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HANSARD

Wednesday, November 16, 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
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Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Deputy Premier Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice
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Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Minister of Economic Development; Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
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THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Emily Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
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Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
 We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of written questions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of a change made to the Order Paper. The following written question was not placed on the Order Paper as it was not in order: Written Question No. 32, tabled by the Member for Porter Creek Centre.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to ask my colleagues in the Assembly today to welcome a number of individuals who are local business leaders and are here for our business anniversary tribute today. Please welcome, first of all, Joe Muff, founder of Alkan Air, as well as Wendy Tayler, CEO and current partner with Alkan Air, and Jeff Faulkner, chief aviation officer and current partner.

As well, from Riverside Grocery, we have Levi and Ella Commons and Leona Commons.

Could we give a warm welcome to everybody today who is here for the tribute?

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Riverside Grocery, Bean North, and Alkan Air significant anniversaries

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to three iconic Yukon companies celebrating significant anniversaries.

Riverside Grocery, just down 2nd Avenue from this Assembly, is celebrating 40 years of providing locals with healthy, sustainable food options. The store opened in 1982 and began as Whitehorse's first 24-hour business. Since then, they have become known for providing a variety of food items not offered at chain grocery stores. It is often said that if you can't find it at another grocery store, you can find it at Riverside — also memorialized by Yukon's own Speed Control, if you haven't heard their songs. In addition to conventional grocery items, they also carry a wide selection of organic, vegan, fair-trade, whole food, and speciality items.

Riverside Grocery remains a Yukon special staple and is an independent family-owned and -operated business. Three generations of the Commons family have worked in the store

and many of their employees have been working there for more than 10 years. I want to congratulate Riverside and the Commons family on 40 years and thank them for all that they have given to our community.

Mr. Speaker, the second company that I will speak about today is Bean North. The Yukon-based coffee roaster, owned by Michael King and Helen Voogd, has been operating for 25 years and I want to congratulate them on their long-standing success. Since 1997, they have provided the territory with great-tasting, fair-trade, organic coffee. Operating out of the Takhini valley just outside of Whitehorse, Bean North products can be found in Canadian coffee shops in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and all the way east to Newfoundland.

It is excellent to see the Yukon being represented by a brand that demonstrates such care for their craft, and I thank Bean North for their commitment to quality.

Lastly, Alkan Air is celebrating its 45th anniversary. Founded in 1977 by Joe Muff, Alkan has provided a variety of flight services throughout its long history, and today it provides charter services, flight training, medevac flights, and more. Based at the Erik Nielsen airport here in Whitehorse, their expert staff are available around the clock, 365 days of the year, providing these important air services to western Canada. Alkan boasts a diverse fleet of aircraft and highly skilled pilots, ready for any challenges.

Again, I want to congratulate Alkan Air on 45 years of operation and thank them for continuing to provide the highest quality air service to Yukoners.

Congratulations to all of these excellent northern establishments on their milestone anniversaries.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize some Yukon businesses as they celebrate some incredible milestones. Alkan Air is celebrating 45 years this year, and we would like to thank you for those years of service.

We also recognize the three founders of this business: Joe and Win Muff and Barry Watson, who began Alkan Air in 1977. From humble beginnings, they turned what we have heard was a seasonal business into a full-service, year-round charter company servicing mining, tourists, and government clients. In addition to charter and ambulance service, Alkan Air offers a flight academy which provides high-quality aviation education with state-of-the-art equipment and an incredible staff.

Congratulations to the whole Alkan team, past and present — well done.

Three generations of a family-owned and -operated business, Riverside Grocery, is celebrating 40 years. A small, odd-shaped building with nooks and crannies and shelves laden with amazing products — organic, vegan, whole foods, and specialty products that are unique to this little store. This incredible shop has left such an indelible impression on Yukoners that there is even a song written about them by a local band, Speed Control.

Riverside has seen many changes over the years, but they are still best known as the little place with the best variety. Yukoners know that, for a trip to Riverside, you must have time to explore and enjoy the adventure.

Congratulations to the team at Riverside, and thank you for your years of service.

Bean North Coffee Roasting Co. is not only a superb service keeping those in the north caffeinated; it has worked to supply stores, cafés, and restaurants across the Yukon, right into BC, Saskatchewan, and even east to Newfoundland. They have done this for 25 years. They have had a great relationship with their coffee producers and farmers and buy at fair price. They donate coffee monthly to Hospice Yukon, the Guild Society, and Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre. Bean North also provides wonderful fundraising opportunities for Yukon non-profits to sell coffee throughout the year to raise money for their sports and organizations. Check out their café in the woods on the Takhini Hot Springs Road if you haven't done so.

Thank you to Bean North for your community support and incredible coffee and tea. Community businesses such as these three companies are what makes Yukon the best place to live.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise in behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate three incredible Yukon businesses on epic anniversaries.

You know, Mr. Speaker, most everyone will have a story to tell about Riverside Grocery, Alkan Air, and Bean North coffee, and I'm no different. I first discovered Riverside as a much younger person, and as a teenager, it became my landing pad. My friends and I would peruse the aisles for treasures for hours at a time because where else could you find an entire chicken in a can, dinosaur candy that dyed your mouth blue, and organic toothpaste at the same place? Well, Riverside, that's where. Leona and her dad, Jack, ran a marvellous ship. This family-run business opened its doors in 1982 and it has never looked back. Leona and her husband, Pat, carried the torch as the store evolved and grew with the times and their three kids. Today, this gem is being steered by the third generation as Ella and Levi have taken the helm. They support companies whose values they share — companies based on community with ethical and environmental practices, often with an eye on zero waste. Even though I haven't seen one of those blue dinosaurs in a really long time, the wonders of the store will never cease to surprise, amaze, and delight me.

Alkan Air does a lot of amazing things, but I know them best as the company with the ace pilots who could land in the very worst conditions out at Wolverine Lake. The airstrip at Yukon Zinc is in a valley, and there was more than one occasion when, flying in that, you couldn't see the ground and you couldn't see where the sky was or any hills in the surrounding area. But no matter what, Alkan always got us in and, more importantly, at the end of 28 days, they always got us out. So, Wendy, Jeff, and their team support people during some of their toughest days with medevac flights, and they are training the next generation of pilots through their flight school.

Started in 1997 by Helen and Michael, Bean North coffee has stayed true to their vision of truly supporting the farmers who grow their beans. They have built long-term and direct relationships with the producer groups who pay a fair price for the coffee that they roast, and that coffee is delicious. I love their café in the woods and all that they do to support local and distant communities, but I can tell you that pots of Bean North coffee brewing in the cook shacks at remote mining camps, in the absolute dead of winter, makes everything better.

Riverside Grocery, Alkan Air, and Bean North Coffee Roasting may appear very different from the outside, but at their core, each of these businesses not only understands the importance of relationships, they strive to build and nurture them.

So, thanks to each of you for investing your time and energy and resources in making your businesses the important community assets that they are. Congratulations and happy anniversary.

Applause

In recognition of Avalanche Canada and Yukon Avalanche Association

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Avalanche Canada and the Yukon Avalanche Association. These two organizations, with the support of a strong community of local avalanche professionals, work tirelessly each winter to provide Yukoners with backcountry forecasts and avalanche safety training. Yukoners love wild places. Whether for hunting, skiing, sledding, or hiking, we spend a lot of time in the mountains. But as more of us venture into the backcountry, we need to be aware of avalanche risk and be prepared to travel safely.

Since 2010, the Yukon Avalanche Association has worked to foster a culture of avalanche awareness across the territory. The Yukon government proudly funds and supports their work, as we share their focus on public safety and preparedness. When you are heading out for the day on the snow, check the forecast and conditions before you go. Avalanches are more likely to occur with heavy snowfall, strong winds, and rapidly warming temperatures. Make sure that every member of your group has the right safety gear and the training and knows how to use it.

Avalanche skills training teaches you how to use your safety gear and helps you recognize the telltale signs about unstable snowpacks and heightened avalanche danger. Avalanche education is a lifelong process. We are lucky to have both Avalanche Canada and the Yukon Avalanche Association supporting informed decision-making in the backcountry.

Local Avalanche Canada course instructors provide avalanche skills training right here in the Yukon. We truly appreciate their efforts to help Yukoners strengthen their winter backcountry skills. Avalanche Canada, in partnership with the Yukon Avalanche Association, provide the public with a recreational avalanche forecast for White Pass and the Wheaton Valley.

Snow is piling up, Mr. Speaker, and it won't be long before we see the first avalanche forecast published for the season.

Beyond avalanche awareness, backcountry safety starts with sharing your trip plan. Tell someone where you are going and when you will be back. Before you go, check 511, and drive according to conditions. Use extra caution when you see crews or equipment on the road.

I would also like to acknowledge our colleagues at Highways and Public Works who work around the clock to keep our highways safe and open for Yukoners, despite winter avalanches. I look forward to our continued partnership with the Yukon Avalanche Association and Avalanche Canada as we work together to help keep Yukoners safe in the mountains.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the important work done by the Yukon Avalanche Association. As we head into the winter season, a lot of Yukoners are starting to get excited — “let it snow, let it snow, let it snow” — tuning their sleds and gathering their supplies for climbing, hiking, skiing, and winter camping.

We know that, with most backcountry activities, it is important to think of the risks associated. Bad weather and the possibility of avalanches are among these risks. The Yukon Avalanche Association was formed in 2010, and it is a valuable resource for anyone looking to enjoy our mountainous terrain. They promote avalanche safety and awareness among backcountry users. They provide extensive web-based information. They provide opportunities for training with local course suppliers and host public outreach events. I would encourage everyone to go to their website; it’s a really great website.

The Yukon Avalanche Association partnered with Avalanche Canada to deliver an avalanche forecast for the White Pass. As a backcountry snowmobiler, I often use this site, actually, before I plan a trip. The Haines summit is my backyard. Safety is important, and knowing the conditions helps plan your activity, and it helps dictate where you are going to ride.

So, as the MLA for the Kluane riding and, of course, the Yukon Party, we support the hard work of the Yukon Avalanche Association. I do want to thank them for their work; it makes the backcountry a safer place to play, and good luck in the future.

Applause

Ms. White: The Yukon NDP wishes to thank the Yukon Avalanche Association for their ongoing contributions to public safety. The winter backcountry landscape has changed a lot since I first started my exploration of the Skagway Pass as a 16-year-old kid with her friends, when we viewed cornices as jumps and not as the train tracks that they actually are. In large part, this change has happened due to the work done by the Yukon Avalanche Association.

