



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

**Monday, November 14, 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**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CONSTITUENCY</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO</b>
<b>Hon. Sandy Silver</b>	Klondike	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
<b>Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee</b>	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
<b>Hon. Nils Clarke</b>	Riverdale North	Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment
<b>Hon. John Streicker</b>	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
<b>Hon. Ranj Pillai</b>	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
<b>Hon. Richard Mostyn</b>	Whitehorse West	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board
<b>Hon. Jeanie McLean</b>	Mountainview	Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate

### **OFFICIAL OPPOSITION**

#### **Yukon Party**

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

### **THIRD PARTY**

#### **New Democratic Party**

<b>Kate White</b>	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
<b>Emily Tredger</b>	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
<b>Annie Blake</b>	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  
Monday, November 14, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We have a number of people here this afternoon for our tribute to Alan Macklon. I would like to introduce: Sylvia Adams, a family friend; May Blysak; Karen Macklon; Sarah Macklon, whom I worked with at Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board; William Macklon; Leslie Peters, a friend with Autism Yukon; Kate Swales, another friend with Autism Yukon; we have Audrey Twardochleb, friend of the family; Jeanie Murray, a colleague of Alan's; and Heather and Tim Hierlihy. Heather was a mentor and worked with me at WCB. I would like to have everybody please join me in welcoming them to the House this afternoon.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In remembrance of Alan Macklon

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour Alan Leo Macklon. Alan was my constituent. I often saw him travelling through the neighbourhood and down Hamilton Boulevard in his electric wheelchair. Alan was a husband. He was married to his wife, Karen, for 41 years. They met in Kimberley, BC. They were high school sweethearts and shared a passion for square dancing. They married in 1981.

Alan was a father. He had five children — Sarah, Stephanie, Samantha, Stacey, and William — and two granddaughters. He had six siblings and many in-laws. Mr. Speaker, Alan was well loved.

Professionally, Alan was a trailblazing nurse. He graduated from the Foothills School of Nursing program in Calgary — only the second guy to graduate. That was in 1980. He was an exceptional clinical nurse and moved to the Yukon in 1988 to work at Whitehorse General Hospital. He worked in critical care. Alan organized regular ventilator training and brought respiratory therapists up from the south to improve the calibre of local nurses, said Geoff Zaparinuk, a former colleague and director of nursing at the Whitehorse hospital. Geoff considered Alan a mentor.

Alan also did medevacs and, on occasion, provided relief at the Old Crow nursing station. In his spare time, Alan would do renovations, worked on vehicles, biked, snowmobiled,

boated, and continued his passion for square dancing. Alan was also eventually a patient.

He was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2007 — a disease that gradually eroded his physical mobility. Alan became active in other ways. He was a forceful advocate for accessibility. He sat on disability committees throughout the city of Whitehorse. For years, he was instrumental in the multiple sclerosis self-help group, helping people get needed support and raising awareness of the disease. He also drove a mean wheelchair.

I met him in 2016. Alan was exceedingly gracious with his time. He spoke passionately about how people with a mobility challenge needed to access exercise equipment and physio. He also mentored me about accessibility, both in homes, in public buildings, and on our streets. Those conversations were extremely important to me, Mr. Speaker. That insight pushed me to have Highways and Public Works improve accessibility on our roads and in our public buildings. Even when we moved the needle, Alan would, in his patient, diplomatic manner, let me know that more could be done. He never let up, and that is what made him a powerful advocate.

The number 2 held a lot of meaning for Alan. When I last saw him in late September, in the early evening, he was with his son William. The two loved to watch movies together, but that night they were wandering the neighbourhood together, chatting. As I recall, it was an unusually warm and sunny night. Alan passed away peacefully, surrounded by his family, a few hours later, on September 22, 2022 at 10:22 p.m. He will be missed by his family and indeed the community as a whole.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** So, today, I stand to add my voice in celebration of a life well lived. Alan Macklon was a lot of things — loving husband and father, a brother, a son, and a grandfather. He was a nurse, and he believed in dignity and inclusion and he cared about people. He also had MS, the disease that put him in his motorized wheelchair.

I met Alan last summer when I saw him trying to cross the Alaska Highway at the lights to Hillcrest in that electric wheelchair, and it was exciting to watch, but not in a good way. I stopped my truck and went to chat with him because you only need to see an adult in a motorized wheelchair circle back and forth, look both ways, and sprint across the highway to recognize that there is a problem. Like the minister said, he was really good in his wheelchair.

I imagine that Alan met everyone in the same way that he met me — with openness and a hint of humour. We chatted a bit that day and I asked him if I could call him, and he raised his eyebrow as if to say, "Sure, sure you'll call me", and then he gave me his number. So, I called him and I met with him and his wife, Karen.

Alan believed passionately in accessibility and inclusion. He talked about how it wasn't his disease that stopped him from participating, but it was poor urban design that made it challenging to do the things that he loved. One afternoon, just ahead of the last municipal elections, Alan and I went for an adventure — he in his chair and me on a bike. I had asked him

to show me some of the challenges that he faced going from his home in Copper Ridge to downtown. We thought that municipal councillors needed to understand some of the challenges that folks in Whitehorse faced around accessibility. We met at the Hillcrest lights, and what came next was an eye-opening afternoon. We made a lot of videos highlighting the challenges that he faced on his way to and from the Walmart McDonald's where we stopped for a coffee, and — spoiler alert — it wasn't great. From having to ride toward traffic on a path that ended nowhere, crossing buttons not designed for accessibility, crosswalks to nowhere, and more, it was eye-opening. These shortcomings fall within the responsibility of both governments, both the municipal and the territorial governments.

We wrote letters to the Minister of Highways and Public Works, and Alan offered to show the challenges first-hand. We were fighting weather and, even though that demonstration didn't happen, improvements were made based on Alan's feedback. Winter came and then so did spring. I sent Alan the city call-out for folks to sit on an accessibility council. We chatted a little bit, and then more time passed.

There was lots of time for talking on that afternoon we spent together last summer, and Alan was very clear: No matter what, he was going to be in charge of his life. He was an advocate for medical assistance in dying. He believed that being able to choose where and how he exited this world was important. It was about dignity.

I saw Alan on the paved path near Canadian Tire on September 18, so I called from my truck and it was during this conversation that Alan told me everything was set. He had picked a date and that he would leave this world on September 22, his way.

It's important, Mr. Speaker and everyone in the Chamber — I have had the conversation with Karen so she knows what's coming next because it was very funny. Alan was standing with my friend Darryl — they had never met before — and he was on speakerphone. Then this is what Alan told me: that he was on his way to the hospital to be weighed because there's a weight limit for cremation in the Yukon, and he wanted to be sure that Karen didn't have to make the arrangements, no matter what happened. So, Karen this morning told me that he just missed the mark and he had to be cremated out of territory. This leads to one of Alan's last two bits of advocacy. Had he known that he would need to be cremated out of territory, he would have organized his death to happen Outside so that he could have been an organ donor. This is something that we in these seats can look at facilitating: How do we make that happen for people?

Days before his death, he reached out to the City of Whitehorse for exemplary grant permission for new buildings going to be built in the city, and he was concerned that new buildings built in 2022 were still not accessible to people with disability and he wanted to know why. So, it's a great question, Alan, and I'm on it.

So, today, as I was scrolling through Alan's photos on Facebook, I smiled a lot because what a beautiful and love-filled life he lived. To Karen, Sarah, Stephanie, Samantha,

Stacey, William, and all of those who are feeling his absence, our hearts are with you.

Alan fought hard. Accessibility issues still exist, and every level of government has a responsibility. Whether it's ensuring sidewalks are shoveled, buildings are accessible, and active transportation corridors truly include everyone, we all have a role to play, and Alan showed us the way.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Pursuant to section 7(7) of the *Historic Resources Act*, I have for tabling the Yukon Heritage Resources Board 2021-22 annual report.

I also have for tabling the *Yukon Geographical Place Names Board 2021-2022 Annual Report*.

If I could just ask the Assembly for a little bit of flexibility, I just want to thank the department for their work on it and also our acting director, Sophie Tremblay Morissette, who is here with us today. Thank you for being here, and thank you for the work on these reports.

**Speaker:** Are there any committee reports to be presented?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions to be introduced?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to table the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board annual reports from 2019, 2020, and 2021.

**Speaker:** Is there a statement by a minister?

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### 2027 Canada Winter Games

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Today, I want to provide the House with an important update on the Canada Winter Games. The Government of Yukon has determined that it can no longer proceed with the bid to host the 2027 Canada Winter Games due to a lack of federal support. The Government of Canada has indicated that it is only willing to provide a total of \$16.75 million toward the Games, and that includes only \$3 million in capital funding, the standard amount provided to any small jurisdiction hosting the Games.

This is less than three percent of the requested contribution from Canada and is less than the \$11 million in capital funding that the City of Whitehorse has already signalled it would contribute to the Games. This means no funding to support the necessary projects that would have made the 2027 Canada Winter Games a success and left a lasting legacy in Whitehorse, including a modern arena complex, an

infrastructure to incorporate Arctic and Dene sports into the Games for the first time.

We did not make this decision lightly, Mr. Speaker, and we are extremely disappointed that we cannot proceed with this bid. Hosting the 2027 Games in Whitehorse would have been an historic opportunity to advance reconciliation and bring the highest level of sport in the country back to Canada's north. We made it clear from the outset that substantial contributions would need to be made by all levels of government, including our federal and municipal partners, for this bid to succeed. Without any meaningful contribution from the federal government to support the Games, we were left with no other option.

With the capital cost of hosting the 2027 Games estimated to be in excess of \$185 million and contributions from partners totalling less than \$15 million, it simply is not feasible for the Government of Yukon to proceed with the bid at the cost of \$160 million.

Our government has a responsibility to manage taxpayers' money responsibly. At this time, it is clear that the territory's resources must be focused on housing, health care, education, and tackling climate change for the benefit of all Yukoners. I want to thank the 2027 Canada Winter Games Bid Committee chair, Piers McDonald, and his exceptional team for all their hard work over the past 18 months. I also want to thank our partners at the City of Whitehorse for their collaboration in pursuing this opportunity.

While this is not the outcome that any of us had hoped for, I look forward to continuing to work with our partners to increase recreational infrastructure and support the development of sport throughout the territory in the coming years.

**Mr. Dixon:** I would like to begin by noting my disappointment about the announcement that the minister is making today. Obviously, this will come as a shock to many in the sport community who were looking forward to hosting the Canada Winter Games here in Yukon in 2027, but also to Yukoners in general who were looking forward to presenting and highlighting our territory on the national stage.

Unfortunately, we are not surprised to hear that the federal government is unwilling to commit to spend the estimated \$200 million needed to host the 2027 Games. Earlier this Sitting, the Yukon Party asked the minister about the leaked letter from the federal Finance minister to her Cabinet colleagues, indicating that federal ministers are beginning to look at cuts in the upcoming federal budget.

In the letter from the federal Finance minister, she clearly stated that any new spending proposals must be paid for with cuts, so we asked the Minister of Community Services about what work he was doing to ensure that important infrastructure money continues to support Yukon communities. As the minister noted, the Government of Canada has indicated that it is only willing to provide a total of \$16.75 million toward the Games, including only \$3 million in capital funding, which the minister has just said is the standard amount provided to any small jurisdiction hosting the Games.

According to the government, that is less than three percent of the contribution request that this Liberal government made to Canada. This announcement should be a reality check, unfortunately, for this government and raises serious questions about many other infrastructure commitments that the government has made. We know that there is a massive funding gap for the Dawson recreation centre that this government is asking Canada to cover. We know that there is an estimated funding gap of, at the very least, \$60 million for the Atlin hydro project that this government is asking Canada to cover. We know that the Moon Lake project, which is already delayed, will require massive federal funding. We have also heard that there are significant cost overruns expected with the territory's largest ever capital project, the Nisutlin Bay bridge, and the Yukon government will be asking Canada to cover that shortfall as well.

The minister admits that they have already allocated all of the Investing in Canada infrastructure program — or ICIP — funding from the federal government as well. That fund will end next year and we have not heard whether there will be a replacement for it.

As the federal government looks to achieve an apparent \$9-billion cut to the incoming federal budget and the main infrastructure funding stream for Yukon municipalities is coming to an end, municipalities are justifiably concerned about what funding will be available for them when federal austerity hits.

In the wake of this disappointing news today, can the minister provide some assurance to Yukoners about federal funding for the critical infrastructure projects that are happening in the territory? Can he tell us if the funding has been approved for the Dawson recreation centre, the Atlin hydro project, Moon Lake, or the additional funding for the Nisutlin Bay bridge as a result of any cost overruns? With the federal Liberals planning cuts, how will the Yukon Liberals make sure that there continues to be infrastructure funding available to pay for the essentials, like street reconstruction and water and sewer projects?

Finally, I would like to ask the minister about the communication from the federal government. Did the Premier communicate with the Prime Minister about this? Did the minister speak to his counterpart? Also, has the Yukon government taken the opportunity to raise their disappointment with our Member of Parliament about this lack of funding from the federal government?

**Ms. White:** To be honest, the statement of reply that I was working on before 11:00 a.m. is not the one that I am delivering now. I have a lot of questions about costs and who was paying for what, and I was also wondering why some of the big infrastructure initiatives that we were expecting to complete could only happen if we did host the Games. But here we are today being told that the Yukon government was only able to secure three percent of the funding that they requested from Canada. So, did no one see this coming?

It is disappointing to learn that the Yukon government is no longer bidding to host the Canada Winter Games. Many of

us will remember how spectacular it was to host the Games back in 2007. The community came together, volunteering and welcoming athletes from across Canada for a successful Canada Winter Games.

We thank the 2027 Bid Committee, its chair, and the team for their hard work over the last 18 months. We can only imagine the disappointment that they are feeling.

One concern over this statement today is: What does this signal from the federal government? The minister initially made it sound like the \$160 million was a done deal from the federal government, but this government has admitted that they were surprised to see this funding fall through. So, this is of concern, because how many other projects have been promised by this government for which they can't actually guarantee the funding to start or complete them? So, what happens next?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can see this afternoon that we are united in this House in our disappointment — unanimity. Mr. Speaker, this is one of the most difficult decisions that we have had to make, and we did not make it lightly. We are extremely disappointed that we cannot proceed with this bid.

The Leader of the Official Opposition has mentioned the funding for the recreation centre in Dawson. It is a very important project to the community, and I can tell the members opposite that we have allocated the Dawson City recreation centre funding in our ICIP application. That funding has been identified in our ICIP allocations, so that is one of the projects in our ICIP funding that has been put against our ICIP funding.

