spoken of on the floor of the Legislature, but as we know, it's a major highway — a very long highway, at 740 kilometres. It's all gravel. We also know that the Government of Northwest Territories operates ferries at the Peel and the Mackenzie River side, with ice bridge use in the winter, so there is kind of a joint responsibility.

The Yukon section of the highway is supported by the three grader stations, and those are at Ogilvie, the Klondike, and Eagle Plains. The southern section of the highway, up to Tombstone, receives moderate traffic volumes — about 80 vehicles a day, compared to the northern part of the highway, which receives about 50 vehicles a day.

While traffic volumes for the 300-plus kilometres of the highway north of Tombstone are not necessarily significant, Highways and Public Works does ensure that this sector of the highway is maintained at a safety standard. This is money coming directly out of their budget.

The ongoing work to ensure that Canada's first all-season road to cross the Arctic Circle remains safe and open is very important work that the Department of Highways and Public Works does. We are engaged with our counterparts in the Northwest Territories, as we always look to collaborate to find ways to improve on the joint management of the highway into the future. This year, the Department of Highways and Public Works conducted gravel resurfacing on both the Ogilvie and the Klondike sections of the highway.

As you recall, there was a vehicle that collided with the Eagle River bridge, resulting in the closure of the Dempster Highway. Highways and Public Works engineers immediately dispatched out there to inspect the damage and to repair the bridge to ensure it was safe. Since reopening the bridge, it is back to no weight restrictions, and a subsequent inspection has also taken place to determine if further repairs are required to maintain the long-term safety of that bridge. Ensuring the steady flow of traffic on that highway is — well, it's understood in both governments to be very critical — again, mostly if you're living in these communities in the Northwest Territories, it's extremely critical to these folks who live there. So, it's great to have that partnership.

Again, the highway has “stabilized” — would probably be the way to say it — for this winter, and its conditions have improved substantially. So, again, to say that the government is not spending any money on the Dempster Highway, I would disagree, but that would be the update that I have for the member opposite.

Mr. Hassard: Another question that was brought to my attention was about the charging stations. I'm just curious if the government has heard any concerns about the reliability of them. I'm also curious who does the maintenance on these units throughout the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, one of the ways that we can reduce our emissions and meet our goals of *Our Clean Future* is to switch to electric vehicles. In the Yukon, the road transportation accounts for 64 percent of our greenhouse gas emissions, and we have committed to making it possible for

electric vehicles to reach all driveable communities in the Yukon by 2027. So, this is where the electric vehicle charging stations come into play. They are being built alongside of our highway network. So, all electric vehicle charging station sites will be designed and constructed to ensure the safety of the travelling public. This is, of course, important.

The first of seven highway electric vehicle charging stations is planned for installation this fall at the Canol Road rest area of the Alaska Highway. A new shelter for travellers will be installed at this location next year. Highways and Public Works is finalizing the network plan that would identify where the other six charging stations are required along the highway between communities, and these stations will likely be installed over the next two years. The stations located along highways between communities require additional time to plan and to implement, because they are dependent on the availability of power and communication sources, which, of course, as folks know, as we travel our highways, is sometimes extremely “intermittent”, would be a good word to use, I guess.

Specifically, on maintenance, well that is a joint responsibility of two departments — that would be Energy, Mines and Resources and also Highways and Public Works. The installation part would be Highways and Public Works and then EMR would maintain the operations through an external contractor.

This is important work. It is important that we also, as a government, invest in electric fleet vehicles, as well, if we are leading by example, and so, that again is one of the components of our commitment to reduce emissions in all possible areas of government work. Highways and Public Works continue to meet and work with local dealers to build relationships and to understand market conditions. Take a glance at some of the businesses in town — the people who sell vehicles in town — there is not a lot of extra stock out there right now, that is for sure, and if you take a look on any of the websites, they are usually prompted with messages of supply-chain issues and demands.

So, it's not without its own problems of getting access to these vehicles, but we are committed to making it possible to travel by electric vehicles to all road-accessible communities by 2027. Planning is definitely underway to develop, as I said, the charging stations. It is important work that they are doing with Energy, Mines and Resources to add these stations to government buildings, as well, and to parking lots, to support the general uptake of the electric vehicle by the public. We know that there are government incentives for buying electric vehicles. Highways and Public Works is going to continue that work of installing those charging stations for electric vehicles in our fleet, as well.

I think that's about all I have for an update right now. I know that we do have a couple of the Chevrolet Bolts that are available for our government to use as fleet vehicles. I also know that Energy, Mines and Resources maintain a highway map of all the charging stations, so if anyone is listening or reading this in Hansard, again, you could go to yukon.ca and just take a look at these charging stations.

Mr. Hassard: Could the Premier tell us if the government anticipates ever starting to charge for these charging stations, and if so, when? And does the government have a plan as to how much they are going to charge and how they are going to do that?

Hon. Mr. Silver: No update on that. It is something that we are definitely looking into. Of course, in the future, changes will have to be made, as the supply and demand of this situation changes, but nothing to add right now, as far as timelines.