Formed in 2010, this not-for-profit organization promotes avalanche safety and awareness for backcountry users. They are doing the good work of normalizing backcountry safety through public events, online information sharing, and training

opportunities. We’re grateful for the work that they have done and continue to do. So, thank you to the volunteers and community members who fill out their snow report, share observations, and make the mountains a safer place to play.

If anyone has a hankering for snow, you can join the YAA film night, November 24 at 6:00 p.m. at the Beringia Centre, to kick off the season with ski and snowboard movies. So, thank you to them for the work that they do.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling today a legislative return based on questions from the Member for Copperbelt South last week.

I also have for tabling two reports talking about placer mining in wetlands, one from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and one from the Klondike Placer Miners’ Association.

Ms. White: I have for tabling an article from *Xtra Magazine* entitled “Yukon government temporarily pauses funding for some gender-affirming care”.

Mr. Istchenko: I have for tabling a letter from the Yukon Dog Musers Association. It is addressed to the Minister of Environment, and it is dated November 16, 2022. It is in regard to the passing of Bill No. 20.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT the House express its solidarity with the people of Iran who are fighting for their rights and freedoms.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to improve the current standard of highway vegetation control in the Ross River area to address safety concerns and improve visibility.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to support the people of Taiwan by:

(1) condemning the People’s Republic of China’s use of military tactics in an attempt to intimidate the people of Taiwan;

(2) urging the People’s Republic of China to exercise restraint in the Taiwan Strait;

(3) supporting Taiwan's participation in international organizations such as the World Health Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization, *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, and INTERPOL; and

(4) supporting Taiwan's admission into the *Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership*.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with ATCO Electric Yukon and Yukon Energy Corporation to allow them to operate electric vehicle charging stations and bill for the energy.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure the safety of its community airports and medevac program by properly maintaining the backup generators at all airports.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to expand eligibility for its paid sick leave rebate to include people with illnesses other than COVID-19.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am proud to rise before the House today to recognize our government's endorsement of Canada's first-ever national action plan to end gender-based violence.

The federal government, in partnership with provincial and territorial governments across Canada, released this historic national action plan last week. This plan marks a significant milestone in our government's collective work to end gender-based violence. It also marks the culmination of years of meaningful engagement with people from many different backgrounds and perspectives, including survivors, front-line service providers, indigenous partners, community leaders, experts, and academics.

This 10-year action plan will work to address the root causes of gender-based violence in Canada and ensure that no matter where someone lives in our country, they will have timely and reliable access to necessary services and protections. The plan has five pillars that will further guide our shared work to achieve these goals, including: support for victims, survivors, and their families; prevention; a responsive justice system; implementing indigenous-led approaches; and a social infrastructure and enabling environment.

The work ahead of us, of course, will not be easy. Gender-based violence is a complex issue. It also occurs all too frequently. In Canada, more than 11 million people have experienced intimate partner violence at least once since the age of 15. We also know that Yukon has rates of domestic

violence three times greater than the national average and that indigenous people are disproportionately affected.

Recognizing this, our government has worked diligently to reduce gender-based violence in Yukon, with initiatives such as support for the Yukon Advisory Committee on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to release a strategy and develop an implementation plan; working with our partners to develop the sexualized assault response team in Whitehorse; and creating a new community safety planning program to ensure consistent funding for First Nation governments to engage in community safety planning activities.

This national action plan provides our government a clear strategic framework from which we can further build. It also marks the first important step to new funding flowing to the territory.

I look forward to the next steps in putting the 10-year plan into action, including beginning formal negotiations with the federal government on a bilateral agreement. I also look forward to hearing from our Yukon-based partners to set priorities under the plan. We know that our priorities in Yukon must align with Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2S+ strategy. I firmly believe that, together with sustained and purposeful action as outlined in this national plan, we can achieve a Yukon where everyone feels safe and is treated with dignity.

Ms. Clarke: Salamat. Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement on a very important topic — gender-based violence.

We are happy to talk about this on the floor of the Legislature today. We are pleased to hear that the Yukon will be adopting the federal government's 10-year *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. I know that we all think that we understand what gender-based violence is. However, I would like to remind this House and all Yukoners that gender-based violence could take many forms. Gender-based violence can include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, and financial abuse, as well as technology-facilitated violence. These are all behaviours that we denounce.

This is also a good reminder that such violence should not be committed by anyone against another human being. I do hope that the minister can clarify a couple of items from her ministerial statement. She did outline how the Yukon has offered supports in the past, but can she tell us how the Yukon will take action on this national action plan? Is the Yukon government budgeting any money for these actions, and how much funding do they hope to secure in a bilateral agreement with the federal government? Did the Yukon, including local groups who offer support for victims of gender-based violence, have any input into the national action plan? The minister says she will hear from Yukon-based partners to set priorities under the plan. How does she plan to do that?

As well, last fall, I asked about the decision by the federal government to shut down a committee reviewing sexual assault cases. At the time, women's organizations were critical of the decision to shut down the work to re-examine sexual assault

cases that police labeled “unfounded” or where no one was charged.

Yukon women’s groups lobbied to have it reinstated, and a Yukon-led process was the only way to continue to work. We asked the Yukon government to develop a made-in-Yukon project so that women’s groups and the Yukon RCMP could continue their work. I am hoping the minister can update us if they have made any progress toward creating a made-in-Yukon version to help vulnerable Yukoners access the justice system.

We are committed to addressing the five pillars of this plan toward a society free of gender-based violence, and we support the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*

Ms. Blake: The Yukon NDP supports the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. Across the Yukon, women and gender-diverse folks continue to face high levels of domestic and community-level violence. This is especially true for indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people. While I am optimistic about this endorsement, I remain concerned about what concrete actions this government will take.

Pillar 1 includes support for victims, survivors, and their families. Every week, I hear from this population about the lack of support they have available to them. Many of them have been waiting just to get basic counselling services. Will this funding from this endorsement address this gap in services?

Pillar 2 is focused on prevention. Early support in the home is critical to preventing violence and harm. Currently, that support is not being provided to many families across the territory. There are a high number of women and children who are facing poverty with no income support. There are still vacancies in health care and education, creating an unequal system for people living in communities. There is no aftercare when people are involved with systems, leaving people with no options to heal or prevent future harm. If Yukoners’ most basic needs for support are still not being met, how is the government preventing harm?

Pillar 3 will create a responsive justice system. The national action plan will enact the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* and amend the *Criminal Code*. Currently, justices are not required to take continued education on updates to the *Criminal Code* or other legislation. Will the minister require Yukon justices, lawyers, and front-line workers to take training to understand and uphold these changes?

Pillar 4 will implement indigenous-led approaches with NGOs, First Nations, and other groups. How many of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls to Action has the government fully completed to date? What work has the minister done to transform the justice system by using circle courts? What happened to the Gladue report writing program that this government funded over three years ago? How effective is this process for victims, survivors, families, and communities?

Pillar 5 will create social infrastructure and enabling environment. Non-governmental organizations are critical to this social infrastructure. They work around the clock to advocate, support, and report on the needs of women, girls, and gender minorities in the Yukon, but many are working off the

side of their desk without adequate pay. A group of women’s organizations asked the minister for an increase in core funding over a year ago. Has the minister increased the core funding for these organizations in the amount that they have requested?

This endorsement is a step in the right direction, and I’m hopeful that meaningful action will be taken, both in government decisions and to support other organizations that are already working to end gender-based violence in the Yukon. I look forward to the minister’s response. Mahsi’.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank my colleagues from across the way for your support for the first-ever *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*

In 2021, Mr. Speaker, federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for the status of women endorsed the joint declaration for a Canada free of gender-based violence, which included a common vision, principles, and goals for the national action plan.

I worked closely with the federal minister around that declaration, and I believe that some of the work that we did in the Yukon around missing and murdered indigenous women and girls had influence on a national declaration as well.

The *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* will see that \$539.1 million, most of which will flow through provincial and territorial governments over the next five years, to support initiatives that reduce gender-based violence and build safer communities across the country.

I had the opportunity to attend the federal-provincial-territorial ministers meeting virtually last week. I can tell you that, on the 40th anniversary of this forum in Canada, to be there — and to have supported over the years in this position — and to reach an actual national action plan to end gender-based violence was an emotional day for all of the ministers across Canada. It was one that I will never forget and was certainly a milestone for our country.

Over the coming months, we will continue to work with our federal partners to determine what that funding looks like for Yukon and how it will be rolled out in our territory. We know that the pandemic had impacts on Yukoners and families, resulting in higher rates of domestic and gender-based violence and increased demands for services.

I would also like to reflect on a few of the questions that came up in terms of the input from local groups. I can assure members of this House that Yukoners participated at the national level to bring forward these recommendations and to help form the pillars that we ended up agreeing to. There was extensive consultation with indigenous groups, which formed that additional pillar to the strategy. Yukon — again, being the first to have a response to the national inquiry through our strategy and we are close to having the implementation plan completed — really filled that portion of this plan. It is an important plan for Canada.

This year, the Yukon Liberal government provided local equality-seeking organizations with over \$2 million to ensure that they can continue to provide valuable services to Yukoners experiencing violence. We will continue to work with the

community partners to ensure that they have the resources they need to provide the support that many Yukoners depend on. Our government has worked to make a more inclusive and safe community for all Yukoners.

In 2021 — actually, before I go there, I will just go back to some of the questions.

Speaker: Ten seconds.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will wrap up by saying that this is a great day for Canada, for Yukon, with a vision —

Speaker: Order, please.

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Land development

Mr. Hassard: In March of last year, the Premier and the Deputy Premier stood on the curb at 5th and Rogers to announce the Liberals' housing policies for the election. One of their marquee promises was to develop the land parcel at 5th and Rogers to ensure — and I quote: "... the development increases the amount of available housing, including rentals."

Since then, a few things have changed. The Deputy Premier was demoted, and the Premier has announced that he is retiring. Unfortunately, one thing that hasn't changed is the status of 5th and Rogers. Can anyone in the Liberal government explain why they haven't delivered a single housing unit at 5th and Rogers?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, the reason that there has been some delay at 5th and Rogers is because there were a whole series of slides along the clay cliffs this year. I think everyone noticed — thanks to the City of Whitehorse, which did all their work to try to make sure that things were safe along Robert Service Way.