I have been working for months and months — for 18 months, actually — on this bid, and I really cannot say enough about the team that Piers McDonald assembled and worked on. Assembling this bid gives us eyes on all of the challenges and benefits that we can see through those Games. It is what we do to make sure that we can proceed with a bid. They did their due diligence, and as a result of their fine work, we were able to identify what was necessary to put on these Games and the whole cost, and this is where we landed, but in the end, the federal government was not able to provide the funding that we needed to proceed with these Games today.

The Government of Canada has indicated that it was only willing to provide a total of \$16.75 million toward the Games, including only \$3 million in capital funding, the standard amount provided to any small jurisdiction hosting the Games. This is less than three percent of the requested contribution from Canada and less than the \$11 million in capital funding that the City of Whitehorse has already signalled it would contribute to the Games.

We made it clear from the outset that substantial contributions would need to be made by all levels of government, including our federal and municipal partners, for this bid to succeed. Without any meaningful contribution from the federal government to support these Games, we were left with no other option.

With the capital cost of hosting the 2027 Games estimated to be in excess of \$185 million and contributions from partners totalling less than \$15 million, it is simply not feasible for the Government of Yukon to proceed with the bid at a cost of

\$160 million. Our government has a responsibility to manage taxpayers' money responsibly. Yukoners have made their priorities clear. We need to remain focused on housing, health care, education, and tackling climate change for the benefit of all Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, I will also say that I was recently in Niagara, meeting with sport ministers. I was just recently at a federal-provincial-territorial meeting on infrastructure held in Moncton, which I had the pleasure of participating in as well. The federal government is suggesting that it has new infrastructure pots of money coming forward. They are going to be focused on several different areas: public transportation; water; waste water; solid waste; and climate resiliency and adaptation. We are going to be looking forward to more details on that infrastructure funding from our federal government as we go forward, but at this time, recreation and proceeding with these Games — we just don't have the funding.

**Speaker:** This then brings us to Question Period.

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Minimum wage

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The 2021 Liberal-NDP confidence and supply agreement set out the minimum wage at \$15.20 per hour. It also tied annual increases to the minimum wage to inflation. As of April 1 this year, minimum wage has increased to \$15.70 due to the CPI increase for that year.

When will Yukon businesses learn what the 2022 minimum-wage increase will be?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** What we are really talking about this afternoon is making life more affordable for Yukoners. We made a commitment to make life more affordable for Yukoners. We have done that in several ways, including universal childcare, including changing the way we handle our minimum wage. We have provided a number of supports to Yukoners in terms of subsidizing their heating and electricity costs, both through fuel wood and through electricity. We are working very, very hard to make sure that this territory, in the face of all the inflation pressures we are seeing, is affordable for Yukoners, and we are going to continue to do that work on behalf of Yukoners.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** According to the Liberal-NDP agreement, the annual increase to the minimum wage is tied to inflation, which is calculated using CPI. The current rate of CPI is 7.5 percent. That would represent a \$1.18 per hour increase. Should Yukon employers be preparing for an increase of \$1.18 to come in on April 1?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As the member opposite noted, we have tied our minimum wage to the cost-of-living increase, as per the confidence and supply agreement. A minimum wage tied to inflation — as with other social supports — aims to help to reduce poverty and increase affordability for Yukon's lowest wage earners.

Do the members opposite disagree with this? Do the members opposite disagree with making life more affordable for the lowest paid Yukoners in the territory?

As committed to in the confidence and supply agreement, and on the recommendation of the Employment Standards Board, the minimum wage will increase each year on April 1 by the previous year's consumer price index.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Yukon businesses are looking for certainty as they try to navigate the economic challenges that are ahead. A potentially massive increase to the minimum wage could have a serious impact on a lot of small and medium businesses.

Can the minister explain when businesses will learn what the minimum wage increase — which will occur on April 1 — will be, and what amount of increase they should prepare for?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I mentioned in my previous answers, what the member opposite is talking about is making life more affordable for Yukoners. We have committed to that. We have taken concrete actions to make sure that Yukoners are better off today than they were in the past, and we are going to continue that good work.

As I said in my previous answer, the minimum wage will be increased on the first of April, according to the consumer price index. We're doing that, Mr. Speaker, because it provides certainty to our employees and our businesses that there will be a regular increase in our minimum wage to ensure that people can continue to afford to live in the territory in the face of any sort of pressures — inflation — that we're seeing.

#### **Question re: Universal paid sick leave**

**Ms. McLeod:** Earlier this year, the Making Work Safe Panel, which was established by the Liberal-NDP confidence and supply agreement, tabled its report on paid sick leave. The committee unanimously endorsed a recommendation to establish a universal paid sick leave program that would provide 10 paid sick days to every single employee. The committee was chaired by the Minister of Community Services, and now it falls to that very same minister to implement it.

Will the Yukon government be creating a universal paid sick leave program, as recommended by the committee chaired by the Minister of Community Services?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** What we're talking about is taking action in the wake of a global pandemic to make sure that citizens in the territory have the proper social supports they need to continue to work and earn a living and that employers, Mr. Speaker, can continue to have workers in their businesses who are not infecting the entire workforce and forcing them to close down, because we have illness spreading throughout our workplaces.

We heard this in our consultations with businesses; however, Mr. Speaker, changes to legislation require broad engagement, and our commitment has always been — our government has always been committed to seeking the proper engagement before making changes that will affect Yukoners.

We are working with our partners to address affordability in a number of different areas — certainly in this one; we know this. My colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, has actually extended the paid sick leave benefit — the cutting-edge, nation-leading paid sick leave benefit that this government put in place during the pandemic to make sure that

Yukoners could continue to afford to live in the territory through the supports we put in place. These supports we put in during the pandemic were a first in the country. They have led the country, and we're going to continue to do that work here.

**Ms. McLeod:** I should remind the Legislature that it was the Minister of Community Services who chaired the committee that made the recommendation to adopt a universal paid sick leave program and that it is now the Minister of Community Services who must decide how to act on that recommendation that he made.

When he was asked about this in the spring, the minister committed to consulting Yukon businesses before implementing any new program. In fact, he said — and I quote: "We are in direct conversations with businesses right now, and we're going to work with them to alleviate their concerns."

We note that there hasn't been a formal consultation since then, so can the minister tell us which businesses he was referring to, and when will other Yukon businesses get a chance to have their say?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I will say again that our strong leadership as we have guided the territory forward has kept our economy going. Our COVID-19 paid sick leave program sparked national conversations and served as a model for employee support across the nation. We are working to make sure that all Yukoners benefit from our territory's economic growth, and we are committed to supporting Yukon businesses and protecting the health and safety of employees. One of the pillars of the Making Work Safe Panel was that it would not adversely affect businesses in the community. We are committed to that. We have had the recommendations, we are doing broad assessments with businesses, and we are doing engagement to find out how they feel about this.

We believe in responsible decision-making that serves all Yukoners. Mr. Speaker, we need realistic solutions to the challenges that Yukoners are facing. The engagement was open to everyone, advertised in print and online. Multiple notices and requests to participate were sent to a broad list of stakeholders. In fact, we had small business representation on the committee itself. I am happy and proud of the work of this committee. I am happy and proud of the work that my colleague has done on this paid sick leave program through Economic Development. We are working very closely to make sure that Yukoners have the supports they need to survive in this environment.

**Ms. McLeod:** Many small businesses are beginning to wonder which minister will be making the decision. Will it be the Minister of Community Services who chaired the committee and endorsed the recommendation to create a universal paid sick leave program, or will it be the Minister of Community Services who has so far refused to accept the recommendation and bring forward legislative changes?

Which minister will it be?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The member opposite seems to be insinuating that we just do a knee jerk and assert this over top of businesses without any proper consultation. We know that is how it has been done in the past. That's not the way this government has ever operated.

We are working very, very closely with our stakeholders. We are going to do this in a measured and rational way that takes into account the concerns of business and labour.

At the heart here, Mr. Speaker, is making sure that people who are working in the territory have protections to take a day of sick leave when they are feeling ill. We are also trying to protect businesses that have seen illness spread through their business and rob them of employees they needed to keep their businesses open.

Our strong leadership has guided us through the pandemic and kept our economy going. Our COVID-19 paid sick leave program sparked national conversations, as I said earlier. It led the country, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to continue to serve to provide that leadership that Yukoners demand.

### **Question re: Systemic abuse allegations at Jack Hulland Elementary School**

**Ms. White:** Yukoners have recently found out about a class-action lawsuit against this government based on allegations of systemic abuse at Jack Hulland Elementary School. On May 5 of this year in a meeting for parents of Jack Hulland Elementary School students, the Department of Education officials acknowledged that holds and forced seclusion had been used as disciplinary measures until at least 2020.

Will the government tell Yukoners when they first became aware that Jack Hulland Elementary School was using the forced seclusion of children as a form of punishment?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I want to, of course, start by saying that the safety and well-being of students is absolutely the top priority for our government. This matter is an extremely serious matter. The matter is now before the courts.

I informed the House about the situation last November, after it was brought to my attention. The information that we received was reported to the RCMP and to Family and Children's Services. The RCMP are actively investigating this matter and we have been cooperating fully with them. We hired a legal team to conduct a fact-finding investigation into the allegations at Jack Hulland Elementary School. This investigation is also ongoing. We have shared the initial findings of that investigation with the RCMP, and their investigation is ongoing.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this matter is of the utmost — and is an extremely serious matter. It is important that we are working closely with those who are actively involved in the investigations.

**Ms. White:** Based on our research, seclusion cells were installed at Jack Hulland in 2008 under a Yukon Party government. They weren't removed until sometime in 2020. This Liberal government was first elected in 2016, so that's four years — four years of children being subjected to forced seclusion as a means of punishment, something that the federal courts deemed a violation of Charter rights for inmates.

Will the minister tell Yukoners how this government did not know that forced seclusion was happening in one of its schools for at least four years?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, these matters are very serious. We take the safety and well-being of students as a top priority. As well, we are supporting the Jack Hulland school community. This is extremely important. We are actively creating environments that are inclusive, built on students' strengths, and ensuring that every child feels connected and supported to thrive, working, of course, closely with our partners to ensure that our education system supports Yukon students.

Again, this is an extremely serious matter. The isolation areas described in these allegations have, of course, been dismantled and are no longer in use and haven't been for some time. We have kept families informed since this information came to light, including reaching out to parents and children who have been affected. We have offered supports to families through Victim Services, Family and Children's Services, the family resource unit, and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services. We absolutely understand the stress that families are under and the pressure that this creates. We take these matters very seriously. They are matters before the courts and under ongoing investigation.

**Ms. White:** These matters are very serious. So, seclusion cells were installed in 2008 — again, under a Yukon Party government. In May, the Liberal government admitted to parents that they knew about the use of seclusion cells, holds, and restraints as a way of punishing children.

So, the Yukon Party knew about this for eight years and the Liberals for another four years before pressure from within the department forced them to put a stop to it. These systemic abuses stopped in 2020, and the government has kept quiet since then — it seems, hoping that nobody would ever know.

Will the minister tell Yukoners how this systemic abuse of children in school was able to go on for 12 years in a Yukon school?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I remind folks in the House how serious these matters are. They are under investigation. They are matters before the courts as well.

These isolation areas, as described, are no longer in use — absolutely. We have worked very closely with our school community, and I want to just point out how committed we are to working with the Jack Hulland school community. Post-incident communication guidelines are being used to address the incidents at the school. School staff have undergone non-violent crisis intervention training. This training was a priority request as we worked with parents and the school council to ensure that staff are familiar with proven strategies for safety and defusing these types of situations that may lead to the use of a whole team from the Student Support Services unit, including an educational psychologist and community consultant. There are many folks working with the school community, and we continue to be committed to working closely with them.

### **Question re: Systemic abuse allegations at Jack Hulland Elementary School**

**Ms. White:** So, we know that the alleged abuses took place over many years, yet only current Jack Hulland families



received an invitation to the parents meeting in May. Many potential victims of the alleged abuse are no longer students at Jack Hulland, and some of them have aged out of school altogether.

In a March 29 news release, the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office stated — and I quote: “From my observations, any lessons learned regarding communication with families and providing timely therapeutic supports have not been applied to this situation.” In short, communication with parents didn’t happen, and supports for students and families are lacking. So, how have the families of students, both current and former, been notified of allegations of abuse at Jack Hulland school?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I will start by just speaking a little bit about the Child and Youth Advocate. The Child and Youth Advocate’s involvement in this matter is vital, and we are working with the Child and Youth Advocate to uphold the rights of children and youth and to ensure that families have the supports they need.

Schools branch officials and school administration have been working on a case-by-case basis to support past and present students and families directly. There is an entire team of folks who are working with the families involved. We also have an inter-agency group that is made up of senior officials in Education, Health and Social Services, Justice, the RCMP, the Child and Youth Advocate, and the Executive Council Office as well.

In terms of communication, we have communicated the serious nature of these investigations into the use of holds and restraints at the schools from the onset of the investigation through the direct communication with parents, guardians, and Jack Hulland Elementary School, and we will continue to do so.

In May, the Deputy Minister of Education provided staff at Jack Hulland Elementary School with a letter clarifying the employer’s expectation of educators in respect to managing student behaviours. Information was also shared with families, and a meeting was held involving Victim Services.

I will continue to build on this as we go forward. Thank you.

**Ms. White:** The two places children spend most of their time is at home and in school. School is supposed to be a safe place for children, where they can learn, flourish, and become themselves.

They build trusting relationships with the teachers they see day in and day out. A breach of that trust can leave lasting impacts on a child — impacts that most children are not equipped to deal with on their own.

It is unclear to many what supports are available to Jack Hulland families and students, both current and former. Will the minister tell parents exactly what supports are in place for victims at Jack Hulland, and how can these supports be accessed?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I have just gone over how we have communicated with families — specifically, the supports and services that are available to them. We have worked on a case-by-case basis to provide information to families to ensure that

they are aware and that they are accessing the proper supports and to allow them to know what is available to them.

We have been working with Victim Services, Family and Children’s Services, the family resource unit, and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services branch. We are focused on supporting families and staff, and we will continue conversations on how to move forward in a good way as a school community.

I want to assure Yukoners that this of the most serious nature, and our government is committed to working to support families. These are matters that are before the courts, and active investigations are ongoing. We continue to work closely with those who are conducting the investigations.

**Ms. White:** Unfortunately, I’m not sure services are as clear as the minister has suggested, so when someone is looking for help, where should they turn?

So, children have been harmed and traumatized for 12 years in two successive governments. Their rights have been systemically violated. Parents’ and children’s trust has been broken at the deepest level. Last week, the Premier stood in this House and told us that the school is moving forward — and I quote: “... in a very positive way.”