Mr. Hassard: Shifting gears a little bit here, I am wondering this: As the Premier knows, under the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*, there are 10 contracts, either sole-sourced or invitationally, put out each year up to \$1 million. I am wondering if the Premier can update us on what the 10 contracts were for this year.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As the member opposite knows, when it comes to the regional economic development exceptions, we're helping to boost the economic development across the territory through the use of these trade agreement exceptions. They allow us to restrict procurement competitions exclusively to qualified Yukon businesses 10 times per year in order to keep government dollars in the territory and to support local businesses. Over the last five years, manufacturing, construction, and consulting contracts have been awarded for work in communities across the Yukon through these 10 times \$1-million exceptions.

Since 2018, Yukon businesses have competed for and secured 49 Yukon-exclusive government contracts worth \$24.6 million. For the 2022-23 fiscal year, we awarded three projects to Yukon businesses totalling \$2.17 million with plans to use all of the 10 exceptions within the fiscal year. The criteria for selecting the regional economic development exceptions includes how much of the money spent on the project will create economic opportunities in the Yukon and whether the projects support the territory's industries and whether or not the project supports our suppliers as well.

So, at the close of the project, suppliers are now required to report on the total dollar value expended on Yukon labour and materials to quantify the direct positive impact that these projects do have on Yukoners. So, to be able to take a look retrospectively is an extremely important part of this ongoing development of this policy.

To date, 12 projects have submitted reporting on their completion contracts, with eight projects using 100-percent Yukon labour and 100-percent Yukon materials. The reporting from the 12 projects show that just over \$1 million was spent on Yukon employee labour. We have three contracts that were awarded, as I said, for the 2022-23 fiscal year — six direct current fast chargers in Yukon communities: so, that's Ross River, Faro, Burwash Landing, Beaver Creek, and Whitehorse, and that's to Solvest Inc., doing some great work on those chargers.

The green street paving project in the Whistle Bend subdivision of Whitehorse was awarded to Castle Rock Enterprises, and also, the community-scale composting program design and installation in Deep Creek, Tagish, Carcross, and Marsh Lake, that went to Boreal Compost

Enterprises Ltd. We know that further exceptions are being considered at the moment, so there is definitely going to be more to come. Again, in those three contracts: \$2.17 million. One additional project is in the process of being tendered, I believe, and that is the building management system upgrade at the Mayo Community Centre.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that update. In the "Appendix A: Status of all Government of Yukon actions", regarding *Our Clean Future*, as of December of 2021, there is a list of action items, some of which fall under the purview of Highways and Public Works. I'm wondering if the Premier could provide us with an update of where we are with some of those action items.

The first one is to develop and implement a system to prioritize the purchasing of zero-emission vehicles for all new Government of Yukon fleet acquisitions, where available — if we could just get an update as to where we are in terms of that action item.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As members know, in September, we released our second annual report on *Our Clean Future*, outlining the progress that we have made in taking action on climate change in 2021. Of the 19 actions within the 2021 timeline, we completed 13, made progress on three, and revised three. As members opposite know, *Our Clean Future* is an adaptive strategy, meaning that we assess and adjust the actions that we are taking year over year to make sure that we stay on track with meeting our long-term goals.

As we were developing *Our Clean Future*, that was always the goal. If you limit yourself with what you are doing with information that you have and then it's a decade-long process, there is just so much technological advancement that we need to make sure that this is an adaptive strategy. This year, we introduced five new actions and revised 13 existing actions to better meet our goals.

When it comes specifically to the Department of Highways and Public Works, they are, as all departments are, working extremely hard to meet the goals that are outlined in *Our Clean Future*. They are undertaking several action items that will improve energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and strengthen our resilience to the ongoing impact of climate change. For example, the department is doing energy retrofit projects and renewable energy projects in government buildings. They are also working on enhancing the ratio of electric vehicles in the current fleet. Again, there are supply chain issues there but they are working as best as they can to do so. They are planning for climate impacts on infrastructure through climate risk assessments and permafrost monitoring. They are also updating procurement processes to better support sustainable and local businesses. Last but not least, they have been tasked with modernizing the heavy equipment that the government fleet has. We have committed to taking actions on climate change, and we will continue to make progress forward on that.

The Department of Highways and Public Works has 27 specific action items that would be outlined in *Our Clean Future*, many of which are ahead of schedule, I would say — either ahead of schedule or they have already been completed. In addition, this summer, the department committed to several

new actions. Some of those would be: creating a new system to promote the re-use of government assets throughout the Government of Yukon; developing and implementing new guidelines for addressing climate change hazards in all major infrastructure projects by 2024; developing and implementing a framework to incorporate greenhouse gas emissions and climate risk into government infrastructure investment by 2024; also this summer, committing to align the Yukon government's energy management program with international standards by the year 2025; and finally, the work that they were doing this summer in the department was to continue working on a joint project with First Nation and municipal partners to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

I will leave it there for today. Deputy Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Deputy Chair, 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

Deputy Speaker resumes the Chair

Deputy Speaker (Ms. Blake): 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. 20, entitled *Animal Control and Protection Act*, and directed me to report progress.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.