I know that the Yukon Geological Survey did a lot of work to try to look at that risk. There was a slide, in particular, right next to 5th and Rogers, which required us to go back and do some geotechnical work. That work is completed, as far as I understand, and we are very close to issuing the RFP.

So, there was a delay; it was about making sure that Yukoners were safe.

Mr. Hassard: Just by way of background for Yukoners and for everyone listening, the Liberal government has been promising various things in relation to 5th and Rogers for years. The simple fact is that it was so important to them that they put the Premier and the Deputy Premier up at a press conference to announce their housing platform.

As we know, the only thing that has changed are the titles of those who made the announcement, and in the minister responsible for housing's mandate letter, the very first item related to housing directs the minister to release the 5th and Rogers land parcel to the private sector for future housing development.

Can the minister tell us if he has taken any steps at all to fulfill this section of his mandate letter?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, it's a walk down memory lane, having the previous Leader of the Official Opposition, who is very comfortable with personal attacks and insults — I

just remind Yukoners that the new Leader of the Official Opposition said that things would change — another inaccurate statement from the Yukon Party.

Yes, we have taken a measure. We have worked with a number of stakeholders. We have gone out with an expression of interest. We have spoken with a number of development corporations about 5th and Rogers. We had an RFP that was ready to go. Although I think most Yukoners can understand that this government is not responsible for the slide that happened this summer, I'm sure the Yukon Party will figure out a way to blame us for it. It happened. We think that the prudent thing to do is to make sure that the ground is stable, that it's safe to build, and to understand what the specs should be if we have to build a berm to protect any further development.

So, that's the work that has been going on since the slide. It is unfortunate because it is an extremely important spot. We believe that we could build up to 300 units, and that is in line with the city's south Whitehorse plan. We believe that this density is necessary, and we think it is key to the market when we think about rental property.

Mr. Hassard: So, in November of last year, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said that they were hoping to release the parcel very soon. In his words — and I quote: "The goal is to try to catch the next building season..." Then this April, the Minister of Community Services told the Legislature that the lot was going to a competitive RFP. It was well underway and would be out before the end of the spring session. So, as we know, none of these things happened, and now we have heard from four different Liberal ministers about this parcel, and we have heard four different things. It has unfortunately become a trend that the ministers are inaccurate and unreliable when sharing information.

So, can someone please tell Yukoners definitively what is going to happen with 5th and Rogers and when it is going to happen?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yukoners remember that the Yukon Party sat on this. If we go back in time, at least multiple organizations, I think, were promised this particular location, and then nothing happened. So, what we have done is that we have looked at the location, we have built out an RFP, we have worked with the City of Whitehorse, and this summer we were ready to go out to a competitive process, and then there was a slide, which everybody in the Yukon knows. That slide then triggered more work.

We received a letter from the City of Whitehorse identifying the fact that it would be prudent for us to ensure that we did updated geotechnical work. Community Services, Energy, Mines and Resources, and Yukon Housing Corporation came together and supported that work. We believe that this work will be completed in full. We have reports that have gone to Energy, Mines and Resources. We want to review it, and we want to share it with the city as well. Then, at that point, the RFP that we already have prepared can be put out.

So again, we have been working on this. We have been moving it ahead — much different from what happened before where there were promises, promises, but nothing ever

happened. So, we are moving on it, but we have to make sure that it's a safe place to build.

Question re: Beaver River watershed land use plan

Mr. Dixon: In 2018, the then-Deputy Premier announced the process for the sub-regional land use plan for the Beaver River watershed. At that time, he made the bold claim that this was a — and I quote — “new way of doing business”. He further claimed that it will help get mining projects going and, unfortunately, it turns out that he was very wrong. The former Deputy Premier originally promised this land use plan would be completed by March 31, 2020. We are two and a half years past that deadline. So, can that minister tell us when the plan that he promised would be done years ago will actually be completed?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the Yukon Party for the question. Yes, this is a new way of doing business; it's by working with First Nations. That's the difference.

The Government of Yukon and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun remain committed to the agreement that supports a proposed tote road and calls for the completion of a land use plan for the Beaver River watershed, and we recognize the need for a road access management plan before road construction occurs. We have completed several stages of public and stakeholder consultation for the Beaver River land use plan and are working toward completing the plan in 2023. I will just say that the last time I met with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, we discussed the Beaver River land use plan — recommitted to it. We will continue to work on that. I appreciate the question and the chance to rise and speak about the Beaver River land use plan.

Mr. Dixon: Just a bit of background for the minister — this plan was announced in response to a positive YESAB recommendation about a tote road connecting to an exploration project, and, of course, the former Deputy Premier claimed that launching this plan was a — and I quote — “new way of doing business”. Of course, if this is the new way of doing business, anyone who cares about the mining industry should be very concerned. Instead, his plan has created uncertainty and delays for the industry.

Here is what the mining company impacted by his approach told CBC Yukon in 2020: “If this road can't be permitted following a positive environmental and socio-economic assessment decision and years of governmental encouragement to invest in the project, then you have to wonder if Yukon is in fact open for business.”

Is the former Deputy Premier concerned with the delays and missed timelines associated with his new way of doing business?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I think that what I have just said — for the Yukon Party, so that they can hear — is that this is a new way of doing business. It is about working with First Nations. So, that is different, and yes, there are times when things take longer. I spoke with ATAC industries just recently; we set up a meeting for during Geoscience so that we could get together. I meet with them often. We believe that this is the right way to go, and I think that our economy shows it. As far

as mining in the territory, it is going very well. We have the strongest economy in the country. I think that the Fraser Institute just released recently, again, about mining jurisdictions across the world, and the Yukon moved up — I believe that we are in the top 10.

I think that we will continue to work with mining, and what I want to say about the mining industry is that I appreciate all of the effort that they are making toward environmental, social, and governance goals, because we believe that is the way of mining in the future.

Mr. Dixon: So, just to remind the minister, last fall he told us that this would be available this spring, and of course, that hasn't come to fruition. The tote road for ATAC Resources was originally recommended for approval by YESAB in 2017. At that time, the Deputy Premier came up with a new way of doing business, which the current minister seems to be lauding now, as well, to be completed in 2020. We are now at the end of 2022 — half a decade after the project was recommended to go forward and with no end in sight.

So, can I ask again: When will this plan be ready?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I am saying is that we will continue to work with First Nations. So, there are times in a government-to-government relationship when I won't be able to control all of the timing, and I will take responsibility for that here in this Legislative Assembly. But what I will continue to do is stand on my feet and say that it is important that we have a respectful government-to-government relationship. So, yes, it is taking longer than we wanted and anticipated. We have worked closely with the companies that are affected by this, but we have continued to say that this is important and that we will do our part to be diligent to get the final plan in place, and I would like to thank industry, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and Energy, Mines and Resources, in the Land Planning branch and the minerals branch, for all the work that they have done in order to realize this.

Question re: Electric vehicle charging stations

Ms. White: Yukon's first electric vehicle charging station was installed by the Mount Lorne transfer station in winter of 2018. At that time, there were 12 electric vehicles registered in the territory. In November of 2019, Yukon government installed the first three fast-charging stations. Now there are fast-charging stations from Dawson to Watson Lake and nearly all points in between, and that's fantastic.

We're just now seeing the private sector begin the process of installing them, too. The government even offers a rebate program to support installation costs. The *Our Clean Future* 2021 report says that this program is complete.

Can the minister tell Yukoners how many rebates have been provided for commercial EV charging stations to date?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will have to look into the number to get that specific piece of information. I can say that we have been moving more quickly than we even anticipated with the charging stations. We now have from Watson Lake to Beaver Creek, and we have from Dawson and Mayo down to Carcross. We fully expect that there's an opportunity for business to come

in. We have moved ahead with the type 2 charging systems, and we are working with businesses and departments, et cetera.

We have put quite a bit of money into the budget for those stations. I will have to investigate further regarding the specific question.

Ms. White: We look forward to that response, because we have heard there are problems. We know the urgency of ending our dependency on fossil fuels, but this government is standing in the way of mainstreaming electric vehicles. The private sector wants to participate, but the problem is that they can't sell the electricity. Right now, if a gas station or a business were to install a charger, they would have to buy the electricity from ATCO and then give it away for free. That is not a great business model.

Our Clean Future calls for changes to the *Public Utilities Act* to allow for businesses to install charging stations and resell the electricity, but this work isn't expected to be complete until at least 2024. Can the minister tell Yukoners why he is putting off this critical legislation for another two years?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will begin by saying that the work of amending the *Public Utilities Act* is significant. I had no understanding that we could not do the work to support the ability to have these charging stations ahead of that act review, so that is a new piece of information that I will investigate further.

I know that our utilities are working with our Energy branch to talk through how we can get to the time when there is a model to charge Yukoners. Of course, up to now, what we have been doing is we, as a government, have been paying for that electricity when we put in the fast-charging stations in order to incentivize those people who are early adopters of zero-emission vehicles. So, the work, as I understand it, is underway right now to get to a place where we can allow for a more commercial activity around the fast-charging stations.

I will report back if there is anything around the *Public Utilities Act* that I was not aware of.

Ms. White: Currently, private businesses cannot sell electricity without changes to the *Public Utilities Act* and that is a barrier.

Yukoners recognize that it is important to get more EVs on the road to displace fossil-fuel-powered vehicles, but the only two companies that will be able to sell electricity as fuel for the next two years or more are ATCO and Yukon Energy. That means that we are unlikely to see any new charging stations available to the public between now and 2025 that are not paid for by the Government of Yukon. On top of that, the government is paying a private company to manage the stations and give away the electricity for free.

Is the minister working with ATCO and Yukon Energy to allow them to operate EV charging stations and bill for the energy that's used?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I think I just answered that question in my previous response. Are we working with ATCO and Yukon Energy to work on this question? Absolutely, we are. We are also working with Yukon University and the northern energy innovation team to identify how that distribution network can work, to identify any specific

vulnerabilities that we have within the system, and to support an uptake of electric vehicle fast-chargers and smart heating units. We are working.

The member opposite seems very definitive about the *Public Utilities Act*. I would say again that I am not sure that is correct, but I will investigate it further and make sure to report back if I find anything about it that would be of import to this House.

Question re: Yukon nominee program support for Filipino community

Ms. Clarke: This past March, the Yukon government celebrated signing a memorandum of understanding with the Republic of the Philippines. This delivered on a commitment back in 2019 in a letter of intent. The letter established — and I quote: "... a framework to undertake negotiations on immigration programming and pursue cooperation on human resource development between the Philippines and Yukon."