Will the minister tell us how a community can move forward in a positive way when families are still left wondering if their children were abused and how long the abuse lasted for?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, these are matters that are before the courts. We are working closely with the RCMP to ensure that they have all of the information that they need to conduct the investigations that are ongoing. The RCMP are actively investigating this matter, and we have been cooperating fully.

We have also hired our own legal team to conduct a fact-finding investigation into the allegations at Jack Hulland Elementary School. That investigation is also ongoing. We have shared all of our initial findings with the RCMP, and they are now documents that are part of that investigation.

As I have stated, we have worked closely with the Child and Youth Advocate. We have a team of folks in an inter-agency table that includes Education, Health and Social Services, Justice, RCMP, the Child and Youth Advocate, and the Executive Council Office. We have communicated continually with families to ensure that they are aware of the services that are available to them. We have reached out on a case-by-case basis as well.

These are matters that I do not take lightly, Mr. Speaker. We’ll continue to work closely to ensure that the community and families are supported, especially the children.

#### **Question re: Children’s medication supply**

**Ms. Clarke:** Many Yukon families with infants or young children have noticed the extreme shortage of children’s medication in Yukon pharmacies. We know that there is a national shortage of these drugs. Last week, Health Canada announced that it was bringing in emergency shipments of certain children’s medications from the US and Australia.

On Friday, Health Canada told the CBC that distribution around Canada will begin very soon. How much of the

emergency shipment of children's medicine will be coming to the Yukon, and how will it be distributed?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Canada is experiencing historic demand for pediatric ibuprofen and acetaminophen, commonly known as "Tylenol". There are concerns with accessing these products locally and nationally. Also, pediatric amoxicillin, which is an antibiotic used to treat a wide variety of bacterial infections, is experiencing national shortage pressure as well. Health Canada is addressing these concerns with partners, as the Yukon Party member opposite said in the question, and announcements have been made that they have obtained what is quite an extensive amount of pediatric ibuprofen and acetaminophen, which will be distributed across Canada.

They are addressing these concerns with partners, of which we are one, of course, to increase supply. The Department of Health and Social Services is closely monitoring this situation. We sit on the drug shortage task force that was developed as part of the national COVID-19 response. I am assured by a text I received on the weekend from the federal minister that Yukon will have its share.

**Ms. Clarke:** Many parents have been alarmed by the spike in respiratory illnesses in other parts of the country. Whether it is from COVID, influenza, or RSV, some jurisdictions are facing serious pressure on pediatric health care. This problem is made worse by the shortage of over-the-counter medications, like Tylenol and Advil. What steps is the Yukon government taking to help families with infants or young children during this shortage of children's medication?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** As I have just said, I expect that the shortage of children's ibuprofen and acetaminophen, at the very least, will be short-lived for us here in the territory. Canada has obtained a number of months' supply and will be distributing them across the country. At this time, the Yukon Hospital Corporation is managing any pressures and is working alongside our Community Nursing branch, in partnership, to ensure that Yukoners are supported. We are aware that certain pediatric — amoxicillin, as I have noted — antibiotics are a bit short here in the territory, and we are mitigating these pressures. I know that announcements have gone out from the hospital, working with Community Nursing, pharmacists, and physicians through these challenges to suggest alternatives to the use of that medication, if necessary.

Yukoners are definitely encouraged to speak with their pharmacists, who can provide recommendations and next steps, as well as their health care provider.

**Ms. Clarke:** We have heard from some pharmacies that they are having to remove these products from the shelves and keep them behind the counter in order to avoid bulk buying and to ensure that prospective buyers are aware of alternative products and dosing schedules.

What steps is the Yukon government taking to work with local pharmacies to ensure that families with infants and young children can access the necessary medicine that they need to mitigate the upcoming winter flu season?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** It takes us back to the very beginning. The Yukon Party question today noted the announcement from Health Canada, and as I have said, I

received a text from Minister Duclos on the weekend indicating the announcement that was coming with respect to the fact that Health Canada had, in fact, obtained a number of months' worth of pediatric ibuprofen and acetaminophen, and it would be distributed across Canada. We have been working with pharmacists; the Department of Health and Social Services is closely monitoring the situation here with respect to shortages.

We are encouraging families to please buy only what they need so that there is enough for everyone. The Hospital Corporation, as I have noted, is working with Community Nursing, as well as pharmacists and physicians, to discuss these challenges and provide conversations among this team of health care professionals, and I thank them very much for their leadership on this issue. They are determining alternatives to care, and they are providing information to families.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### **Bill No. 20: *Animal Protection and Control Act* — Third Reading**

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 20, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Clarke.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I move that Bill No. 20, entitled *Animal Protection and Control Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Environment that Bill No. 20, entitled *Animal Protection and Control Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and before I start my comments, I would just like to acknowledge that the chief veterinary officer, Dr. Mary Vanderkop, of the animal health unit is present in the gallery, as well as director Kirk Price from the Agriculture branch from the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — welcome to the Assembly.

I sincerely appreciate the comments and contributions from the members on both sides of the House in support or the comments in general with respect to this act. I would like to take a few minutes to highlight the bill and its content.

The *Animal Protection and Control Act* will provide a comprehensive, modern, enforceable framework for managing all aspects of animal protection and control in the territory. As I presented at second reading and discussed during Committee of the Whole, the focus of this new act is to improve animal welfare and control across the Yukon. This bill is largely about safety — safety for animals and safety for Yukoners.

Over the years, communities have expressed concerns about public safety from roaming dogs, as well as the need to control cats, livestock, and working animals. This is an essential part of the Government of Yukon's ongoing work to ensure that we live in safe, supported communities.

Through this act, we have created a flexible regime for enforcement that will allow the Government of Yukon to work

with communities to develop unique solutions appropriate for that community, thereby supporting better relationships with First Nation governments and Yukon municipal governments.

It is clear from the public engagement that Yukoners would like to see a higher standard set for animal welfare and control across the territory. We hear from Yukoners on a weekly basis about their concerns over dogs in their communities, among other animal-related complaints.

Mr. Speaker, winter brings more complaints and concerns about livestock welfare, too. Yukoners are frustrated with the limitations of government response to date. The tools enabled by this act will address those limitations and allow us to respond. We will move forward with additional engagement.

We are excited to see the amount of feedback received thus far and the willingness and interest in providing input on the details in the regulations. This act improves animal protection by establishing standards for the care of animals and setting standards for the acceptable means of killing animals humanely. This act will also provide a clear framework for managing which species of exotic animals may be owned in the Yukon and regulates the operation of animal-related businesses, including animal rescues and pet stores.

Without this new act, the Government of Yukon will fail to address long-standing concerns of Yukoners about the enforcement of animal laws in the territory and will fail to mitigate risks that uncontrolled animals pose to public safety, the environment, and property.

I thank the members opposite for their contributions to this debate, and I look forward to the passage of this necessary, progressive, comprehensive and non-partisan legislation.

**Mr. Cathers:** This legislation will affect thousands of Yukoners who have animals. I am going to summarize without going through all the details of the many hours of debate that we have had regarding this. I do want to summarize some of the key points here.

What I do want to note is that there are some good parts in this legislation. My colleagues and I do agree that the act itself was in need of replacement and, in some areas, strengthening, but we do have some serious, outstanding concerns. First among those concerns is the lack of consultation on the details of the legislation with Yukoners who are affected by it.

In the first place, I do find it odd that government didn't see it as necessary and appropriate to consult with stakeholders on the details of this legislation before tabling it. It is disappointing that, once they tabled the legislation, they received multiple requests from stakeholders asking government to pause and consult them on the legislation, and government unfortunately chose not to listen to that.

Several years ago, the government did a high-level consultation and survey. At the time, as the Minister of Environment has acknowledged, they missed consulting with one important stakeholder group whose lives and livelihoods are affected by this legislation.

Another stakeholder group has recently written to the minister claiming that they feel that their feedback was ignored in the original "what we heard" document and that they felt that

the survey itself, several years ago, was biased. After that high-level consultation years ago, the government unfortunately did not consult with stakeholders or the public on the details of what they were proposing. They drafted Bill No. 20 without involving stakeholders, including farmers, municipalities, outfitters, tourism operators, and dog mushers.

After it was tabled, the government received letters from multiple stakeholders asking them to consult on the details of the legislation. This was a very reasonable request from Yukoners whose lives and livelihoods are affected by the bill, as well as the Association of Yukon Communities and the Town of Watson Lake, which have some obligations placed on them as a result of this legislation and also feel that they were not adequately consulted.

The government could have listened to these reasonable requests and consulted without even necessarily delaying when this act would come into force, since coming into force will happen in spring 2023 at the earliest, according to statements by the Minister of Environment. Instead, the government that originally ran on the slogan of "Be Heard" refused to listen to Yukoners who were politely asking to be consulted on the details of a law that will affect them, their animals, and their livelihoods, in some cases.

I should just clarify that sentence, Mr. Speaker. They refused to listen to Yukoners whose lives would be affected by this, and in some cases, those people would also have their livelihoods affected by the details of this legislation. Mr. Speaker, there is no good reason for government to refuse that reasonable request from multiple Yukoners.

It seems that the Liberal government felt they would lose face by pausing and doing consultation on the details of the legislation, so they dismissed those requests from stakeholder groups.

As mentioned, the government did high-level consultation several years ago, but key details of the legislation and the fine print of it were never shared with the stakeholders who would be affected by it most before it was tabled. Then, when government received requests from those stakeholders for consultation, they refused those requests, and after days of criticism in the Legislative Assembly, they finally relented and reached out further, with an after-the-fact attempt by the minister to make phone calls to consultation that seemed to be about the pretense of consultation versus actually meaningfully consulting. From feedback we have heard from stakeholders who received phone calls, those calls from the minister seemed to largely ask the stakeholders to put out a full list of concerns and questions, and when stakeholders indicated that they and their members still had not had the chance to fully go through the details to understand the legislation and how it would affect them yet, the minister seemed happy to wrap up the phone calls and consider that, in his view, a successful consultation. That is, of course, not actual meaningful consultation.

I want to move on to some specific sections in the legislation as well. As members will recall, under questioning, the minister was unable to point out anywhere in section 41 of the act, or anywhere else in the bill, that created an exception to the rules set out in there which made it illegal, among other

things, to have an animal off your property or out of your vehicle at all times. The minister was first unable to point to another section in the act that created an allowance. Then, in response to questions, he suggested it was maybe a typographical error. Then the minister said they were going to look into it in more detail, and then the minister, on a subsequent day, indicated he would be bringing forward an amendment to section 41.

Also, we did ask the minister to share that with us prior to him proposing it so that we would have time to consider it. The minister, instead of providing it to us on the Thursday, when we know that he had the amendment, chose not to share it until he actually proposed that wording change during line-by-line review on the bill on the following Monday afternoon.

To give credit where credit is due, the minister's amendment did partially correct the problems in section 41, but it didn't go far enough. The amendment the minister proposed to section 41, which was ultimately passed, did improve it; however, it's important to note that what the government originally tabled made it unlawful to ever have an animal off your property or out of your vehicle. The minister acknowledged that they made an error in section 41, though he has not explicitly acknowledged how serious that problem was and tried to gloss over the severity of the mistake made by him and his colleagues in tabling this legislation. It seems that, accidentally on the part of the minister, he tabled legislation that made activities on public property illegal. That included walking your dog on a leash, riding your horse, driving a team of horses, dog mushing, and a number of other activities.

The change that the minister introduced did improve that. The revised version does seem to allow having your animal off your property and on public property in some circumstances, which is certainly better than where section 41 started out; however, it is disappointing that the government chose to reject an amendment we proposed, which would have made it clear that animals can be loose on public property as long as they aren't causing damage, endangering public safety, or running at large.

I do want to emphasize that the minister has repeatedly told this House that it is his intention that it would be legal to conduct a number of activities where an animal is not on leash, including walking dogs off-leash and outfitters' horses grazing in remote areas. The minister has repeatedly asserted that his intention is for those activities to continue to be legal under this act; however, even with his changes to section 41, he has still failed to point out which section of this act actually allows those activities to occur. The minister's speeches are emphatic, but it is the legislation itself that ultimately will determine what is and is not legal.

So, as I noted, it is disappointing that the government chose to reject an amendment we proposed which would have clarified this section and made it clear that what the minister claims to intend this legislation to do would, in fact, be the case, and that would be specifically the amendment we proposed in section 41, which would have made it clear that animals could be loose on public property if they weren't causing damage, endangering public safety, or running at large.

It is still an offence under this bill in section 41 to allow your animal to stray onto public property. The term "stray" is not clear and is not defined in the legislation. So, this continues to be a concern, and we will, of course, see how it is implemented by the government, but it is an example of — the fact that the government made such a serious error in the first place is something that could have been avoided if they had simply agreed to consult with stakeholders.

We have also made it clear that the section regarding entry without a warrant is something that we do not support. As noted during debate on November 7, I made it clear that the Yukon Party caucus would be voting against section 14, Entry without a warrant. As I noted at the time, we have expressed the view that, just as we did in the *Animal Health Act* in 2013, because of increasing accessibility of telecommunications in the modern era, in our view, the ability for an officer to apply for a telewarrant is as far as the legislation should go, and there is no longer, in our view, the requirement for legislation to consider including the provisions for entry without a warrant. We also need to acknowledge that an increasing number of Yukoners have grown more concerned about the potential erosion of civil liberties, and as I noted, I have also become more concerned about that than I was at one point in time. So, we did vote against the inclusion of section 14, Entry without a warrant, into this legislation. Unfortunately, that did not succeed, and the legislation does contain the provision for warrantless entry.

I think that I will conclude my remarks there. I could go on at much greater length talking about some of the specific concerns that we raised and the specific concerns from stakeholders. However, that has largely all been said, and at this point in time, in the interest of continuing on with the other important items of business that remain undebated, I will wrap up my remarks at this point. But I do want to include a note that it is unfortunate, with legislation that affects the lives of thousands of Yukoners and the livelihoods of many of the stakeholders who contacted the government — it is unfortunate that they did not see a need in the first place to consult with them on the details of the legislation, and secondly, it is very disappointing that, when those stakeholders respectfully asked to be consulted, government chose to charge forward and dismiss those requests for consultation.

So, for those reasons, while we do agree with some parts of this legislation, we will not be supporting the bill being passed today.

**Ms. White:** I think the first thing that I will do is I will ground myself in the memory of what happened in 2015 in Ross River, when a young person was killed by dogs. That was a pretty traumatizing time, to be honest. It was hard to be supporting the community through that, and it was hard to be dealing with a government that didn't make changes at that point. Again, we all have a different perception of history, but I have my own.

So, I will start by saying that I think about that when we talk about this bill in front of us. I also think about my friends in unincorporated communities who are being chased home by

dogs or they can't let their dogs out — are concerned. I think that there lots of different things.

I do appreciate that this legislation will help deal with that, and I think that is a critical nature. I appreciate all the work that was put behind this, and I do understand, based on the minister's re-telling, that there was extensive consultation leading up to it. Again, it happened before COVID, and this was written during COVID. I think that this is a reminder for all of us in this room to make sure that we communicate things out to the public before they come to the House as legislation. I think that could have definitely taken away some of the sting that people were experiencing.

The minister has been very clear in his commitment that consultation will happen with affected groups as regulations are being developed, and I think that is really important. I do think that a real asset is having a conversation with the knowledgeable people within the department, because I think that a very short conversation with those folks can get rid of any concerns that people have about what may or may not be included in this piece of legislation.

I do really appreciate this Chamber's willingness to make sure that the religious practices of halal and kosher slaughtering are now actually protected under law, as opposed to just being put into regulations. There were lots of reasons why those communities brought forward those concerns, and so we do appreciate the House's willingness to work with us on that.

Like lots of legislation, Mr. Speaker, the proof is going to be in the pudding, they say, or in the regulations, so we think those are going to be important. I guess I would urge all those who are behind that development of the regulations to, you know, not just to consult once, but to consult often and also quickly.

So, you know, the minister has made a lot of commitments and promises about how things will go forward from here, so we will be watching, and we will be paying attention.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Today is an important day for the territory, as we debate and then vote on the new *Animal Protection and Control Act*, which is replacing and improving the *Animal Protection Act*, as well as the *Pounds Act* and the *Dog Act*. To date, everyone who has risen to speak to this legislation has begun by talking about how important it is and that the current legislation definitely needs an overhaul. So, we have all acknowledged that this is an important piece of legislation.

In my role as an MLA, and also in my previous role as Minister of Community Services, one of the most commonly recurring community issues has been conflict with dogs. When I go to communities and I talk to folks, there is a lot of conversation about dogs. At the community level, I would say that dogs and democracy are deeply intertwined.

So, let me begin today by discussing how we talk to Yukoners about animals and this new legislation. I hope this will address some of the Member for Lake Laberge's first concern that he raised, which was about consultation. In 2018, we put out a broad call for public feedback, including to First Nations, municipalities, and relevant organizations, and we

organized a community tour with meetings on request, and we headed to Carmacks, Carcross, Dawson, Mayo, Old Crow, Pelly, Tagish, Teslin, and Whitehorse. Everyone who asked — that's where the folks went.

We held focused meetings upon request, including with animal protection officers, First Nations, municipalities, local advisory councils, mushers — including the dog mushing association and the Yukon Quest — and the RCMP. We corresponded with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. We conducted a survey and heard from over 900 Yukoners, and we produced a "what we heard" document. We then reached out again to First Nations, municipalities, and organizations in 2019. This led to more meetings on request — mushers again, Fish and Wildlife Management Board again, the Klondike Farmers Forum — we set up an Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee, including farmers, the Yukon Agricultural Association, and Growers of Organic Food Yukon. We hosted a livestock workshop. We corresponded with individual farmers, more First Nations, the Yukon Wildlife Preserve, and again with the RCMP. After that second round, we hit a pandemic.

So, it did take a bit of time to draft this new legislation. Since the legislation was tabled here this fall, we have written back and forth with Yukon Muslim and Jewish cultural societies, humane societies, the outfitters association, wilderness tourism, dog mushers association, the Association of Yukon Communities, Growers of Organic Food Yukon, and the Town of Watson Lake. I am going to come back to this group of correspondence in a bit, but all in all, what I would say is that is quite a bit of engagement — it's a lot of engagement.

I took a look back at the last time the *Animal Protection Act* was amended; it was 2008, under the Yukon Party. I hunted down the "what we heard" document from that engagement, and I have it here to table today. Under the Yukon Party, the engagement took place in the six months before the legislation was tabled. They conducted a survey with responses from less than 150 Yukoners. By the way, I didn't see any outreach to any specific organizations — no reference to outfitters, no reference to dog mushers, no reference to wilderness tourism, no reference to any group from the agricultural sector, and no First Nations. In comparison, the bill we are debating today has had two full rounds of engagement, which began several years ago, with a third round coming up for regulations. We created an ag industry advisory group, and the survey we conducted, which the Yukon Party has criticized even just now, got more than six times the number of responses than their survey did in 2008. As I said, it's a lot of engagement.

One of the things that I found completely fascinating was to look at these two "what we heard" documents to try to see the difference in how we have evolved as a government in engaging with Yukoners, and it is substantial.

I will also note that, with respect to those stakeholders who have reached out to us during the time this legislation has been here in the Assembly and being debated — as the Department of Environment and the minister have done in reaching back out, it has always been to say, "Yes, let's engage further. As we

go to develop regulations, let's engage." So, it has never been dismissed.

The Yukon Party has asked why we need to pass the bill now. Just now, the Member for Lake Laberge suggested that there would be no problem to postpone the bill. I will talk about the main reason why it's important to keep moving forward, but whenever you have a bill, you typically wait to develop regulations until the bill has passed the House. Why? Because we respect this House. It may be amended by the House. That's why you would want to wait until you pass the bill before you start working on regulations. That's something the Minister of Justice has taught me — but the main reason it's important to pass this bill and then begin to work on the regulations is simple: It's because Yukoners are asking us to improve this legislation. It's important.

Our chief veterinary officer has told us that she gets calls every week — every single week — from the communities about animals. They are mostly about dogs that are not in control. These are issues that the existing legislation does not help address. We need to improve this legislation. That is why we are here today.

While this bill has been debated here in the Legislative Assembly, I have had several meetings in my own communities with extensive conversation about the importance of advancing this legislation. There have been several times when the Yukon Party has suggested we are trying to rush this bill through the Legislature. Actually, we debated this bill in Committee of the Whole for seven days. That's more than any other bill so far this Sitting, including our supplementary budget.

Four years in the making; lots of engagement; lots of debate: so, not rushed.

Let me turn now to the single biggest specific concern raised by the Yukon Party: warrantless searches. When we had second reading debate about a month ago, the Yukon Party's first person to speak to this bill — their critic for Agriculture — stood and said — and I quote: "To begin with, I want to talk about one glaring example of where this legislation goes too far. The provision that this legislation has created — the power for warrantless search and seizure — goes too far. It may, in fact, be unconstitutional." That's from Hansard, on page 2257.

The Member for Lake Laberge made a comparison that, under the new *Child and Family Services Act*, the government — quote: "... did not see any need to make a change to the child protection legislation to permit the ability for a warrantless entry to a premise..."

As I pointed out later in debate, the Yukon Party was wrong. Warrantless searches are allowed for when there are kids at risk, and in fact, the Yukon Party voted for those provisions, along with all of us, this past spring — and that was the right thing to do. After second reading of this bill that we are debating today, I looked back at the existing animal protection legislation, and sure enough, the provision to allow for warrantless searches is already in the existing *Animal Protection Act*.

So again, the Yukon Party was wrong. The bill before us today is not creating this provision; it is keeping this provision. I looked back to see when warrantless searches had been

introduced into the *Animal Protection Act*, and to my surprise, it was the Yukon Party that brought the provision in, in 2008. I've just tabled the "what we heard" document from 2008, and it's fascinating to read back through Hansard the words of the Member for Lake Laberge arguing about why warrantless searches are the right thing to do in 2008 and now argue the exact opposite.

After we tabled the animal protection and control bill last month, the Yukon Party started a letter-writing campaign to various groups asking them to write to us and to ask us to pause this legislation. I know that, Mr. Speaker, because I was copied on a bunch of that correspondence. They misinformed Yukoners about warrantless searches, saying we were introducing them, which is not true, and that they don't exist under child protection legislation, which is also not true. They stated that this included animal protection officers having the right to warrantless searches — also not true. Beyond this, the Yukon Party sought to create fear around a range of issues —

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

### Point of order

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

**Mr. Cathers:** The minister is well aware that accusing other members of seeking to create fear has been ruled out of order multiple times. I would ask you to have him retract that statement in his relaying of somewhat revisionist history and apologize to this House for making it.

**Speaker:** Government House Leader, on the point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I believe that what you ruled for us was not to use phrases like "fearmongering". In your ruling, you said that the use of the word "fear" was not out of order; it was how it was used.

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** I just want to caution the member and all members about using phrasing around "fear" in the debate.

I am not certain that there is a point of order, but I will review Hansard and get back to this House, as required.

Please continue.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me rephrase.

Beyond this, the Yukon Party sought to create an unfounded concern around a range of issues such as prohibited species, restricted species, standards of care, animal hoarding, and regulation-making powers.

Some folks shared, as I said earlier, the original letters from the Yukon Party. Others wrote to us to express their concerns based on the Yukon Party's misinformation. Of course, we followed up with everyone who contacted us, and I wrote back to people, sharing the background information and correcting the record. I made sure to copy opposition MLAs in my correspondence.

Our Minister of Tourism and Culture met directly, for example, with the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon. The association expressed their concerns that we were

introducing warrantless searches. The Minister of Tourism and Culture shared the same background information that I have shared today during third reading. The association was shocked to learn the history and the Member for Lake Laberge's involvement in that history.

Regardless of this history, should we allow for warrantless searches? The Yukon Party says no; I think the answer is yes, and here are three reasons why: (1) it is for emergencies only, when animals are in severe distress and there is no opportunity to get a warrant or a telewarrant; (2) it is only the RCMP who are authorized to do so, and there are checks and balances to make sure that they do not overstep, like having to show in court that the conditions for a warrant existed before they entered; (3) Yukoners are telling us that we should protect animals from harm in these situations. Let me just go over those a little bit more.

The Yukon Party is now arguing that telewarrants should be good enough, but we all know that we don't have universal cell coverage. In fact, the Yukon Party wants us to — given that nearly every Sitting, they put forward a motion asking — and now I am quoting, Mr. Speaker: "... to expand cellular phone coverage to people without service in rural areas..." That is from Hansard, on page 2279, from October 19 this year.

The Member for Lake Laberge, who voted in favour of warrantless searches in 2008 and again this past spring, is now referring to warrantless searches as government overreach, abusive, and trampling civil liberties. It is unfortunate to hear the Yukon Party now being so critical and so untrusting of the RCMP — because that is who we are talking about, Mr. Speaker. That is who would execute these warrantless searches. This is not a new provision, and over time, we have seen that it does strike a balance to ensure that we can prevent animals from harm while protecting civil liberties.

Through our engagement, Yukoners did not express concern about warrantless searches, but they did ask for more tools for the RCMP to support enforcement in our communities. I note that when the Yukon Party asked this question directly from the 2008 "what we heard" document, they indicate that over 90 percent of the Yukoners who replied to their survey said that they support warrantless searches. That is their engagement, carried out 14 years ago, and this is on page 4, item 7.

Since the Yukon Party has raised this concern, I have been talking with Yukoners about the new act and about this existing provision. For example, I went to the Yukon Agricultural Association AGM. In my remarks, I talked about the act. We had a question-and-answer period afterward; they raised no concerns about the bill. I confirmed that we would continue to work with them as we develop regulations.

I went to a few local advisory council meetings. The meeting last week in Tagish is noteworthy for a couple of reasons. They had a presentation from our chief veterinary officer. Councillors asked many questions. Overall, they expressed that this was an important bill to bring forward and long overdue. The local RCMP detachment was at the meeting, and I asked the two constables what they thought about warrantless searches. They said that they already had that

authority and, of course — this is not surprising — that they would always use telewarrants if they could and that it was also good to have the provision to enter without a warrant for emergencies when a telewarrant was not possible. After the RCMP left, I asked the local advisory councillors what they thought of the warrantless searches, and they said that they supported them.

I will note, for the record, that in my responses to e-mails initiated by the Yukon Party's campaign to undermine this new bill, I did have one Yukoner — one constituent of mine — who advocated for us removing the existing provision for warrantless searches, but there are so many other Yukoners who are asking us to include this.

Let me move off of warrantless searches, and let me just talk about why we want — what the purpose of this legislation is. Seven years ago, a young man, Shane Glada-Dick, was attacked and killed by dogs that packed up and were feral. This is a stark example, but I am aware of many other concerns and instances of dangerous incidents caused by dogs not in control or rather caused by owners who do not take proper responsibility for, and care of, their animals.

Let me turn now, finally, to section 41 that the Member for Lake Laberge referred to. It is titled, "Duties of owners", and there was a typo. I appreciate that the typo was found. It was missing the word "or". What it now does is that it says that Yukoners can take their dogs off of their property onto public property, but they have to make sure that those dogs are under control. That typo was fixed. I appreciate that the members opposite believe that this is not correct, but that is what the whole purpose of this legislation was about, including ensuring that, as long as those dogs are controlled well, there is no issue.

So, beyond that stark example, let me talk about a few others. In Tagish, there was a long and protracted civil court case to deal with dogs. I think, under this legislation, we might call that "dog hoarding". In Mount Lorne, one owner had her pet attacked and killed by a dog-mushing team when they were out for a walk along the trails. She presented to her LAC. In Marsh Lake, I have seen adults bitten, kids bitten, and small dogs killed by other dogs out of control, and last winter, I was inundated with calls regarding a herd of horses being neglected in the cold months. All of these are unfortunate stories and why we need a new *Animal Protection and Control Act*. Yukoners have told us that this is important and all of my communities keep telling me that we need this legislation.

Before I sit, I would just like to take a moment to thank the Department of Environment and the Agriculture branch for their incredibly hard work that they put in to bring us this new legislation. I would also like to give a specific shout-out to Dr. Mary Vanderkop, our chief veterinary officer, and Jay Lester, Yukon's animal protection officer, for their many visits to our communities. They have done a great job. Thank you very much.

**Ms. McLeod:** This has been an interesting debate, and the Minister of Environment stood up on at least two occasions to outline who the department had consulted with, and he neglected to mention anyone from southeast Yukon on both of

those occasions. Now, the minister was asked again to clarify that, and so the minister, by omission, clarified that no, he had no knowledge of any consultation that took place in southeast Yukon.

I know that recently a letter has gone back to the Town of Watson Lake — probably the First Nation, but I'm not exactly sure on that — to outline all of the opportunities that the town was given to respond. I don't doubt that. Perhaps they did, but what I can say is that everyone who is in a position of authority today wasn't then. The consultation took place a long time ago, so long ago that nobody remembers that it happened.