Yukon's Filipino community and Yukon businesses have been looking forward to the collaboration on immigration issues that were promised in the MOU; however, the joint committee has not yet established the terms of reference required to put the MOU into action.

When can the Yukon Filipino community and Yukon businesses expect the MOU to be implemented?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, after two years of negotiations and discussions, I am pleased that we were able to reach an agreement on the terms of the memorandum of understanding on the employment and protection of Filipinos under the Yukon nominee program. On March 18, 2022, I met with then-Secretary Bello with the Philippines' Department of Labor and Employment to sign the MOU. It should be noted we are the only jurisdiction, and the leading jurisdiction in the country, out of all provinces and territories to do so.

Bello has since taken on a new post following the May 2022 Philippines general election. Work on the MOU implementation continues with a new department, so there's now a brand new national department in the Philippines of migrant workers, and that was formed in February 2022.

Economic Development is working to finalize the implementation and the guidelines of the MOU with the Department of Migrant Workers, and the MOU, of course, will make it easier for Filipinos to come to the Yukon, while reducing costs and red tape for employers.

Ms. Clarke: Salamat, Mr. Speaker. Well, we are glad the MOU has been signed and that work has started, but it appears there is a lot more work to do.

In 2019, the minister signed a letter agreeing to come up with a framework supporting Filipinos and businesses in the Yukon nominee program. This spring, he signed an MOU agreeing to establish a joint committee to create a framework supporting Filipinos and businesses in the Yukon nominee program, but everyone is waiting for the actual program benefits to be delivered.

When can the Yukon Filipino community and Yukon businesses expect to see the terms of reference finalized and the program finally delivered?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Again, our two governments — and I would like to highlight how progressive that is. That is the territorial government and the federal, the national Government of the Philippines again, working hand-in-hand to develop implementation guidelines for the MOU.

These are expected to be completed in the coming months. So, again, we had a national election in the Philippines. The responsibility for this work has changed federal departments in the Philippines. Of course, that has given us a bit of — taken us a bit more time, as they have the responsibility under a different particular area within government.

Again, I want to thank the Filipino community.

All parties were represented this last weekend as the Filipino basketball league began the start of their season. But really, what it was about was all members of the House going out to celebrate how much richness we have gained by having the Filipino community and how important the community is. Again, I want to thank the Filipino community for guidance through this work and for all that they contribute.

I would also just note, too — excited to hear from Air North. That same day, we also put in a support agreement between Air North and Philippine Airlines, and there is more to come on that.

Question re: Emergency measures legislation review

Mr. Kent: So, the Yukon government invoked the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, or CEMA, a second time, in November 2021, to curb the spread of COVID-19. We have been concerned with abuses of CEMA, and that is why, in March of this year, we introduced a private member's bill aimed at making changes to make the government more accountable. That bill was defeated after the government committed to a full review of CEMA. It is a commitment in the Minister of Community Services' mandate letter as well — and I will quote from that document: "In response to the challenges faced by the COVID-19 pandemic, review the Civil Emergency Measures Act and the Public Health and Safety Act to better equip the Yukon to address future emergencies."

So, when will the full review of CEMA and the *Public Health and Safety Act* begin, and when can we expect legislation to be introduced to the House?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Really what we are talking this afternoon is making sure that Yukoners are safe and doing a full assessment of how the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* worked throughout the global pandemic, which was certainly an event that is deeply imprinted on all of our minds. We are undertaking a legislative review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health and Safety Act* to identify challenges in existing legislation, proposed policy direction, and options for further action. This is a lot of work that the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Community Services are undertaking to make sure that our act is modern and is meeting the needs of Yukoners in the event — the certainly unwanted event — if such an event like a pandemic happens again.

Mr. Kent: So, after the private member's bill was defeated in March, the Leader of the Yukon Party told local media that — and I quote: "It's incredible, strong, broad and sweeping powers that they give themselves when they enact a state of emergency..." This was proven out in a confidential briefing note that we found in the Minister of Education's spring briefing binder. With regard to non-violent crisis intervention training at Jack Hlland Elementary School, the note says — and I will quote: "On February 23 and 24, the Minister used her authority under CEMA to close the school for two days to allow the training to occur..."

As important as this training is, it certainly isn't something to curb the spread of COVID-19. Does the Minister of Education believe that this was an appropriate use of her authority under CEMA?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to add some insight into the situation back in February of last year. On February 23 and 24, I approved the request of the school council to make the school calendar adjustments to suspend classroom instruction.

The training that we are talking about is non-violent crisis intervention. The training was a priority request from the entire school community. The safety of staff and students is always the first priority, and the training was in response to concerns raised for the safety of staff and students. Earlier, training scheduled on a non-instructional day was cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. It was imperative to adjust the school calendar to offer the training when the contractor was allowed to travel again.

Section 46 of the *Education Act* requires that the minister shall establish the hours of classroom instruction annually on March 31. The Minister of Education should adjust the hours of instruction to respond to community and school outbreaks of COVID-19, so the ministerial order that we are talking about is the 2022/15, enabling me to do what I did for that training.

Question re: Wildlife harvest allocations

Mr. Istchenko: This spring, the Minister of Environment announced that he was throwing out the guidelines to establish outfitter quotas. In March, the minister said that this was because the department now interprets these guidelines to be inconsistent with the *Wildlife Act*. This was confusing to many in the industry because the 25-year-old process has been consistent with the *Wildlife Act* by every other Minister of Environment since 1990, and the *Wildlife Act* hasn't changed.

The only reason to change this interpretation is if the government has a new agenda and no longer prioritizes the outfitting industry and the benefits that it creates for the Yukon.

So, can the minister tell us why he thinks that the 25-year-old guidelines are inconsistent with the *Wildlife Act*?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Establishing outfitter quotas is a complex process that requires balancing the rights and interests of outfitters, Yukon First Nations, and renewable resources councils. Given the changes made to the quota process and the fact that some outfitters were assigned quotas for the first time, we received an unprecedented number of appeals, which created delays in the appeal process.

We recognized this spring — nine outfitters submitted appeals to the Outfitter Quota Appeal Committee. One has since withdrawn, and two have also submitted appeals to the Concession and Compensation Review Board.

The fact is that it is 25 years ago and that, as I said, establishing outfitter quotas is a complex process. It requires balancing the rights and interests of outfitters, Yukon First Nations, and renewable resources councils. I have met with outfitters. I have certainly met with Yukon First Nation governments over the course of the summer — with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and the Teslin Tlingit Council.

So, this is 25 years later. There is a greater degree of complexity to these relationships.

Mr. Istchenko: I didn't get an actual answer to my first question.

So, since the Liberals have been in power, the government's relationship with the hunting and fishing community has never been worse. There was hope that the new minister might correct this, but unfortunately, that hasn't happened, and there is now serious concern about the ongoing viability of outfitting as an industry.

Earlier this month, the Yukon Outfitters Association wrote to the minister citing serious concerns about the outfitter quota process — the unintended consequences of the recent moose harvest restrictions, the removal of the licensed harvest of the Finlayson caribou herd with no recovery plan in sight, and the unilateral revision of the quota guidelines. The Yukon Outfitters Association concludes — and I quote: “Our collective experience around these and other unresolved issues do not instil confidence that outfitter interests will be addressed...”

So, my question to the minister is simple: Does he truly value the outfitting industry and —

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Outfitting is a valued industry in the Yukon that benefits communities by creating jobs, purchasing goods, and, in many cases, donating fresh meat. As part of the review of the quota allocation process, the Department of Environment worked with outfitters to place all outfitters on quotas this year, including four concessions that have never had quotas. Quotas are set to ensure that wildlife harvest remains at sustainable levels considering wildlife conservation, indigenous subsistence harvest rights, and resident and non-resident hunter interests.

As I have indicated previously, the Department of Environment conducted six moose surveys and two elk surveys in 2021. In addition, we completed census work on five caribou herds, conducted 12 caribou composition surveys, and deployed collars in 10 caribou herds.

In 2021 as well, the Department of Environment spent approximately \$680,000 for six moose surveys and \$535,000 for 15 caribou surveys and related data collection. In 2022, the department has allocated approximately \$448,000 for three moose-related projects and \$865,000 for monitoring projects related to 12 caribou herds.

As I have indicated a number of times, I will be guided by the best data available, and we are deploying resources in that regard.

Mr. Istchenko: I want to return to my first question. Many in industry are wondering what has changed that is making the guidelines inconsistent with the *Wildlife Act*. That was my question.

Can the minister explain what has changed to make the process inconsistent with the act?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The quick answer is that we are in a more complex and collaborative Yukon. There are mature government-to-government relationships between Yukon government and self-governing First Nations. We are also receiving the valued input from many renewable resources councils, with which I have had the opportunity to communicate and, as I also indicated, with indigenous governments. These quota regulations are from 1996.

We are in a different Yukon in 2022 and it is more complex. I have the utmost respect for the outfitting industry, and I am committed to continuing to have open lines of communication. The industry is valued, but I am also committed to representing all Yukoners and all stakeholders.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Speaker: We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of Yukon, in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to certain bills which have passed this House.

Commissioner Bernard enters the Chamber announced by her Aide-de-Camp

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Please be seated.

Speaker: Madam Commissioner, this Assembly has, at its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the Assembly, I respectfully request your assent.

Clerk: *Second Act to amend the Legal Profession Act, 2017 (2022); Clean Energy Act; Technical Amendments Act (2022); Animal Protection and Control Act.*

Commissioner: I hereby assent to the bills as enumerated by the Clerk.

Commissioner leaves the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 472

Clerk: Motion No. 472, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McLean.

Speaker: It is moved by the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to advance initiatives that will end discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia in Yukon, including supporting advocates and working with partners to continue implementing the LGBTQ2S+ action plan.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I am honoured to rise today in the Legislature to speak to Motion No. 472, which calls on the House to end discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia in the Yukon, including supporting advocates and working with partners to continue implementing the LGBTQ2S+ action plan.

Homophobia is defined as a fear, hatred, discomfort, or mistrust of people who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual. Similarly, transphobia is fear, hatred, discomfort, or mistrust of people who are transgender, gender queer, two-spirit, or who do not follow traditional gender norms.

For most of us, these definitions are extreme, and we may find it hard to understand how someone could hold these views against those who do not identify with the heteronormative ideology. What people must also consider, however, is that this includes more than just overt discrimination: systemic discrimination, inequity, stereotypes, and micro-aggressions that are harder to spot and therefore harder to eliminate.