I personally don't recall any public meeting, but you know, government says that it happened. At the end of the day, the people of southeast Yukon do not feel that they were consulted on this piece of legislation at all, and so, for that reason, I will stand behind the people in southeast Yukon, and I will not be supporting this bill.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** From the outset, before I make my closing comments, I would just like to associate myself with the comments made by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources as they pertain to the well-debated issue of warrantless searches, as they currently exist in the *Animal Protection Act*, and as they are proposed to exist in the new *Animal Protection and Control Act*, as we debated at some length over the course of seven days in Committee of the Whole. I associate myself with the comments made today by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I also associate myself and support the comments made by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources as they pertain to the amendments made to section 41 of the new proposed *Animal Protection and Control Act*, but as I provide my final comments with respect to third reading of Bill No. 20, *Animal Protection and Control Act*, I will just outline some next steps, confirm some next steps, and a general overview of this legislation.

The Government of Yukon has been working for several years to develop this new legislation. Our engagement started in 2018 but continues to this day. We are still having conversations and are still taking a great deal of feedback. We acknowledge the importance of engaging key stakeholder groups and recognize that they have special interests to take into account. We also take seriously our responsibility to serve the public — those many individual Yukoners who have continued to voice concerns and to speak to our mandate to advance sound, modern legislation.

Once again, I would like to thank Yukoners and stakeholders for their input thus far. Implementing this new act would not be possible without their critical feedback, and we look forward to hearing more. There will be opportunities for key stakeholders to provide feedback on the standards of care for animals, cosmetic surgeries, exotic animals, and any other questions or concerns that may arise. For example, we want to hear from stakeholders on the standards of care, making sure

that they are reflective of our Yukon values and traditions and to the animal — whether it is a pet, a working animal, or livestock. This is in addition to discussions on the proposed permitting process to ensure that they are the right fit for pet stores, boarding facilities, and animal rescues.

Our next steps, prior to finalizing the regulations, is to reach out to each of the key stakeholders, seeking their input, to ensure the regulations reflect the Yukon way of life. We will first begin asking stakeholders how they prefer to be further consulted so that their values and input can be seen to help shape the regulation development. It is important for us to maintain positive relationships as we ensure this important legislation works for all sectors.

In terms of whether we are open to consultation being led by the agriculture industry, we certainly support the industry taking a leadership role through consultation, but we recognize that there are many groups with different structures that represent specific agriculture industry sectors in the Yukon. We want to ensure all groups are well-represented.

I would, once again, as I have said on numerous occasions during the course of this Fall Sitting, emphasize that the act will not come into force before the regulations are developed and passed and that we will be engaging with affected stakeholders as the regulations are developed.

The members opposite also asked questions regarding permitting animals and animal-related businesses. The act allows for regulating specific species of animals. Permitting and prohibiting ownership of animals of designated species — typically, exotic animals — will be defined in the legislation. I would like to assure Yukoners that this legislation is not a tool to ban or restrict the ownership of breeds of animals, such as dogs, across the Yukon. As well, the intention of permitting animal-related businesses is not to interfere with the operation of these facilities but to bring comfort to Yukoners that welfare standards are being met and inspected for in these facilities.

There were concerns raised during Committee of the Whole debate with respect to the Government of Yukon potentially off-loading enforcement onto communities. Let me be clear: The *Animal Protection and Control Act* provides the opportunity for the Government of Yukon to enter into an agreement with an interested Yukon First Nation for the application of additional requirements to be enacted by regulation respecting the care or control of animals to all or a part of the settlement land of the First Nation.

The act will be enforced by territorial government employees, but can also be enforced by authorities in municipal or First Nation governments when those governments want to take on that authority. This is particularly helpful when other governments lack authority to enact bylaws.

Again, it provides opportunity and not an obligation for local governments to assume authority and to enforce in a manner consistent with their needs. We have also discussed, as we heard from the Leader of the Third Party and the Member for Whitehorse Centre, the prohibition on the use of exsanguination without prior stunning. As I indicated previously, we have been in direct contact with religious



communities in the Yukon, including the Jewish Cultural Society of Yukon and the Yukon Muslim Society.

They are aware and support that we will be prescribing nationally accepted guidelines that will allow this method to be used for the purpose of ritual slaughter to produce halal or kosher meat. The amendment to the bill proposed by the Member for Whitehorse Centre provides certainty that, when drafting regulations pursuant to subclause 34(3)(c), allowance must be made for the reasonable ability to follow cultural or religious practices for animal slaughter.

While there were other topics that were discussed during general debate, I will wrap up by clarifying how this act will be enforced. The departments of Environment and of Energy, Mines and Resources will be working together to develop a compliance and enforcement policy. The goal of any legislation is to bring people into compliance, so the first stage will be a broad communication and education component. We will work with individuals on a case-by-case basis. This will be followed by graduated enforcement. The bill allows a framework to address a broad range of circumstances appropriately. The bill includes better and more flexible enforcement tools and stronger penalties for certain offences. Officers will be able to use their discretion when assessing the severity of the contravention and will use orders as a tool to guide individuals into compliance, rather than penalize.

The new legislation will provide for tickets for most minor offences, and deputy officers, on behalf of local governments, may issue these, which aligns with the concerns raised by communities. Enforcement duties will be divided between the staff of the Department of Environment and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Primary responsibility for issues related to control or welfare of livestock will rest with Energy, Mines and Resources Agriculture branch officers. Officers in the animal health unit of the Department of Environment will respond to concerns about companion animals. Animal protection and control officers will continue to maintain a strong relationship with the office of the Crown prosecutor to ensure that evidence is gathered and investigations are completed in a professional and thorough manner when a prosecution is warranted.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I thank all Members of the Legislative Assembly for their participation in this fulsome debate. I am confident that the new legislation will provide the framework needed to oversee the welfare of animals and to contribute to safer communities for Yukoners for years to come.

As we have heard numerous times during debate, we hear from Yukoners on a weekly basis about their concerns over dogs in the communities — among other animal-related complaints. Winter brings more complaints and concerns about livestock welfare as well. As I indicated previously, Yukoners are frustrated with the limitations on government response to date. The tools enabled by this act will address those limitations and allow us to respond.

We will move forward with additional engagement. We are excited to see the amount of feedback received thus far and the

willingness and interest in providing input on the details of the regulations.

I look forward to the support of members opposite — certainly appreciate the support from the Third Party and the comments from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, the Leader of the Third Party — in passing this progressive, necessary, thorough, overdue, and non-partisan legislation.

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

## Division

**Some Hon. Members:** Division has been called.

## Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Mr. Dixon:** Disagree.

**Mr. Kent:** Disagree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Disagree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Disagree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Disagree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Disagree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Disagree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Disagree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Blake:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are nine yea, eight nay.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 20 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 20 has passed this House.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

**Motion re appearance of witness****Committee of the Whole Motion No. 8**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move:

THAT, from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Monday, November 14, 2022, Dr. Sudit Ranade, Yukon's chief medical officer of health, appear as a witness before Committee of the Whole to answer questions regarding the chief medical officer of health's responsibilities to protect and promote the public's health.

**Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes:

THAT, from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Monday, November 14, 2022, Dr. Sudit Ranade, Yukon's chief medical officer of health, appear as a witness before Committee of the Whole to answer questions regarding the chief medical officer of health's responsibilities to protect and promote the public's health.

*Committee of the Whole Motion No. 8 agreed to*

**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.

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

*Recess*

**Chair:** Order. 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?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** We will pick it up where we left off. Last time we were in Committee of the Whole in general debate, the member opposite was asking a series of questions at the end of the day on Thursday, most of which I was able to respond to. I was in the middle of responding to issues related to the substance use health emergency, so I will start with that topic today.

There was a suggestion that, since the Public Accounts showed a 1.6-percent reduction in mental wellness and substance use spending from fiscal years 2020-21 to 2021-22, somehow this government was not committed to addressing this emergency. I would like to remind everyone that the substance use health emergency was declared on January 20, 2022 and that the 2022-23 budget passed in the spring session, and it included substantial new funding to address this challenge. The amount spent in the Health and Social Services budget on mental wellness and substance use prior to this year, as the member opposite was pointing out, was between \$21 million and \$22 million. In this budget, after the

emergency was declared, significant new funding was allocated to Health and Social Services to increase their spending in this line item to over \$25 million.

The January declaration was a commitment to action by our government but was also a call to action to all Yukoners as well. To make our commitment involves all stakeholders. If we want to make our communities safer and healthier, we need to work together in a coordinated fashion to address substance use in our territory.

There was more than \$5.5 million in this year's budget allocated to support the immediate response to the substance use health emergency, and \$1.1 million of this is targeted to enhance the supervised consumption site to increase access and supports to more people who are in need. Expanding the safer supply program to rural communities and increasing availability in Whitehorse is supported by more than \$850,000 in this year's budget.

Approximately \$1.8 million is being used to support additional mental health and social services throughout the territory.

As far as police services, almost \$300,000 in new funding this year is bolstering the RCMP's response for toxic supply of illegal drugs in the territory. I know that many Yukoners are struggling with mental health and substance use issues, so that's why we have taken this action. Our government is committed to working with our partners to take action to respond to the substance use health emergency by approaching this in a coordinated fashion. We are working to find solutions that will help ensure that Yukoners can access the supports, if they need them.

We know that Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services has increased medical capabilities for withdrawal management by adding a physician clinic lead. The Referred Care Clinic and the opioid treatment services have expanded services and added seven FTEs, which include an overdose outreach team to provide harm reduction and education to support clients with system navigation and to provide connections to other services related to substance use.

I have a couple of other things to point out. The Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services at 405 Alexander is used to ensure that clients have access to harm reduction, education, and outreach services. The Department of Health and Social Services continues to work with the RCMP to implement Car 867. The objective of this new partnership is to provide trauma-informed, clinic-centred responses to mental health emergencies.

Last but certainly not least, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services expanded services at the supervised consumption site to include inhalation as an approved method of consumption.

Thank you very much for the indulgence, Madam Chair.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I am going to rise today to ask a few questions on the Tourism department and the tourism season.

Has the minister heard if White Pass & Yukon Route will service Fraser, Bennett, and Carcross next year? If so, when is the anticipated start? Does he believe it will be at pre-COVID frequency?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I know that Tourism and Culture has been bringing partners in Carcross together regularly to discuss some challenges and some opportunities to support the destination development in the community. We know that folks see tourism as having a great potential, especially as we prepare for post-COVID seasons, but they also want it to be better managed — was part of the conversation there as well — with more direct benefits to local businesses and residents.

Specifically to the White Pass folks, I haven't heard anything recently from that private sector endeavour there, but consistency within that *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy* is really important. The government has a key role in supporting other governments and the private sector as well, as we all have the same goal of bringing tourism into Carcross and ensuring that the destination is managed sustainably.

As the member opposite knows as well, as part of a pilot project, Tourism and Culture is investing in different projects identified by businesses and organizations that support broader destination and community development, but I unfortunately don't have any update as far as timing for this summer for the member opposite.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The change in travel, and now the slow uptake in world travel, is continuing to have impacts on local tourism businesses, hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops — the list goes on. Can the minister elaborate on how tourism numbers looked this past season across the Yukon, in comparison to the last two seasons during COVID? How are we doing in comparison to pre-COVID numbers?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I know that quarter 2 tourism indicators show that the Yukon's tourism industry is bouncing back strongly from the impacts of the pandemic, but despite this positive trend, we have not yet fully recovered to the 2019 levels. We have been impacted by global geopolitical situations and economic and demographic factors that have affected all economies throughout the world, thereby creating challenges in our tourism sector. I know that, pre-summer, folks were cautiously optimistic with booking levels and rates, so that was nice to see as well. I know that folks were busy, but to say that we are back completely, we haven't really accomplished that yet. There have been challenges, including travel delays, transportation delays, accommodation and labour market shortages, and also inflation pressures as well. I know that the department is working very collaboratively with industry partners to address these setbacks.

From January to September of this year, approximately 113,000 passengers arrived at Erik Nielsen international. While this is up significantly over the 2021 arrivals, it's still 31 percent lower than the 2019 standards that we have set — those arrivals for that same period in 2019. In terms of hotel capacity rates, the rate for the month of August of 2022 is 17.3 percentage points higher than August of 2021 but still 42.8 percentage points higher than 2020 but yet still 3.8 percent lower than 2019.

So, it's encouraging to see these numbers. The tourism sector has definitely rebounded significantly this year — taking a look at the information from the interim fiscal update that we

provided in October and, again, still identifying there that we are still not at the pre-pandemic levels, the number of international border crossings into Yukon totalled almost 96,000 from January to July in that fiscal update time period — already 51 percent above the total visitation reported in those two previous COVID years.

So, we are poised to see a great season this year with our amazing tourism providers, and we know the government COVID-19 relief and recovery initiatives played a critical role in sustaining Yukon's tourism industry throughout the pandemic, enabling the recovery that is now underway. I've said it a few times in the Legislative Assembly: For a healthy economy, you need healthy people to accomplish that. So, looking forward, we will be placing a priority on working with industry partners to support community capacity and destination development.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

**Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek North that the Chair report progress.

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** I declare the motion carried. Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 8 adopted earlier today, the chief medical officer of health will appear as a witness before the Committee.

In order to allow the witness to take their place in the Chamber, the Committee will now recess and reconvene at 3:30 p.m.

*Recess*

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

### **Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole**

**Chair:** At this time, I will ask if any private member wishes to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole, as I would like to take part in questioning the witness appearing today, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 8.

*Member for Takhini-Kopper King rises*

### **Appearance of witness**

**Acting Chair (Ms. White):** Order, please. Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 8 adopted on this day, Committee of the Whole will now receive the witness, the chief medical officer of health.

I would ask all members to remember to refer their remarks through the Chair when addressing the witness, and I would also ask the witness to refer their answers through the Chair when they are responding to members of the Committee.

### **Acting Chair's statement**

**Acting Chair:** Members and the witness may refer to me as "Acting Chair".

*Witness introduced*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would like to welcome Dr. Sudit Ranade, who is Yukon's chief medical officer of health, here as a witness appearing before Committee of the Whole today. I am very excited to introduce our new chief medical officer of health to our Legislative Assembly. He brings a wealth of experience and a renewed approach as we continue to proceed through this world pandemic. He has been asked and invited here to appear as a witness today to answer questions about the chief medical officer of health's responsibilities to protect and promote Yukon's public health system.

Thank you for being here.

**Acting Chair:** Would the witness like to make a brief opening remark?

**Dr. Ranade:** Sure. Thank you to the Acting Chair. My name is Sudit Ranade and I am the new chief medical officer of health for the Yukon Territory. Thank you for having me here today. I really appreciate the chance to be here.

I am sure that there will be some questions that I will be happy to answer where I can, but I would just say, broadly, in the Yukon and in other places, the chief medical officer of health fulfills a number of statutory obligations as well as sort of a collaboration kind of function in terms of advising the government of the day on a number of scientific issues, especially as they relate to public health, but sometimes as they relate to clinical medical practice. Those are the two domains in which advice is typically sought in addition to the fulfillment of the statutory function of the CMOH.

CMOHs have a history in terms of their statutory function that dates back to around 1882. Shortly after the first was instituted, many other provinces and territories put in place a chief medical officer of health largely for health protection functions, but the role has evolved over time. Certainly, you can see the work of chief medical officers of health in assisting with policy development for health promotion, in assisting with the development of health protection guidance, and a number of other functions. I will probably leave that there.

In terms of the Yukon Territory, I would say that I'm still learning a lot about the Yukon Territory and about this place and about the context in which I practise, but having said that, the public health fundamentals and the medical fundamentals that are part of the prerequisites for this role — I can tell you that I have those and that we can talk through them if that's needed.

Beyond that, I think, as has been mentioned, the key focus here is on population-level health issues. There is the COVID pandemic that is still in play. There is substance use and its effects on human health and the population health and a number of other concerns that are relevant to the Yukon Territory. Over time, I will have the opportunity to examine those in more detail and then make recommendations as appropriate for each topic or area.

I think I will leave my remarks there.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thank you very much, Acting Chair, and thank you to Dr. Ranade for his opening remarks; I appreciate that, as well as the introduction from the minister.

We will have a variety of questions today. I think the obvious topic is, of course, how we carry on living with and managing COVID-19, but I will have some other questions as well for the chief medical officer over the course of today.

This is a timely appearance for the chief medical officer of health because of the recently announced changes to Yukon's approach to managing and living with COVID-19 last week, so I will have some questions for the chief medical officer of health about the new *Charting the Course* document and the new approach that the Yukon government will be taking.

Before we get there, I think I would like to begin with a more contextual question for the witness. We are seeing a course in other jurisdictions, particularly out east — a fairly significant spike in respiratory illnesses overwhelmingly, at least, affecting infants and children. We have seen considerable pressure put on pediatric and children's health facilities in Ontario and other areas in the southeast part of the country. Those include COVID, but it is certainly not limited to COVID. There has been an increase in RSV, influenza, and a range of other respiratory illnesses.

Throughout the last couple of years, I think what we have seen — and if I am wrong here, I invite correction — typically is a bit of lag between impacts of this nature in eastern Canada and the north. So, as a general opening question — as we see the impacts affecting other regions of the country of an uptick of respiratory illnesses, is it something that we should be watching for here in the coming weeks or months? Should we expect a similar spike here in the Yukon as well?

**Dr. Ranade:** I would say that, typically speaking, yes; it looks as if the patterns that are established in the eastern part of the country typically move in a westerly manner. You would say that even about influenza crossing over hemispheres and the pattern that it takes. So, you would expect things that you are seeing there to also play out here, but perhaps a little bit later.

The question is about degree, and the question is about the level of health system preparedness. The comment that I have in response is really that health systems in general are facing a number of different pressures. The first is a human resource pressure. The second is an infrastructure pressure. The third is the pressure of what comes in the door because of what's prevalent in terms of illnesses in the community.

So, I think that there are ongoing activities in order to ensure readiness, but nobody can say for sure exactly what the surge will be or when it will come, and you will see it through health system indicators like emergency department visits and admissions.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thank you, Acting Chair, and thank you for the response from the witness.

I will build on what the witness has indicated. In speaking about the level of health system preparedness, he noted the three items that he did. I would note that in other jurisdictions — particularly the one that is getting the most attention recently, which is Ontario — they have seen that particularly their pediatric health capacity has been stretched. I know that certain pediatric hospitals and children's hospitals have been forced to enact policies and changes to allow for operation

overcapacity. Can the witness give us a bit of a sense of his assessment of our hospital preparedness specifically and the health system more generally, in anticipation of what we could see down the road, which could be a spike in respiratory illnesses of the nature that we see in Ontario?

**Dr. Ranade:** So, first, I would acknowledge that, because I'm still new here, there are elements of the health system that I'm still learning about and still trying to understand. My understanding of the current situation is that there are multiple levels of care, and when care requirements exceed what can be provided in territory, people are then flown out of territory for specific care.

The challenge that many northern communities have highlighted in calls that I have been on — and so I will reflect that here — is that when those jurisdictions to whom patients are sent become overwhelmed, they start thinking about how they can manage their own capacity. One of the concerns that we have — or a position that we're putting forward — is that hopefully should not impact the transfer of patients from here to other jurisdictions in order to provide or receive care. I don't know enough about the way this system works to say for sure whether or not there is adequate surge capacity or whether it's prepared in that way, but that's one of the considerations that I think we need to think about for this winter.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the answer from the witness. Since COVID-19 appeared in the territory, there have been a number of steps taken by the government to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, but also, some of these steps obviously affect other illnesses as well; in particular, I would note the commitment and the interest in improving ventilation, particularly in Yukon schools. I know that the previous chief medical officer of health had commented about the need for improved ventilation. I have heard similar comments from the Canadian chief medical officer of health — or the national chief medical officer of health. I'm wondering if the chief medical officer of health here can talk to us a little bit about the need for improving ventilation, particularly in the school system — in schools where large numbers of children are in close proximity to each other — and what is the assessment that he can provide around the work that we have done so far to improve ventilation?

I do know that the government has highlighted that they have installed a number of HEPA filters in classrooms, but we don't know the full extent of that. I'm wondering if the chief medical officer of health, in his time in the Yukon, has been called upon by either the Department of Education or Highways and Public Works to provide advice on the installation and improvement of ventilation in Yukon schools.

**Dr. Ranade:** I will try to take the last part of it first. So, if I were to be consulted, I would be happy to advise on interventions such as ventilation for the reduction of transmission of respiratory diseases. I would say that — in terms of what actually has been done in the local systems and in the school system — that may be a question better sent to the minister of that area.

In terms of the ventilation piece overall, I think that we now have to start thinking about these interventions that were

introduced during COVID as now being interventions that may have impacts on respiratory diseases overall. Then the question becomes: To what extent would they have an impact? — and then decide whether or not they are useful interventions, but not just from the perspective of COVID — now from the perspective of a number of respiratory viruses.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the answer from the witness. That actually is a perfect segue to my next question. Now, I had the benefit of hearing Dr. Ranade on the radio this morning in his interview with CBC, so I am familiar with what he will likely say here, but I think it is beneficial for Yukoners to hear — those who are listening or those who will follow in Hansard.

Dr. Ranade spoke about mask mandates and why there is not a decision at this point to go in that direction. I thought the comments on the radio were quite interesting, and so I would like to provide an opportunity for the witness to describe why it is that we aren't considering mask mandates at this time, why it is the view of the chief medical officer of health that such a decision should not be taken at this point, because it is obviously an intervention that sort of came about in the public discourse largely because of COVID, but now, as other respiratory illnesses come into play, there is also a discussion about that as well. I would just like to provide an opportunity for the witness to explain the position on mask mandates and why we are facing the current course of action that we are.

**Dr. Ranade:** Acting Chair, if we can just take a step back for a second and say that, you know, my role would be to provide recommendations or advice, and then the government would then decide whether or not a mandate was advisable, based on some of the recommendations that I would provide, I suppose, as well as other factors that are outside of my recommendations.

So, in terms of a mask mandate, you are seeing conversation around that in many other places, especially as RSV and influenza cases rise in different communities. What I would say is that — just like I said before, about ventilation — now you need to think about these things as not being related just to COVID, but related to a number of other respiratory viruses that are going to continue to persist — right? — in the community. So, we will continue to see influenza year after year after year, as we will continue to see RSV and we will continue to see COVID, and we will continue to see other respiratory pathogens. So, then the question that you have to ask about these interventions, in terms of a mandate, is: What impact do we think they will have, how much impact, and how much impact if they are used in isolation?

So, one of the points that I made this morning on the radio was that many people have resumed a full set of social activities as part of their life, and those social activities are important; they bring a lot of well-being to us. So, you have to examine those social activities in the context of the idea that most social interactions, especially if they are over a long period of time in close contact with people who you like, doing things that you like — those are going to bring risks of respiratory virus transmission, whether it be COVID, or influenza, or the common cold. I think that it is important now to think about what impact would interventions in public or congregated

settings have, given that people have continued to socialize to what you might consider pre-pandemic levels, and what impact would those interventions actually have, if people are engaging in activity that presents significant risk of transmission.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the answer. Just to be perhaps a little bit more clear, what is the chief medical officer of health's current advice for Yukoners about mask wearing?

**Dr. Ranade:** My current advice about mask wearing is this: The first is, if you are a symptomatic individual, that raises the probability that you are infectious. So, if you are symptomatic and you are going to a place that you need to be for an important reason — for example, you need to go get groceries or you need to go do something that's important in your life — the general advice around a symptomatic person would be to isolate yourself to the extent that you can, but if there are circumstances under which you can't, that's a situation in which I would definitely recommend the use of a mask, and that is because if your own respiratory secretions are more likely to be infectious because you are unwell, then the use of a mask can protect the environment around you from those secretions.

In terms of other mask-wearing by people who are asymptomatic, I think it's important to remember that, for a fully asymptomatic person, the likelihood that they either have disease or are infectious is fairly low. So, what I would be saying is that it becomes more of a comfort around people wearing masks as their choice to make themselves feel better in situations, or feel protected in situations, in which they may not be able to control the time that they spend with other people. So, it becomes something that people can choose to do.

There are some other circumstances in health care where we are still recommending — or I'm still recommending — universal masking. There are two reasons for that: One, when people seek health care, they are likely to be unwell, which means that they have a higher likelihood of being infectious, first of all. The second part of that is that health care providers have a responsibility not to act as a vector of transmission between themselves and a patient or between one patient and another patient. So, that's the reason for continuing to recommend that in health care settings.

**Mr. Dixon:** Just for some further clarity, in which current settings does the chief medical officer of health recommend mandatory masking?

**Dr. Ranade:** The settings in which I continue to recommend that — and I believe those are reflected in the guidance documents that will accompany *Charting the Course* — are clinical care settings in which patient care is being actively delivered.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the CMOH's answers. In the context of the general public, he has made a clear case that masking among asymptomatic people is perhaps not the course of action that is required currently. Can the chief medical officer of health provide us with what sort of scenario or changes might lead him to change that advice or to increase the stringency of that advice?

**Dr. Ranade:** I would say that there are a couple of circumstances. Now what you are seeing is pressure on the

health care system in some provinces. I had previously stated that this might be a situation where we would have to look at some of these interventions. That is one scenario, although I would say, again, that it is hard to say exactly how much impact just the use of mask mandates would have in terms of reducing transmission without accompanying public health measures, such as reducing social gatherings and so forth.

The other important situation where I would reconsider some of the public health measures or the recommendations around them would be if we had evidence that there was, for example, a COVID variant against which vaccination no longer provided protection from severe disease. If that were emerging, or if that were proving to be the case, and we would have some warning of that, it would circulate in other parts of the world, and we would see reports of lack of protection from severe disease by vaccines against a particular strain, so that would be a reason to revisit the recommendations.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the response from the chief medical officer of health.

I am sure that, like all MLAs throughout the course of the last number of years, through the imposition and removal of masking mandates, I certainly heard from a lot of Yukoners who noted some of what they felt were some of the more negative ramifications of mask mandates, whether it be the impact to the development of children's language skills through the course of having to wear a mask in school or other implications. Can the chief medical officer of health discuss some of the perhaps unintended consequences or negative aspects of requiring mask use?

**Dr. Ranade:** The published literature on this talks about what I would consider to be — we would say “non-severe, negative consequences of mask use”. There are some published reports on mask-related dermatitis on the face and some other reports about just general discomfort.

I think there are some very reasonable scenarios where mask-wearing can have some harms, based on a person's history or based on a person's previous experience or trauma, but I would say that those are case-by-case situations as opposed to population-level situations.

The other piece around where it's appropriate or not is related to the developmental trajectory of children. Certainly, I think, for the very youngest — and I think you saw this in settings with younger children, daycares and so forth — nobody expected those children to wear masks because it is not developmentally appropriate. There is no fixed age cut-off of that, but certainly there are average ages around where it can become more developmentally appropriate than in the younger ages.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the response and the acknowledgement of the fact that there are some unintended consequences that are associated with masking mandates.

I will move on, because I know time is short. One of the issues that has come up in Ontario — and I learned this morning from the doctor on the radio that we don't have any cases, to his knowledge at this point, of RSV. Can the chief medical officer of health just describe what we are dealing with here — what it means from a public health perspective and what we

should be thinking about with regard to the possible entrance of RSV into the Yukon?

**Dr. Ranade:** RSV is a virus that we have been dealing with for many, many years, so it is not a new virus for the medical or public health field. Largely, it is a virus that causes respiratory inflammation, and that inflammation can cause more severe disease in very young patients. Part of the reason for that is just that their lung structure and bronchioles are already small, so when you get a little bit of inflammation there, it can become harder for them to breathe. The treatments around RSV are largely supportive, so the critical determining factor in terms of RSV outcomes is access to care. While there are no other major preventive measures for RSV besides the usual, standard respiratory virus prevention measures, on the other side, the most important piece around RSV is — especially when young kids are seen — that they be seen quickly and that they be given the care that they need, which is largely supportive.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate that answer.

Can the chief medical officer of health tell us whether or not there is a vaccine available for RSV?

**Dr. Ranade:** There is no vaccine in the way that we think about vaccines for other viruses like a flu vaccine or COVID vaccine for RSV. There are monoclonal antibodies that are used in children who may have a risk of very severe disease by virtue of the fact that they were born too early, for example, or born at low gestational birth weight. There are some eligibility criteria around the use of that product, but they are really reserved for situations where the person might be at highest risk of severe disease, but other than that, there is no vaccine for RSV.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the answer.

So, going back to the strain that the surge in respiratory illnesses in eastern Canada has placed on the health care system in other provinces, one of the factors that has compounded that challenge has been the national shortage of childhood medicine — in particular, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, Tylenol, and Advil for most of us parents at least — children's Tylenol and children's Advil. Obviously for most parents, the most common treatment for these types of illnesses is over-the-counter medication like Tylenol or Advil or their equivalents.

In some of the public discourse that I have seen, the shortage has compounded the already challenging capacity issues that are being faced in other parts of the country. Is the chief medical officer of health involved in any of the discussions around the national shortage? Can he provide any sort of input as to what the Public Health Agency of Canada, perhaps, is engaging with the provinces and territories on? We learned earlier today from the Minister of Health and Social Services in Question Period that there is a supply of these medications that are coming to the Yukon, but we still don't know exactly how they will be distributed. Is there advice that the chief medical officer of health provides to the Government of Yukon about how that distribution occurs, and if so, what is it?

**Dr. Ranade:** I would say that I'm currently involved in this mostly in an ancillary way, so I may not have all of the answers for your question.