I will be rising in the House again soon to speak to the Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20. That is a day to honour, mourn, and remember individuals who identified as transgender and gender-diverse around the world who were killed because of anti-trans violence and oppression. Just last year, 2021, was described as the deadliest year for transgender people since annual reporting of worldwide homicides began in 2008. In the last 12 months, 375 trans and gender-diverse people were reported killed globally.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that, time and time again, we hear people talking about the heinous crimes against the LGBTQ2S+ community and other challenges that they face. I want to acknowledge and name the hate that continues in our society today. We are not immune to acts of violence in the Yukon. Violence and aggression toward transgender and other LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners has and does happen here. This hatred has no place in our Yukon. Now is the time, more than ever, to change the conversation.

As an indigenous person, I understand how marginalized populations continue to be traumatized when conversations continue to go on around the pain, suffering, and violence that we have faced. I stand here today with a lot of privilege but also with an understanding of the need to share stories of people, not just the struggles they face. It is society that is struggling, not LGBTQ2S+ individuals. We are lucky in the Yukon that we look around at the richness of our diversity. We will see beautiful LGBTQ2S+ people — Yukoners who identify as transgender, two-spirit, and gender-diverse — who are making outstanding contributions throughout the territory just by being who they are.

At a time when people's human rights are being called into question and oppressive legislation is being passed so close to our borders, it can indeed be a scary time. I hear LGBTQ2S+

people when they say that they are scared by current events. What I want you to know is that, right now, the Yukon government will protect your rights. I want you to know that. We are working and will continue to work to make sure barriers are removed and that equity is factored into all of our decision-making.

A cultural shift is needed in organizations, in communities, and within families, as well as personal accountability and self-reflection to truly end discrimination. That is some of the thinking behind the Yukon's *LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan*, which seeks to continue to work to make the Yukon government an inclusive employer and program and service provider. This is a plan based on "nothing about you without you". The Yukon government worked with the LGBTQ2S+ community to develop this plan. We will be checking back in next summer, as promised, to make sure that we are getting it right and to identify where any priorities may have shifted in the community.

This five-year plan has over 100 actions from across government. The actions in this plan came from what the community told us needed to change.

There are a few areas I wanted to specifically mention today from the action plan, because we know they are major priorities for the community. It has been mentioned before that the Yukon has some of the most progressive and comprehensive coverage for gender-affirming care in North America. We also know that there is an issue with how this care can be covered. We are working to make sure that this is rectified as soon as possible and that people will not lose their place in line when they are seeking gender-affirming care.

Other resources related to gender-affirming support include Queer Yukon. We are, of course, fortunate to have the work and advocacy of this community-based organization. They provide programs and services and support for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners, including the gender gear program, which provides access to gender-affirming supplies with funding from Government of Yukon.

We also know that the mental health resources, including counselling services, are vital. Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services offers services, including rapid access to counselling for adults, youth, children, and families. MWSU counselling staff recently completed a two-day training session with the World Professional Association for Transgender Health. This past summer, they came up to the Yukon to provide tailored training for mental health care providers.

Another area we know is a major priority of the LGBTQ2S+ community is education. There is some exciting work going on in education involving special and inclusive education. This will include addressing the sexual orientation and gender identity, also known as the SOGI policy, in schools. There is work to be done to ensure the implementation of these policies and that the work truly supports those we are trying to serve.

Of course, progress on implementing the *LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan* was impacted by the pandemic, but it has not stopped. Advancing inclusion represents long-term cultural change work. We are learning that this work takes time and that

we must bring many public servants, service providers, and Yukoners along with us.

Foundational work, such as building awareness and enhancing training, must be done first. I am pleased that the Yukon government was recently joined by our colleagues in the federal government in releasing an action plan on LGBTQ2S+ inclusion. The first federal *2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan* was announced on August 28, and it includes \$100 million in support for 2SLGBTQI+ communities across Canada. Of the \$100 million announced to support the plan, 75 percent of the funding will be targeted toward community organizations focused on diversity and inclusion.

The federal government will formally engage provinces and territories in advancing 2SLGBTQI+ equity across Canada, starting with the FPT table on the status of women. This was part of our discussions last week in the FPT on the status of women — I am really excited about the work that is happening there — along with the federal government's *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. The Yukon is in a good position, with our federal counterparts, to bring awareness to our northern context and to raise awareness of the needs of community-based organizations, doing some of the front-line work with the LGBTQ2S+ community.

It is an exciting time. I think that we really absolutely have an opportunity here to turn the dial and to really advance the interests of Yukoners. I am very pleased that we were able to do all of that planning work in advance of Canada's plan. Now, with these new resources that are historic and the first of its kind, I am looking forward to the discussions ahead. There is momentum right now toward equity and inclusion, not just in the Yukon, but across this country.

In conclusion, I urge all members to support the *LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan* and its continued implementation. I also encourage members to counteract the violence, aggression, and negative stereotypes prevalent in our society today. Connection leads to understanding, and understanding leads to acceptance and support. So, I encourage everyone to embrace the LGBTQ2S+ community and think about how you can be part of the solution. Community and family support is a major determinant for good mental health and feeling that one can live as their true selves.

Our supportive relationships are protected, so we must continue to listen to our allies and speak up against all forms of LGBTQ2S+ discrimination. Again, I hope that my colleagues in the House will vote with me in support of this motion today.

Mr. Dixon: I am pleased to stand to respond to this motion. We support the Government of Yukon advancing initiatives that will end discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia in the Yukon. Discrimination of any kind, including homophobia and transphobia, have no place in our territory, and I'm proud to join my colleagues in standing up against discrimination. I know that across the country, and indeed the world, transphobia, homophobia, and other types of discrimination are all too common, and steps are needed to ensure that equity and fairness are achieved for the LGBTQ2S+ community.

I would also like to note that we are supportive of the *LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan* that the government brought forward last year. As the document suggests, we recognize that there's a lot more work ahead of us to create a more inclusive Yukon and to end discrimination. We look forward to working with all Yukoners to build a more inclusive home for all of us. We will be supporting this motion.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am certainly speaking in support of my colleague's motion. I think it's incredibly important that Yukoners understand our government's commitment to making change that supports an inclusive community here in the territory. As part of that public statement and public commitment, it is important that we speak to this motion.

I can say that certainly it is our position that we have been dedicated to making change. We are moving the territory forward with respect to many, many aspects of defining our community. We are working to support all Yukoners in many ways across all departments. That includes the new acronym for Yukoners in the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

We have changed laws to support inclusion, and that is important because it clearly signals the kind of place, the kind of community, that we have here in the territory — the kind of community that we are building to be inclusive.

We have changed programming to improve access. One example would be to improve access to gender-affirming health care. Other examples of laws that were changed is the banning of conversion therapy issues early on in our last mandate with respect to other pieces of legislation that affirm the fact that gender diversity is welcome here in the Yukon Territory and that, not only are we going to say that, we are going to change the laws to make sure that everyone is aware and that rights are protected. That's an important statement on behalf of a government.

I just want to speak for a second about the gender-affirming care situation. Back in March 2021, the Government of Yukon announced changes to significantly improve access to gender-affirming health care, including surgery for Yukoners, and to make those services free, to include them under our health services here in the territory. Since that announcement, we have determined that additional work is required to ensure that the delivery and the access to all services can be appropriately provided.

We continue to uphold that commitment while ensuring that these changes don't create concern or an avenue for private health care. Our system of health care here in Canada is second to none and must be respected.

We are seeking, through the work that is currently being done at the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice, the authority to provide these services in a way that allows the government to pay for them. It's not a matter of getting more funding for those services to be covered; it is a matter of the legal authority for the government to be able to do this and to be able to pay for them. We are working diligently to have those changes made by the end of this calendar year, 2022 — only some weeks away now.

I appreciate that the necessity to wait for some of those services is stressful. It is absolutely of concern to Yukoners, but I can assure them that a solution is in the works and that we expect that, within the next few weeks, it will be resolved.

The Department of Health and Social Services and, in fact, our entire government recognize the importance of these services for the transgender and gender-diverse community and the growing number of people waiting to access this kind of care. We are working to resolve this matter as soon as possible. I think what is also critically important is to note that we are working very closely with Queer Yukon, that we will be assuring individual patients and individual seekers of care that their gender-affirming care will be resolved and that the payment for that to private clinics should be resolved in the next number of weeks.

Since the announcement, as I have noted, the additional work was identified. I think it is important to remind Yukoners that Yukon is leading the country in our commitments to advancing gender-affirming care and access, and we recognize that this does come with some challenges. We are very close to having those resolved.

Currently, many, many services are available and they can be performed here in Whitehorse or in other places, as I will note in a moment. Here in Whitehorse, there is gender-affirming voice and mannerisms coaching, there is the ability to have a hysterectomy and salpingo-oophorectomy, and coverage for gender-affirming hormone therapy is available through the chronic disease and disability benefits program. That is the avenue for payment. It is not considered either a chronic disease or a disability, but nonetheless, that is the route for that.

Additionally, Yukoners can access the following services through the Gender Surgery Clinic located in Vancouver General Hospital. With respect to feminizing procedures, there is coverage at the moment for breast reconstruction — I shouldn't say "at the moment". There is coverage ongoing. I don't want anyone to think that there is some issue with respect to that. There is coverage ongoing for breast reconstruction, for orchiectomies, for vaginoplasties — although there is a long waiting list — and there are vulvoplasties and revision surgery available.

Under the concept of masculinization procedures, chest masculinization — or what is often called "top surgery" — is available, metoidioplasty, clitoral release, phalloplasty, penile and testicular implant surgery, and revision surgery — all available. The department has determined that the following services at this time cannot be paid for through our current legal authorization, and we're working to address this, but the small number of those — not that they're not serious. Please don't take this in any way as but supporting these required procedures for individuals, but at the moment, we do not have the legal authorization to pay for tracheal shave surgery, body contouring surgery, gender-affirming hair removal, voice surgery, and any gender-affirming services that are performed in a particular specialized clinic in Montréal.

We are working diligently to explore the options to create the path forward. Our government and department recognize

the importance of these services for the transgender and gender-diverse community and the growing number of people waiting to access this care. I know that there has recently been an article produced in a publication that speaks about Yukon government temporarily pausing funding for some gender-affirming care. I note that the article is fair. It describes the fact — there are some inaccuracies in it, but I think it is a fair description about what has happened with respect to this policy change.

What it does not say is that Yukon's gender-affirming care program is second to none in Canada. It does say that we are absolutely committed to resolving this issue and will do so in the next few weeks. What it also does not say is that we have reached out to individual patients here in the territory and confirmed that these procedures will be covered in the very near future, and we have attempted to reassure them and their service provider that this is something that will happen.

We have to be quite careful with respect to reaching out to the care providers and the privacy of those individuals, but we are attempting to reach out to them to make sure that we do not want anyone losing a spot on a waiting list because of the details and the authority. We have committed to pay for these services, for these procedures, for these life-changing procedures for individuals, and it is a matter of authority that we need to resolve.

So, as I have said, we have reached out to service providers to make sure that they are aware that this is in no way an issue of no funding or an issue of no commitment to this — it is absolutely the opposite.

I do note that in the article — and this is something that we will be seeing — being a leader in the Yukon has its consequences in a positive way, and we expected that — there is a note in here, for instance, about an individual who, in fact, moved to the Yukon in part because of the comprehensiveness of our territory's gender-affirming care program, and we do expect other Canadians to move or others to come to Canada, to move to the Yukon, because we have set a precedent. We have set a program and a commitment to a program for gender-affirming care that is, as I have said, second to none.

I look forward to this matter being resolved in the very near future. I am certainly pleased to be able to speak to this motion and to confirm our resolve in this matter: the work that Yukon government has done with respect to promoting and protecting the rights of all individuals here in Canada.

I will note, with respect to a few other notes that I have — I want to make sure that I have covered everything. If I haven't been able to convey any message this afternoon, what I hope that Yukoners hear is: We are committed to the Yukon being a place of safety, we are committed to the Yukon being a place of inclusion, and we are committed to supporting Yukoners who need medical procedures to achieve their whole selves, and that will be our commitment going forward. While there are a few procedures that are currently not covered, and I do appreciate that causes concern, Yukoners have our utmost commitment that it will be resolved as soon as possible and within the next few weeks.

I appreciate the opportunity to address this motion and provide all that information to Yukoners.

Ms. White: Today, in speaking in favour of Motion No. 472, I just want to reiterate that the Yukon NDP has always stood together with folks who are facing discrimination, whether it be homophobia, transphobia, or others. You know, we have stood by our queer and trans friends since the day I was elected. It was the Yukon NDP who fought to make sure that driver's licences could be changed — or now on wedding licences. When someone gets it, there is room for four parents, because there has been the recognition that parents come in all sorts of groups and sizes. So, of course, we are in support.

I do have some concerns, though. I do have some concerns for things that recently happened. I agree that, when the announcement was made two years ago about our gender-affirming care policies — I mean, it is leading in the country. There have been different concerns over time. I was contacted by a pharmacy, because Yukon government forgot to communicate out to doctors that hormones — like hormone therapy — was covered and it was no longer a cost. That was not communicated out to medical clinics or pharmacies. I was actually contacted by a pharmacy to try to get that message out.

So, with the recent challenges, I appreciate that we're going to have different takes. Of course, I am not a member of the community that has been affected, but I do think that is a really important voice to hear. So, I'm going to read a letter that was posted on Queer Yukon on November 4, and it's important to note, that's just under two weeks ago.

So, Queer Yukon Society "... has been hearing concerns from community members about delays and cancellations to gender affirming care for Trans, Two-Spirit, Non-binary and Intersex people. Earlier this week ... our Executive Director and ... our Health and Education Manager met with YG's Director of Insured Health and Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services to bring up these concerns. We made it very clear to Health and Social Services that the delays and uncertainty caused by this move have huge negative impacts on people's mental health, and we asked them to communicate directly and transparently with community members who are affected.

"Today, we received the attached letter. We are disappointed that YG chose to notify service providers before community members, and to address the letter to Queer Yukon rather than to the Trans, Two-Spirit, Non-binary and Intersex people affected by the change. But we are glad to be able to provide some clarity and transparency to community members and we will continue to make your concerns heard and share any information we learn.

"Based on our conversation on Tuesday, we understand that:

"YG is currently unable to pay for any services in private clinics ... including surgery or hair removal. Access to hormones, and surgeries at Vancouver General Hospital, are unaffected.

"This is a temporary pause, and there is a 'written in stone' commitment to have a legal fix in place by the end of December 2022 and restart payment in January.

"People who already have referrals in for surgery can work with their healthcare provider and YG to make sure they don't lose their position in line.

"We've made it very clear to Health and Social Services that the delays and uncertainty caused by this move have huge negative impacts on people's mental health. We're pushing to have the wait times at Mental Wellness waived for members of our community who need support, and we'll let you know when we hear back.

"Please take care of yourselves and each other, and get in touch if there's any support QYS can offer."

The reason why I wanted to read this — this is from Queer Yukon Society — is because the minister said that she felt there were some inaccuracies in the *Xtra Magazine* article. I wonder if, for example, it's this line that says: "Queer and trans folks are angry and feel confused about how this pause could have been allowed to happen in the first place, since the Yukon government promised to expand care nearly two years ago."

Or there's this line, when the department talks about the mistake. This is a quote from one of the Queer Yukon members: "It's obviously a huge mistake to make this kind of commitment to provide life-saving, highly vulnerable care to people without having a plan in place to make sure you can actually do it," they say. "Mistakes happen, and it seems like Health and Social Services took steps to fix the issue as soon as they became aware of it.

"In my mind, the bigger issue is how they've communicated about it — without a public acknowledgement of how we got into this situation, it's hard for our community to trust that it won't happen again."

So, a lot of what this article talks about is the broken trust. In the case that the minister talked about, the individual who was accessing electrolysis heard from their provider that it had been cancelled, so the provider had been told about the cancellation, or the pause, prior to the client who was accessing the service — and that's the problem.

In the last two and a half years, I thought that we were really clear that the best thing we could do is communicate with people; we could let them know what was going on and the timelines and what that's going to do. I'm relieved that the department has been reaching out and they have been letting people know that it's a pause and, as we heard from the minister, it's going to pick back up again in January, but it was our office that people were calling with the fear that they had gone to so many appointments and gone through all the steps, and all of a sudden, this really important surgery that was coming might be cancelled because no one had communicated with them.

So, when folks started bringing those concerns to us — that's a concern, right? If all this information had been clearly communicated, that would have been better.

I just want to make sure that we recognize that the policies regarding gender-affirming care may be leading, but the fact that we have had to put a pause on it because, when that announcement was made, no one thought to look at how these processes were going to be paid for and whether or not it was legal is problematic.

I do hope that people have been able to jump wait-lists and I hope that they have gotten access to the support that they need, because I think it is really important.

When I go to, for example, the GSA at Porter Creek Secondary School, they have questions about the *LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan*, including, very specifically, the issues around SOGI. They want to know when the evaluation of the SOGI policy is going to happen in partnership with them. They have written letters. They have asked to be involved, so they just want to know when it's going to happen.

I think it's really important, and I appreciate that my colleagues from the Yukon Party have come out clearly with a statement because we all know in this Assembly that it hasn't always been that way, so I do appreciate that.

I do appreciate the work that is ongoing to support people in the queer and trans community, but I guess this is another cautionary tale to us — to make sure that government programs, if there are any changes, are clearly communicated to people ahead of time to make sure that the people who are going to be the most affected by the changes are the first to be informed and not the last informed, because that is when problems arise.

Again, the track record of the NDP speaks for itself when I say that we will be supporting this motion. Again, I expect that the Yukon government will do a better job of communicating with people about changes that affect them directly.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am pleased to rise this afternoon to respond to Motion No. 472, standing in the name of the Member for Mountainview — namely that this House urges the Government of Yukon to advance initiatives that will end discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia in Yukon, including supporting advocates and working with partners to continue implementing the LGBTQ2S+ action plan.

The theme of my comments is to absolutely support this motion but to also recognize that progress in inclusiveness and combating hate cannot be taken for granted.

In many US states, the socio-political climate for transgender people is becoming increasingly hostile. In 2021, more transphobic laws and policies were passed in the USA than in any year to date. This unenviable record is on track to be broken in 2022.

In certain states, an environment in which the removal or reduction of trans populations is being pursued by socio-economic, medical, and institutional means. Attempts to reduce or remove trans populations are occurring via social invisibilization, stigma, removal of support, and discouraging transition. There's a developing narrative that trans ideology is corrupting youth with the accompanying suggestion that the permeation of insidious ideologies of Woke Gender allows the mutilation of children and the undoing of the family. These talking points are aggressively pumped out in order to create moral panic.

In some conservative circles, there is a clear use of toxifying ideas about transness as an infiltrating, contagious, corrupting threat to vulnerable kids, seducing them and leading

them astray through drugs and surgery. In a recent poll asking about the estimated proportion of transgender people in the USA, the average perception was that it represented 21 percent of the population when the actual figure is estimated to be closer to one percent.

Imagery presenting trans identity as an infiltrating foreign force is also potentially an early warning sign as LGBT foreign infiltration and moral terrorism is already deployed in Hungary and Russia. We know that transgender and gender-diverse youth are disproportionately affected by depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation when compared to their cisgender peers.

Some studies suggest that the prevalence of suicidal ideation is reported by almost two-thirds in some studies, with tragic figures ranging across countries from 32 percent to 50 percent for suicide attempt rates. While exact figures remain undocumented, research suggests that 31 percent of transgender persons in India end their life by committing suicide and 50 percent have attempted suicide at least once before their 20th birthday.

It is known that transphobia can lead to social discrimination, minority stress, and internalized self-hate, creating risk factors for mental illness in this population.

Transgender high school students report significantly higher rates of victimization and harassment than their cisgender peers and are more likely to feel unsafe at their school. There is substantial evidence that structural stigma in the form of discriminatory laws and policies and prejudicial societal attitudes also shape mental health outcomes among multiple stigmatized groups. That is why it is critical that we not only combat this form of hate in our individual lives, but also as a society on a structural level.

I support this motion and I am proud to continue to promote our government's actions to meaningfully address and combat this type of hate.

As well, we strongly support the protection of civil and human rights of LGBTQ2S+ youth and all persons. It is vital to understand and acknowledge current educational and mental health issues of queer youth, particularly those who identify as transgender and gender-expansive, as well as the consequences when basic human and civil rights of this population are not protected. If unchecked, we know that this type of hate can devolve into dehumanization and extreme violence. As history starkly reminds us, those who were considered sexual deviants in Nazi Germany were placed in concentration and death camps. In the camps, they were subjected to the horrors of forced labour, castration, and other forms of torture and had a pink triangle attached to their clothes to identify them. It is estimated that only 60 percent of those who were transported to concentration camps survived.