I can say that, at the Health Canada level, I am aware of discussions to sort of expedite the availability of pediatric formulations of over-the-counter medications that are in shortage currently, but as to specific dates, times, or mechanisms by which that would be delivered, I don't have that information.

There are two pieces to this. There is a community side and also an acute care side, and so, if there were to be a prioritization, probably we would ensure that the acute care system has enough to treat inpatients and then work to build supply in the community. That would be my initial assessment of what would be likely.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate that answer.

I will move now, if I can, to the *Charting the Course* document that was released last week and some of the changes that the Yukon has undertaken with regard to our approach to COVID-19. The document is fairly brief for Yukoners to review, and it is largely, in my view, sort of broken into five general goals.

So, I will start with the first one and that is "Vaccination". One of the changes that is occurring with regard to vaccination is a shift in vaccine delivery in Whitehorse from a mass clinic to existing immunization programs. So, I would like to ask if the chief medical officer of health can describe what that is going to mean for Yukoners seeking the COVID-19 vaccine, whether it is the most recent booster or any other aspect of the COVID-19 vaccination in Whitehorse. Likewise, does he have advice or information about rural Yukon and what that change in delivery will mean for rural Yukon?

**Dr. Ranade:** In the short term, there won't be significant changes to the way that vaccines are delivered. It is mostly the expression of a longer term goal that, rather than having COVID vaccines delivered separately from other vaccines, the place in which you can receive your normal set of vaccines — either for a pediatric series or for other purposes — would be also a place where you could get COVID-19 vaccines. So, there will be some transition pieces around that, but the goal is to have a system where, when you get one vaccine, you can get other vaccines. That is currently in place, to my knowledge.

For example, the current delivery system is one where you can make an appointment for a flu vaccine and also get a COVID vaccine at the same time. The goal is to really just integrate the vaccine delivery pieces so that it is not a COVID-19 vaccine out here that is delivered in this way and then you get all of your other vaccines in these other ways.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate that answer. I will move to the next aspect, which is "Testing and Treatment".

It is noted in a press release from last week that the COVID-19 testing and assessment centre will close on November 18, which is later this week, and that testing is no longer routinely recommended for Yukoners with COVID-19 symptoms, unless indicated by a health care provider in a clinical assessment.

It goes on to note that the confirmatory lab-based PCR testing remains available for those who need it for diagnostic or therapeutic purposes, such as for accessing Paxlovid. As a general question, can the chief medical officer of health provide some information about when someone should seek testing? When should they elevate their — perhaps just having symptoms and being concerned about really needing to seek a PCR test?

**Dr. Ranade:** I would say, first of all, that if anyone has any kinds of symptoms that are respiratory, those symptoms could be influenza, COVID, RSV, or some other virus. So, just as we did before, the idea is that if you have symptoms that are mild and can be managed, then you manage them through the ways in which you are used to managing mild symptoms. At the point in time at which you think you need greater care for your symptoms, then when you seek that care, it might be reasonable to test you for COVID as a way of understanding what to treat you with. But beyond that, the thinking is that mild symptoms of COVID can be managed similarly to mild symptoms of influenza or mild symptoms of RSV. It's the severity of the symptoms that dictates the need for testing rather than whether or not you think you might have a particular disease.

**Mr. Dixon:** Can the CMOH provide a little bit more information about Paxlovid, what is the effectiveness is of Paxlovid as a treatment, and when it is deployed in a setting where someone has a need for it?

**Dr. Ranade:** Paxlovid is an anti-viral medication that has been approved by Health Canada for the treatment of mild to moderate COVID symptoms essentially in order to prevent them from becoming severe COVID symptoms. Somebody who already has severe disease who needs to be admitted, for example, would not be treated with Paxlovid. It's an outpatient treatment designed for people who might be at greater risk of severe disease to reduce the likelihood of a progression from mild symptoms to severe symptoms.

**Mr. Dixon:** I will move on to the changes to the self-isolation rules. Obviously, one of the rules that has changed or one of the changes in direction we saw last week was the change to the self-isolation guidance to align with other illnesses. That will also include the closure of the self-isolation facilities.

So, I would just like to provide an opportunity for the chief medical officer of health to provide some comment about why this decision was taken, what the new guidelines are, and what it will mean for Yukoners who find themselves with COVID-19.

**Dr. Ranade:** I think I would like to take a step back on that answer to, you know — the way in which we used to manage isolation for respiratory viruses pre-COVID was to say that the symptoms directed the time of isolation. So, as long as you were feeling unwell, you should isolate yourself, and beyond that, you know, wait 24 hours for respiratory viruses before you reintegrate yourself into doing other things with other people.

When COVID happened, there was all sorts of conversation around: What is the incubation period? What is

the period of communicability? — these things that guide the kind of general time frame of infectiousness. The consequence of saying that it was, at first, 15 days or 14 days, then 10 days, then seven days — there are two consequences. One is that you may actually be keeping people out of their routine for longer than needed, depending on how long their symptoms go. The other consequence is that, for many people, it becomes challenging to say, “Well, if I have COVID, it's this rule, but if I have some other respiratory disease, it's this rule.”

So, the thinking here is to now integrate these things together so that if you have COVID, for example, and your COVID lasts three days, that would be the period of time that your symptoms last — for three days; you would isolate yourself for that amount of time, plus an additional 24 hours. But if you have COVID and your symptoms last for 10 or 14 days, then the symptoms are driving your isolation, because they are really the proxy for your infectiousness. The same thing would be said if you had flu or if you had some unknown virus that you didn't get tested for.

**Mr. Dixon:** I will move on to the public reporting side of the change. The way that the government and the chief medical officer communicates will change, as a result of the announcement last week. So, I'm wondering if he can provide a bit more information about what Yukoners can expect with regard to public reporting and communication with regard to COVID-19.

**Dr. Ranade:** Again, this is part of integrating the response to COVID with what we do with other respiratory viruses. Two things: One, COVID-19 surveillance has been sort of put over here as a separate category that is distinct from the surveillance for other respiratory viruses. The goal, over time, is to integrate the surveillance mechanisms. So, we have a system of respiratory virus surveillance that includes COVID but also includes flu and RSV and other diseases, if they are reportable to public health. The goal is to then have essentially more comprehensive respiratory surveillance.

**Mr. Dixon:** I will conclude my questions with this one, so in advance, I will thank the witness for appearing today. I appreciate his candor and information.

The final question I have is simply related to nomenclature. Is it fair to say that we have moved from COVID-19 being a pandemic to endemic? Is that correct terminology that we would use in our discussion of COVID-19?

**Dr. Ranade:** It does depend on your definition of “endemic”. If you decide that a definition of “endemic” is “present routinely at baseline”, then I would suggest that, with our two-year experience now, COVID has moved into this phase where we expect it to be around.

Similar to flu and other respiratory viruses that routinely circulate — if you consider endemicity as a situation where a virus routinely circulates, even though it may peak or crest — yes, you would say it has probably reached that point.

**Ms. Blake:** I would like to thank the witness for being here today. It's nice to see him.

A lot of the questions that I am going to bring forward are questions that I have been hearing from the communities. I just



returned from Old Crow yesterday, so I am going to tie some of the questions in.

The first question I will start with is on surveillance and reporting. I apologize if I am repeating some of the questions of my colleague. I was taking as many notes as I could.

Can you explain the purpose of pausing the COVID dashboard and moving it toward a dashboard for all respiratory illnesses?

**Dr. Ranade:** The rationale for that is to really give a better picture of respiratory virus circulation and not to have COVID surveillance exist in isolation. Over time, when we can build a respiratory surveillance reporting system, it would include COVID, as well as other respiratory viruses. The thinking is that, when you just look at COVID when other respiratory viruses are circulating, you get an incomplete picture of what's happening. This is an effort to create a more complete picture of respiratory viruses as they're circulating.

**Ms. Blake:** I appreciate the answer.

So, waste-water testing has been done in other jurisdictions successfully. Here in the Yukon, Haines Junction is also doing waste-water testing. Is your team planning to use waste-water testing for COVID? If not, why not?

**Dr. Ranade:** I think that we are looking very carefully at the waste-water surveillance project that's happening currently in the Yukon and trying to understand, as it evolves: What additional information does that supply, compared to the routine surveillance mechanism, and then also, what additional information or impact does it have on decision-making related to the viruses? I think the first part is there's a growing recognition of the additional surveillance value. The second part is less clear in most jurisdictions, which is: What impact or what decisions would you make differently based on that knowledge? I think that's something we had hoped to get from the evaluation of the pilot.

**Ms. Blake:** Thank you. So, the next question I have is in terms of masking. When folks reach out, they often ask me if I know, or if I do not know, if they should mask or mask up or not, depending on where they are. The new plan indicates that we are now treating COVID similar to other respiratory illnesses. Are there plans to ramp up prevention and treatment for respiratory illnesses? An example is that hospitals in other jurisdictions have been asking that masking be increased in indoor settings. We all know that masking works not only for COVID but for other respiratory illnesses. With flu season approaching and hospital staff at an all-time shortage, what would trigger your office to re-institute a mask mandate?

**Dr. Ranade:** I'll just go back and suggest that I would offer recommendations to the government, and the government would then decide whether or not to put in any kind of mandate or other interventions.

What would trigger change in recommendation from me around that would be one of two scenarios. One, again, we're looking at masking not as an intervention purely for COVID-19, but now about more respiratory viruses; but also, I think it's important not to consider that intervention in isolation. It's important to think about the other public health measures and what impact they may have had relative to

masking before you move to the step of just focusing on a mask mandate.

Because many of these viruses are transmitted in social settings that happen in ways in which people want to be there doing that thing, if those behaviours are not changed, or if that aspect of society's intermingling does not change, then it's hard to say what impact just masking alone will have. In terms of the guidance around: "When should I mask?" — for any individual, if you have symptoms and you need to be somewhere where there are other people around, then there is a strong recommendation to mask, because if you are symptomatic, then that increases the probability that you would be infectious with whatever you have, but the other part of it is for people who do not have symptoms. At the moment, my recommendation is that it's a personal preference around what makes people feel comfortable in a setting.

**Ms. Blake:** I thank the witness for the response. With the new plan, the plan recommends that the best course of action is to stay home when sick. Given that you have made this the primary tool to fight COVID and other respiratory illnesses, would you encourage the implementation of paid sick leave so that less infectious people have to choose between losing wages or coming into work? This is especially important when related to the ongoing worker shortage and risk of overwhelming short-staffed health care centres.

With a recent trip I just completed to Vuntut Gwitchin, there were a few folks who reached out indicating that they weren't sure how much more time they could take off work because they are dealing with living in an environment with black mould; they're dealing with allergies, so at times, they don't know if their symptoms are from allergies from the mould or actually sick. So, they're continuously taking time off work, using up their vacation leave and special leave, and having to lose income.

**Dr. Ranade:** I guess I would say that, as a policy matter, there are lots of discussions that can happen around the sick leave and benefits around people being away from work when they're ill. Just from a purely public health perspective, I would say that one of the things we try to do is help enable environments for people to make healthy choices. I would say that, if one of the recommendations around people staying at home when they're sick has barriers to it, then policy tools that remove those barriers can assist with the goal of mitigating transmission of respiratory viruses.

**Ms. Blake:** I've been able to hear from some employees at the Vuntut Gwitchin government how they're taking on 20 different tasks in a day when they are short-staffed, so I hope that paid sick leave is something that is being looked at for the territory.

Moving on, the plan also indicates that COVID working groups are going to be disbanded. Does this include the long COVID working group?

**Dr. Ranade:** I have participated in some of those discussions, and I think that this group has its own plan about what their deliverables are and how to move forward, so the recommendations in charting the course are not related to that particular working group.

**Ms. Blake:** I thank the witness for that answer.

In terms of ventilation, good ventilation is necessary to prevent many respiratory illnesses. I know that my colleague asked about ventilation within schools. My question is: How is the chief medical officer of health working to improve ventilation in all public buildings, including health facilities and others where there is public access?

**Dr. Ranade:** I would say that I think that this relates to a question about: In what way would the chief medical officer of health be working with these other areas? So, the implementation and the direction-setting would really come from those areas. They would be asking the chief medical officer of health, if indicated or appropriate, for advice on which of the interventions to choose or how to choose them, and I would be happy to provide that advice.

**Ms. Blake:** My next question is in regard to communications. I have had many conversations with folks in the communities who don't know what the protocol is when they get infected with COVID. They don't know where to get vaccinated or who to reach out to for this information. These are also questions that came up during my visit in Vuntut Gwitchin over the weekend. Does the chief medical officer of health's office plan to increase communication with communities, and if so, how? Also, can you please lay out what your plans are to reach folks in the communities — many of whom do not have Internet access, cable access, or phone access — to encourage them to get vaccinated for COVID and the flu?

I will just add the last question: Have you planned to visit each community throughout the territory?

**Dr. Ranade:** I would say that — maybe I will start with the last question.

I think that having an on-the-ground sense of communities is very important to the practice of public health, and so I would be happy to visit, as per whatever protocols or procedures are decided upon between the Yukon government and communities. I am happy to do that.

I would say that, in terms of the communications plans and paths — certainly, I have taken back some feedback around making sure that the communications are available through multiple channels, and they have some communications folks who are planning those things out. But at any time, I think that they are open to feedback around how to reach people who might not have Internet access, for example, or people who might communicate or need to be communicated with in different ways. That is something that is an ongoing piece that is always happening, and we are happy to continue to try to improve it.

In terms of where people can get vaccines and what the guidance is — where people can get vaccines is essentially where they got vaccines before. So, wherever they were getting COVID vaccines, that is where they will still be able to get COVID vaccines, and in terms of the guidance, it is very streamlined toward symptoms now. So, the idea is, what you would have done before, you do now, in terms of your symptoms — which is to isolate for the duration of your symptoms.

**Ms. Blake:** Again, I just thought that would be an important question, because during my community visit in Vuntut Gwitchin this weekend, I heard from two families who are working toward medical travel outside the territory, and they just weren't sure who to talk to in the community to access vaccinations before their travel, so I hope that information gets to them soon.

Many folks in the territory believe — I have heard from those who reside in rural communities — that the chief medical officer of health is responsible only for COVID. Can you please share which other public health issues your office is responsible for monitoring and making directions on?

**Dr. Ranade:** I will try to answer that question. Much of it relates to the statutory responsibilities that are set out for the chief medical officer of health, but broadly speaking, the chief medical officer of health would be an advisor on any public health-related topic. So, it would not just be about COVID; it would be about communicable diseases, non-communicable diseases, environmental health, and so forth. There are a number of different — anything that could constitute public health would be a topic that the chief medical officer of health could have advice or support on.