Of course, there has been real progress and there is reason for optimism. We know that homophobia has generally reduced or subsided in recent years in western democracies. However, it is still a stark reality that homosexuality remains criminally punishable up to and including a death sentence in many jurisdictions around the world. In recent years, hundreds of men have been detained and tortured as part of anti-gay purges in Russia's Chechen Republic. One of Putin's henchmen and the

head of the republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, not only denied the existence of any persecution, but went on to deny the existence of gay men in Chechnya, adding that those people would be killed by their families. According to Human Rights Watch, it is difficult to overstate just how vulnerable LGBTQ people are in Chechnya, where homophobia is intense and rampant. LGBTQ people are in danger not only of persecution by authorities, but also of falling victim to so-called “honour killings” by their own relatives for tarnishing the family honour. Kadyrov has encouraged extrajudicial killings by family members as an alternative to law enforcement. In some cases, gay men in prison have been released early specifically to enable their murder by relatives. This violent homophobic rhetoric sometimes — and obviously — does lead to physical violence. This is without mentioning unofficial ill treatment, extortion, and discrimination.

The recently defeated president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, uttered many odious comments about homosexuals, with statements like: “I’m not going to fight or discriminate, but if I spot two men kissing in the street, I’ll beat them up” and that “90 per cent of adopted boys are going to be gay and will be sex workers for the couple.” He also said in a TV interview that if “... the kid begins to look gay-ish, you just beat him up really bad and this will fix him. Right?”

The fact that the now former president, Bolsonaro, has just recently lost the presidential election is, without a doubt, a significant relief for Brazil’s LGBTQ2S+ community in a fragile — but it is — parliamentary democracy in Brazil, a country of almost 220 million people.

This is about basic human and civil rights. This is about saving lives and combating hate and discrimination.

I thank the Member for Mountainview for bringing forward this motion and her substantial and significant efforts over many years in combating this type of hate. I also thank the Member for Riverdale South for her tireless work in this regard over many years as well.

I certainly look forward to my colleagues supporting this motion.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I thank my colleagues for their comments today and for the support from all three parties for this important motion that we put forward today.

As many have reflected on, our government has worked tirelessly on working with our LGBTQ2S+ community and their allies to ensure that we are working toward a more inclusive Yukon.

The Government of Yukon works to improve inclusion and create equity in its programs and services for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners. This work, as you have heard today, is well underway.

I wanted to reflect on some of the comments that were made today by the Leader of the Third Party. I know that most of the member’s comments were focused around the gender-

affirming care for folks seeking those services. We are incredibly proud of that policy, and we remain a leader in our country, and perhaps North America, on gender-affirming care. I believe that the Minister of Health and Social Services has spoken very clearly about our government’s commitment to ensure that the issues that have arisen in regard to this important care are rectified, and she has given very specific timelines for that work to be completed.

I want to just go over a few of the actions that we have taken. Again, the LGBTQ2S+ action plan was released on July 15, 2021 following a comprehensive public engagement in 2018 and 2019. Queer Yukon Society and All Genders Yukon Society reviewed the draft and final versions of the action plan. In that release, we did that together with the community. Our commitment is to ensure that we are always working in lockstep with the community — again, over 100 actions outlined in this plan.

I wanted to just highlight some of the work that we have completed. We know we have, as folks have stated here today, a lot of work ahead of us. We are, again, leading the country, I believe, in terms of our response to our LGBTQ2S+ community and inclusion throughout the territory, working toward changing the culture. I know that, for me — I have been the minister responsible first for the Women’s Directorate and now for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. I have worked since 2016 on advancing this file. I am so proud of where we are at. When I do have opportunities to sit with my colleagues from across the country, I am always proud to talk about the work that we have done in the Yukon. I have certainly had ministers and other MLAs from across the country contact me to talk about the process that we went through and how we did this work together and to find out more about some of the innovative responses that we have been able to achieve in the Yukon. For such a small jurisdiction, we definitely are contributing to this conversation in a significant way through our action.

Some of the examples of the work underway or that has already been completed are really important to put on the record today, as we don’t always get opportunities to speak about this area of our work along with my colleagues in the House — and particularly, the Minister of Justice and of Health and Social Services and the former Minister of Health and Social Services. We worked carefully together to accomplish the work that we’re talking about today. We expanded health care insurance coverage for gender-affirming therapies, procedures, and surgeries, which has been a huge focus of the discussion today.

We provided HIV pre-exposure and post-exposure medications free of charge. We are: integrating language into the new official Government of Yukon communication style guide; incorporating gender-inclusive washrooms and change rooms, change room specifications and design guidelines into Yukon government design guidelines and technical standards manual to improve the gender-inclusivity of future renovations and new buildings; upgrading the official name and mandate of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate to reflect the work of the LGBTQ2S+ inclusion and spectrum of gender identity and expression; including pronouns in e-mail signatures as a

best practice for Yukon government employees who feel comfortable doing so; amended the *Family Property and Support Act*, which allows separated common-law spouses equal access to spousal support compared to married spouses; providing operational funding for Yukon Pride Centre; creation of a gender-neutral washroom in the Whitehorse Visitor Information Centre and gender-neutral washrooms and change rooms at CSSC Mercier — which was the first school built as we were adopting this new practice, and it will be the practice going forward in terms of our Yukon government design guidelines and technical standards manual; passing the *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act*, which bans conversion therapy in the Yukon; making LGBTQ2S+ awareness and inclusion training available to all Yukon government employees through our internal [YGLearn](#) website; and offering World Professional Association for Transgender Health mental health training to all Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services clinicians.

Again, we made historic moves in terms of funding the LGBTQ2S+ community, and I am very, very proud of being able to provide Queer Yukon with funding that has helped to establish our first Pride Centre in the Yukon. I know that folks are aware — and many of you were here during the last mandate and this mandate and are aware of all of the other legislative changes that we have made since 2016 to ensure inclusion of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners. Again, we know that we have a long way to go and we are very grateful for our partners that have helped us to work to create a road map for the work that we are doing.

Again, I am very proud that the federal government has also released a 2SLGBTQI+ action plan that will bring \$100 million of dedicated funding to support Canadians who are working to advance inclusion throughout Canada. I am looking forward to very specific discussions with the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible at future tables, and this will be a huge part of our discussions going forward.

I thank all members today who had an opportunity to speak. I am thankful, of course, that all three parties have indicated that they will support this motion. I believe that it is an important one for all Yukoners.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time allowed to me to debate such an important motion.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 472 agreed to

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.

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 am unable to Chair for part of this afternoon.

Member for Takhini-Kopper King rises

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

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

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

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

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Kent: Yesterday when we left general debate, we were talking about Energy, Mines and Resources, and I wanted to pick up on some of those conversations here this afternoon. I want to take the opportunity again to welcome back the Deputy Minister of Finance, who is here to provide support to the Premier today during general debate.

I had asked a series of questions about the collaborative framework, which has now — from my understanding — sort of become the YESAA reset MOU table or a table of First Nations and industry. The Premier mentioned yesterday that there was an initial engagement on a potential YESAA amendment between industry and First Nations and, I am assuming, Yukon government representatives on October 25. The next round of workshops or meetings on that started today, I believe. I'm just wondering if the Premier can tell us who is represented at those meetings on a potential YESAA amendment that I believe he said would be ready sometime in the new year.

Hon. Mr. Silver: As far as the actual meetings that were scheduled to happen today, I'm not really sure of who was in attendance, but if the Member opposite is asking who the representatives are of the oversight group, it would be: Kate Durand for our government, as the chair; Dionne Savill for Canada; Daryn Leas from the Council of Yukon First Nations; and also Emmie Fairclough from the Council of Yukon First Nations.

Mr. Kent: So, yesterday the Premier mentioned that industry was involved in these workshops as well. Perhaps he doesn't know the names, but does he know who or which organizations are representing industry in these discussions?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As I said, they were targeting, early in the new year, to advance recommendations to the Minister of Northern Affairs. I don't have the information as far as who attended meetings, but I know that working on that target amendment for assessment of amendments and renewals is well underway, and our Yukon representatives on OG have raised a review of the YESAA assessable activities. I know that exceptions and the executive committee project regulations — the activities list regulations — are possible next projects for them to advance in those initial conversations at the meeting that was scheduled for this week, but I don't have an update on those activities.

Mr. Kent: So, perhaps the Premier can indicate whether or not we can get some information on who was in attendance at those meetings. I know that obviously a lot of the focus with respect to the collaborative framework has been on mining, but there are other industries that we all know go through the YESAA process and could potentially benefit from addressing issues around timelines and reassessments. The forestry industry is one that called for some changes to the assessable projects list at the June 2021 meeting when representatives of all three parties, including the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, were in attendance. It sounds to me like the Premier doesn't have that information today, so hopefully he is able to get that information to us on which industry organizations are represented at these two workshops — the one on October 25 and then the one that started today.

I guess one final question on that — and then I will ask a quick question about another regulatory topic. The Premier has mentioned that they are targeting the new year for a potential YESAA amendment, and then will the broader consultation be the responsibility of the federal government? Is that where the public engagement and other engagement will take place at that time with the amendment, or will there be an opportunity for Yukoners and the public to weigh in before that amendment is sent to the federal government?

I have just one other quick question. This is in reference to an October 17 *Whitehorse Star* article entitled "Yukon joins energy and resource tables agreement". In that, the federal minister responsible for Natural Resources Canada, Minister Wilkinson, said that they wanted to identify additional resources needed to align regulatory permitting processes "... so we can find ways to go faster with respect to some of these prototypes, all the while respecting constitutional obligations and ensuring we are doing it in an environmentally sustainable way." I am just curious if the Premier has any information on these roundtables. I asked the minister during the *Clean Energy Act* debate about this, but is there any further indication of when this regional energy and resource table initiative will happen in the Yukon? Does he have any comment on this streamlined regulatory and permitting process that the federal minister was talking about?

Hon. Mr. Silver: In both — I don't have a lot of information as far as set dates or timelines. I know that with the establishment of that regional table, there are internal conversations that are ongoing right now to establish the pathway forward. It would be the same with our previous conversation and the reset table.

I do agree with the member opposite that this isn't just necessarily about mining. The names that I have heard, as far as who has been engaged — it would be the usual suspects in mining — obviously the KPMA and other representatives. I take his point on other resources and industries and businesses being affected by these changes, but I don't have anything to update the member opposite as far as timelines past this week's activities.