**Ms. Blake:** I thank the witness for the response. In terms of the substance use emergency in the territory — the other public health emergency to contend with is the substance use health emergency. With resources diverting from COVID response, are there plans to direct that money, those buildings, and the “all hands on deck” attitude in public health services toward that substance use emergency?

One example that comes to mind is COVID facilities, like the self-isolation facility. This facility is now closing. Are there plans to make the self-isolation facility available for the substance use health emergency?

**Dr. Ranade:** I'm not sure that I can speak to the plans for that facility or to how resources might be redirected from one response to another, but I would say, from a public health perspective, that the substance use health emergency is a vital public health topic, and there are many interventions that are already going on, as well as probably — you know, there are lots of other pieces that jurisdictions are building into these responses. So, it just shows you that it's a very multi-connected issue. So, managing it requires multiple parts coming together.

**Ms. Blake:** So, it has been almost one year since the substance use health emergency was declared, and many Yukoners are trying to understand what the declaration means in practice. I do get calls from First Nation governments and non-profit organizations regularly asking me these questions. Do you currently have a strategy mapped out for the substance use health emergency, and if so, can you share it with us and Yukon First Nation governments?

**Dr. Ranade:** I would say that there is an ongoing plan of activities, and it is probably something to defer to the minister on that.

**Ms. Blake:** My next question is: Has your office been communicating directly with each respective Yukon First Nation in the territory to understand what each community's needs are when it comes to the substance use emergency in the

territory? Also, can you share what directions the office has given this government to respond to the substance use health emergency?

**Dr. Ranade:** I would say that I'm happy to be involved in ongoing advice and support with respect to the substance use health emergency.

In terms of communicating directly with each First Nation, what I'm starting to do is look at the current processes that exist in terms of the connectivity between the Yukon government or specifically the Department of Health and Social Services and Yukon First Nations. So, where there are opportunities for me to engage in those discussions, I'm happy to do that.

**Ms. Blake:** The last two questions I have for the witness: Are there any plans to exempt newer treatments, like psilocybin and other therapies, for mental health treatment? These are questions that I've been hearing from mental health providers who provide service to the surrounding communities.

The last question is: Have you made any community visits to understand the mental health and substance use needs of each community? Those are my final questions. Thank you.

**Dr. Ranade:** For the last question, I was able to go out on a visit to a health centre recently, but I have not been able to do community visits yet, which I'm hoping to do.

In terms of the question around approving or exempting certain medications for treatment, in general, I would say that's a system question and that health systems have processes to decide what medications are approved and through what means, rather than being a specific CMOH question to approve or exempt a particular medication.

**Mr. Hassard:** I have just a follow-up question to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin's question. The CMOH said that he would not, or has not, travelled to rural Yukon to the communities. So, I'm curious: Does the CMOH plan to travel to rural Yukon?

**Dr. Ranade:** Yes, it is my hope that I'll be able to get out to a number of different communities in the Yukon. Yes, I don't have specific dates, but I'm hopeful that I'll be able to do that.

**Acting Chair:** Are there any further questions for the witness?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I thank the Members of the Legislative Assembly for their questions today and thank the witness very much.

I understand that we will end Committee today by moving that the Speaker do now resume the Chair. In anticipation of no further questions for the witness, I would thank Dr. Ranade very much for his time today and thank everyone today for the questions that they have brought. I please encourage any further questions to come — or those appropriate to come — to my office in my role, and we will certainly endeavour to have Dr. Ranade answer if there are additional questions from today's appearance. Thank you.

*Witness excused*

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

**Acting Chair:** It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

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

Also, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 8 adopted earlier today, a witness appeared before Committee of the Whole to answer questions related to the chief medical officer of health's responsibilities to protect and promote the public's health.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

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

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

*Bells*

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Disagree.

**Mr. Dixon:** Disagree.

**Mr. Kent:** Disagree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Disagree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Disagree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Disagree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Disagree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Disagree.

**Ms. White:** Disagree.

**Ms. Blake:** Disagree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are nil yea, 16 nay.

**Speaker:** I think the nays have it.

I declare the motion defeated.

*Motion negatived*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Committee of the Whole will recess for 20 minutes.

*Recess*

**Chair:** 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?

**Ms. Van Bibber:** We will continue with our tourism theme with the questions.

Border issues — with the federal COVID rules and the various restrictions at borders at the start and at the end of our season, the Little Gold border crossing was a huge problem for Dawson, of course. We suggested that the Minister of Tourism and Culture advocate to keep open the border one week earlier and staying open one week later to accommodate at least the September long weekend. This was not done until the eleventh hour and Dawson lost a much-needed infusion of visitors right at the close of the season.

Can the minister ensure that this will not happen again and work with local businesses to help lobby on their behalf with the federal government?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** In preparation for helping to support the 2022 tourism season, we worked with our industry partners and with the federal government to ease border and travel restrictions. This enabled tourism recovery, while also protecting the health and safety of Yukoners. It was definitely not great to see the border — the Little Gold port of entry at the Top of the World Highway — not go back to a regular schedule. The federal government made that decision — governments, plural — made that decision, even though we did a lot of advocacy work with our partners.

In that advocacy work, we did see the elimination of COVID-19 testing requirements at the international borders in Yukon. We saw, through the advocacy of the minister and his

team, a reinstatement of the international travel through the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport and also the Dawson City Airport. We saw a streamlined process for cruise passengers at the Fraser port of entry. That was quite the work done by the minister and his team — again, letting the federal governments — plural — knowing the reality of remote borders is something that was very integral in the decisions being made on those national levels. So, that is important — and, also, with our engagement, as well, getting that border open to begin with was quite the feat as well.

So, again, talking with folks like Gertie's and others in the tourism industry out of my riding in Klondike, that time frame is extremely important for a lot of reasons: not only the last of the American tourists and other tourists who are getting the beautiful fall colours that they could see up in our neck of the woods and prolonging the season and then heading into Alaska, but also, it is really important, as well, for the funding of Gertie's. They have a staff who they rely on from right across the country. The production crew is world-class. We want to make sure that we do as much as we can to extend our tourism seasons, and so, the work that the minister did in all of these capacities — to do their best to get back to as normal as possible — knowing full well that the considerations also have to take into consideration the health of not only the travelling public, but also the communities that they travel through — we're hoping to see a lot more "normal" next summer.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thank you for that answer. I was wondering if the minister had heard any reports from the Little Gold border crossing at the Top of the World Highway and if he has heard when it is expected to open in this coming season, 2023.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I have not, no.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** There has been an expression of interest for land for a new convention centre, which closed on October 14. It was reported that nine plan takers submitted bids by the end of September. The minister indicated that the timeline to have the new centre built was two to three years. I was hoping that we could maybe get an update on this process.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I probably won't be able to provide anything in the form of an update, as I would imagine that any news on the new convention centre would be something that the department would want to get out there in a timely fashion.

There is definitely a need in the Yukon for a new and up-to-date convention centre. After the closure of the former High Country Inn facility, for example, we are missing out on an opportunity to host the Canada Chamber of Commerce AGM, because we didn't have a proper facility for that. So, the need is not lost on us. Conventions, conferences, and many other forms of meetings are extremely important economic drivers. Again, these are the types of things that we can use to extend our tourism season and our conference season as well. It can contribute to year-round, high-yield tourism visitation — so, extremely important investments.

We are in an early exploration stage right now with this initiative to learn who is interested and to see what land is available. That expression of interest did close October 14 of this year, and the department is really interested in helping to

connect potential proponents with the tourism industry partners — also with government funding sources and investors. That good work is ongoing.

At this time, space to host anywhere from 750 to 1,000 seated attendees is under consideration, with a desired timeline of being built in two to three years. It's too early in the process for cost estimates, but they are not necessarily ruling out some degree of financial participation by our government and exploring opportunities with federal funding and private sector as well.

A new convention centre in Whitehorse would make a significant contribution toward the Yukon development tourism strategy and their goal of doubling Yukon's tourism business revenues to \$500 million to \$525 million by 2028.

There have been a couple of expressions of interest received, and those are now preparing to go through the RFP process. Again, I don't have too much more to update the member opposite on in this pursuit.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I thank the minister. You answered my next question.

The Government of Yukon has extended the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement program to provide ongoing support for the Yukon's tourism sector. The new extension period ran retroactively from April 1, 2022 to July 31, 2022. Did the program run out on July 31? Can the minister tell us the total expenditures for the program this fiscal year?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** As far as money set aside so far or spent, if folks recall, back in the 2022-23 mains of this year, we put aside \$300,000. The actuals that we saw from the Public Accounts in 2021 showed a budget of \$1.229 million from the actual spend for tourism non-accommodation sector supplements.

Now, between the launch of the program in 2020 and March of this year, 2022, \$1.6 million was distributed through TASS, which is the tourism accommodation sector supplement, and \$5.65 million through TNASS, which is the tourism non-accommodation sector supplement. So, an additional \$1.9 million was distributed to the hospitality sector to alleviate the impacts of COVID restrictions, and the government extended and made changes to TNASS with the new extension period running retroactively from April 1, 2022 to July 31, 2022.

Accommodation businesses were eligible for TASS. They became eligible to apply for TNASS as well as we switched them around, based on necessity. As of September 21 of this year, the revamped TNASS program provided over \$264,000 to local businesses during the extension period.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** There is a new program called the "Rugged Apprentices pilot" or "voluntourism", which was an inaugural event this fall in September, with 33 Canadian volunteers used on different projects — one in Carmacks, one in Dawson, and one in Watson Lake — where these volunteers built or helped maintain tourism infrastructure. Once the volunteers arrived in the territory, food, accommodation, and transportation were covered by the department.

Can the minister tell us what this program actually cost for these 33 volunteers?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I wouldn't have a dollar value right now in general debate. For a supplementary budget, it doesn't have any budget items for Tourism and Culture.

The regenerative tourism is a concept whereby visitors travel with a mindset to leave a destination in a better place than it was before they arrived and to engage in experiences that go beyond a traditional vacation — an excellent initiative for us to be looking at.

So, in September of this year, we welcomed 36 Canadians participating in that program — the apprentice program — over two days. That took place, as the member opposite said, in Carmacks, Dawson City, and Watson Lake. They had over 300 applicants to this program, so there is clearly a need to look at this and to take a look at this concept more thoroughly. So, our government, working with communities, Yukon First Nations, and also tourism businesses and local partners, invited volunteers to work on tourism-related, local community projects, such as enhancements to trails and to community infrastructure as well.

Some of the work that was done in Watson Lake, for example — Sign Post Forest beautification happened, removing some of the illegible, weathered signs and replacing damaged signs and also doing some trail repair. In the Village of Carmacks, there were some park enhancements — building picnic tables and benches, painting, and park beautification. In Dawson City, there was work with the municipality and also with the Klondike Visitors Association doing Crocus Bluff recreation site enhancements. It's amazing what they are doing up there on that trail right now, including a new provision of maintained disc golf that is extremely popular, but also bush work and trail maintenance as well.

The overall program was budgeted at \$175,000, and many of the expenses were of a one-time cost related to program development. It would be much more cost-effective to then repeat the program in a future endeavour, should a program review deem this advisable.

As far as costs — I know that it was about \$45,000 for creative development and a landing page. This is a reusable asset. There was photography, videography, and capture. This is also a reusable asset that was a \$10,000 investment. They paid media for some ad placement, so that was about \$11,000. Apprenticeship start kits, welcome gifts, and those types of things were roughly around \$79 per person for a total of \$2,800. In-Yukon transportation — whether it be with Yukon's airline, Air North, or with Standard Bus or with Ruby Range Adventure — was around \$8,000. The opening event, Yukon Transportation Museum, and also some cold cuts from Yukon's The Deli — \$3,500. The closing event, which was at the Eclipse Nordic Hot Springs and also partnered with Gather Café and Taphouse — just under \$10,000. Materials to communities for the projects were \$45,000. To communities to host, the fees — which were \$200 per person per night — were another \$21,600. So, the program budget breakdown is just to the tune of \$156,600.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** There is another program called the "Express Micro-grant", and this is also a new endeavour hoping to get quick dollars to various projects that might need small

injection money for a project. Tier 1 is up to \$1,500 and tier 2 is up to \$5,000. Can the minister tell us if this is being well-subscribed to, and also, will this program continue?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** So, the microgrant express — this is a new fund, and it fills a gap in current funding supports offered by the Government of Yukon for creative cultural industries and also is identified as a priority action in *Creative Potential*, which is the Yukon's creative and cultural industries strategy. So, feedback from this sector clearly demonstrated a need for flexible funding in this capacity with simple applications and simple reporting requirements and a quick turnaround for approvals — all feedback that we got from the sector.

As far as your eligibility, emerging established and professional artists, creatives, or people involved in the creative and cultural industries, artists' collectives, and non-profit societies registered in the Yukon that are in good business standing — so businesses, First Nation governments, and municipal governments that present activities created around artists. More specifically, the new program is aimed at those who have never received funding before, especially for those who might find the funding world a bit intimidating. This program will prioritize first-time applicants and those from equity-deserving communities. This program will provide quick response to take advantage of these opportunities, and it couldn't come at a better time as we are stimulating investment in our post-pandemic days here, hopefully.

So, internal review by the arts section based upon eligibility criteria in the decision-making process — applicants will be notified of the results in writing within five working days for tier 1 and 10 working days for tier 2. So, that's a very quick turnaround — the department making good on what they heard. So, the intake is ongoing, with a minimum of \$12,500 available each month for distribution, and the budget is \$150,000 available for each fiscal year until March 31, 2024.

I don't have very much more for the member opposite other than, like I said: For tier 1, it is up to \$1,500; for tier 2, it's from \$1,501 to \$5,000, and the funding can cover 100 percent of all eligible expenses.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thank you for that information.

We looked on [yukon.ca](http://yukon.ca) and found that the last published tourism annual report is for 2018. Can the minister tell us where we can find the other reports for the years since?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** If the member opposite can clarify which specific reports she is referring to — I know that the minister tabled two reports today, but I don't think that those are the ones that the member opposite is referencing.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** It is the tourism annual report. On the website, it says that it is only for 2018, and then we were looking for subsequent years.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I have a firm commitment from the minister responsible that he will take a look into where those reports are.

Madam Chair, seeing the time, I am going to move that we report progress.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

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

**Speaker:** You have heard the report of the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.*

### The following sessional paper was tabled November 14, 2022:

35-1-75

*Yukon Heritage Resources Board Annual Report April 1, 2021-March 31, 2022* (Pillai)

### The following document was filed November 14, 2022:

35-1-111

*Yukon Geographical Place Names Board 2021-2022 Annual Report* (Pillai)

### Written notice was given of the following motion November 14, 2022:

Motion No. 530

Re: extending the Special Committee on Electoral Reform's reporting deadline (White)