Mr. Kent: Does the Premier have any information regarding Minister Wilkinson's comments in the *Whitehorse Star* in October about the resource roundtable and identifying additional resources to streamline regulatory and permitting processes?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, that was my original part of the answer. I apologize if I wasn't clear there. There are internal preliminary discussions that are underway right now in establishing that regional table, but that is about all I have for the member opposite at this time.

Mr. Kent: I apologize; I didn't hear that part of the response.

I wanted to move on to an issue that came up during Question Period today, and that's the Beaver River sub-regional land use plan. I have some questions for the Premier about that. Obviously, we talked earlier today about the initial YESAB recommendation on the ATAC Resources tote road in 2017. I think it was in April or May, and then in the following

year, in 2018, the former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources announced the sub-regional plan for the Beaver River area as part of the approval process, or the decision document process, for that project to proceed. At the time, it was said that it would be ready in two years, which is 2020. We are still awaiting completion. Last year, the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources told this House last fall that it would be ready in the spring of 2022, and then I believe that he is expecting it to be ready in 2023.

So, I do have the work plan documents from yukon.ca in front of me. It is a winter 2022 update, and it says that they were in phase 2, which is background reporting. It says here that it was complete in May 2022, so I am assuming that this work has been done. But there is some planning framework under phase 3 that had a completion of October 2022. The tasks under that — and I will just read them quickly as there are only a few of them. To finalize the planning framework, there was: a vision, principles, and goals; land use designations; LMUs, or land management units; and implementation.

So, can the Premier tell us if that work was completed in October of this year — that planning framework work that is identified in this document?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Just for context here a bit, we are talking about an ATAC mining land use application for a proposed 65-kilometre all-season road project that crosses First Nation traditional territory and includes upgrading existing trails, construction of new roads, three access-control gates, and numerous river crossings as well.

This goes back a bit, obviously. In February 2018, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and also the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun signed the ATAC road agreement. According to the agreement, the land use plan and a road access management plan must be finalized before any road construction occurs. In November 2020, the chief mining land use concluded that the authorization to construct that road would not be issued on the basis that the application did not reflect the road access management plan and also the wildlife monitoring plan. ATAC Resources Ltd. can submit another road access management plan for better addressing the issues identified in the record of decision.

The decision does not affect our government's ability to consider future application for an all-season road, and the nature of any future submissions will determine what assessments and regulatory review processes will be required.

The member opposite is correct that we did complete three stages of public and stakeholder consultation on the Beaver River land use plan and are working on completion of the plan for next year, 2023. As the member opposite read off, this land use plan is available on yukon.ca, if folks want to read up on this.

Through the process, we are working to address the concerns about the potential impacts of the proposed tote road — on moose mostly and other wildlife species, including harvest considerations for those species. The planning committee met with ATAC Resources Ltd. in the spring of 2022. We heard the minister on his feet today speaking about meetings that he has set up during Geoscience with the

proponent — again, all to work toward the completion of an access road management plan — and currently waiting for a final version of the draft plan from the company.

As far as phase 3 activities and how they are going, I don't necessarily have anything more to update the member opposite on with the specifics of what has been done in phase 3 since the information that was accessible on the website had been posted.

Mr. Kent: Sorry, I just wanted to clarify with the Premier — he talked about a road access management plan, which, according to yukon.ca, the completion is pending the completion of the sub-regional land use plan, but did he say that we are waiting on the draft plan from the company? Can he just clarify for us?

Hon. Mr. Silver: No, I'm just saying what options the company does have.

Mr. Kent: Again, I asked about phase 3 of this planning framework, which was to be completed in October 2022. There is another timeline deadline coming up in December with respect to analysis and the draft plan — that was phase 4. Phase 5, which is the final draft plan and implementation, is due in March 2023. Then, phase 6, it says, is the final plan. The completion on that is to be determined by the parties.

Is the Premier suggesting that phase 6, which is the final plan, will be ready in 2023? That would be consistent with what we have heard from the Minister of EMR.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, to be clear, we have completed three stages of public and stakeholder consultation on the Beaver River land use plan, and they are working toward completing the plan in 2023.

Mr. Kent: So, there will be additional — I see in phase 5, there will be a final opportunity for plan review by the public, NND citizens, and stakeholders. We can circle back on this in the Spring Sitting and check in with the government on where we are at with respect to what has been identified for this winter 2022 plan. I think the minister mentioned he will be meeting with ATAC Resources, and we will follow up with them prior to the spring as well just to get a sense of where they believe we are at with this planning document and resolution to something that has been going on for quite some time now. As mentioned, that initial YESAB recommendation came back in 2017.

I do want to move on to another topic, which is the staking withdrawals in the southeast Yukon in the Ross River Dena Council traditional territory, as well as the Liard First Nation traditional territory. I understand that this is something that would be led by one of the Premier's departments, the Executive Council Office. I am curious if he has any updates for us. This is a significant area that is off limits to new staking, obviously, and it is an area where there are an awful lot of minerals — particularly some of the critical minerals that are on the federal list and are important for our transition to a low-carbon future.

Does the Premier have any updates? Can he let us know when the last meeting was held with the Kaska First Nation to discuss the staking ban and what we hope to be the eventual removal of that ban? For RRDC, toward the end of next year, it will be 10 years since that ban came on. I know that the ban in

the Liard First Nation area came on in the 2016-21 mandate of the current government.

Hon. Mr. Silver: There is the mineral staking prohibitions in place in the Kaska asserted traditional territory in the Yukon to allow time to address the court declarations that were made in the Ross River Dena Council and the Kaska Dena Council mining cases when the Yukon Party was in power. We put mineral staking prohibitions in place for the A Cu Village site as well, around the area in the asserted territory of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation, to support our ongoing decisions and discussions and to hopefully alleviate some of where that was heading as well. We do anticipate that the work being done in collaboration with First Nations to develop new mining legislation will help address many of the issues, including the court declarations that we inherited.

When it comes to Ross River specifically, the mining prohibition in that area was put in place, as the member opposite said, coming on a year here, so March 27, 2013, and is in place until April 30, 2024. This is intended to allow the advance consultation with the Ross River Dena Council and other Kaska as to how to better address the declarations regarding mining staking, exploration, and development.

As far as the southern portion of the Kaska asserted traditional territories, the mineral staking prohibition in that area was put in place on February 1, 2017. Again, it is going to be in place until April 30, 2024, as we do the same with consulting and trying to find a pathway forward. To support some of the conversations on, for example, the A Cu Village, there was a mineral staking ban that was put in on March 28, 2019. This withdrawal is in place until September 30, 2023, so three mineral staking prohibitions in the Kaska and the Taku River Tlingit First Nation traditional territories, covering approximately 23 percent of the Yukon. Of this, the Ross River area prohibition covers 13 percent, the prohibition in the Kaska assertion outside of the Ross River area covers 10 percent, and the prohibition in the A Cu Village area covers a negligible percentage.

Of the three areas, the Ross River area has the highest mineral potential, especially when we're taking a look at a critical mineral strategy on our efforts to get off fossil fuels. Additional staking prohibitions have been in place for reasons such as land use planning to create parks and protection areas, but that's not what the member opposite is asking about. The Ross River Dena Council are part of monthly meetings that we're having with the conversations on new mineral legislation, and that's where we're hoping to see reconciliation in action and a pathway forward to the litigation that we inherited.

Mr. Kent: I'm going to move on to a question that I have with respect to Yukon Zinc and the Wolverine mine. Members may have seen some online ads, and I understand there are some full-page ads in local newspapers about the sale of the mill. I'll just read briefly from this online ad. It says — I think I'm going to pronounce this right — and I quote: "Welichem Equipment Limited owns substantially all of the removable equipment at the Wolverine Mine in the Yukon Territories, Canada." So there are a number of pieces of equipment

identified here: the mill and the 200-plus-person camp and some other equipment, such as the assay lab, a batch plant, truck shop, and warehouse.

So, these assets, once they're sold, will the money from those sales be applied against the remediation that is now on the Public Accounts and on the books at a substantial amount of money, or does it go to this equipment company that is selling them? I'm just curious if the Premier has any insight on that for Yukoners.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Getting into kind of some of the legal aspects of this particular situation, the corporation's decision regarding the ownership of those assets by the third party, Welichem, general research partnership, required the receiver to replace essential assets on the site with funding provided by the Government of Yukon.

The receiver and Welichem have reached an agreement in principle requiring Welichem to remove its assets from the site and providing that all of the assets used for water treatment remain part of the mine property. The final terms of the arrangement will be captured in the settlement agreement that is filed in court.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that response, so I will let those interested know about that.

I just wanted to take a step back to the Beaver River area and that area north of Keno City. I know that there is an ongoing lawsuit filed by the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun with respect to some permits. Can the Premier give us a status update on that? Are we still awaiting a decision? Is that where we are at with respect to that? I don't want the Premier to comment on the specifics of the law case; I am just wondering if he can give us a status update of where we are at with respect to that particular lawsuit.

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, in March 2021 — March 15, the Ides of March — the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun did file a petition for a judicial review of the Government of Yukon decision document under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act* to follow a proposed class 3 quartz mining exploration program to proceed in the regulatory phase. There is not much to report at this point, other than that a judicial review was heard on June 28 and 29 of this year, and the decision was reserved and is not expected before the fall of this year. So, that is kind of where we are right now.

Mr. Kent: I want to move on to a number of other mining-related topics and will start with regional land use planning. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources delivered a ministerial statement earlier this Sitting on the Dawson regional land use plan — that the consultation period on the final recommended plan has been extended, I think, until December 20. I do want to touch on the confidence and supply agreement that the governing Liberal Party has signed with the New Democratic Party about accelerating other land use planning.

I am wondering if the Premier can give us an update on what resources have been allocated to that particular commitment in the CASA. This current CASA is set to expire in just over a couple of months. I am just wondering what kind

of resources have been allocated to accelerating the other land use plans in the territory.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Conversations are continuing. The fact that money is spent — the money that was set aside for regional planning. We believe that, by the completion of the Dawson regional land use plan, that money will be tapped out.

We actually have had a bunch of different meetings bilaterally — as our government. Of course, this is a trilateral conversation with the First Nation governments, the federal government, and ours as well. As far as implementation — and also moving forward into other planning regions — there have been lots of conversations with First Nations that would be up next in the queue — and making sure that all First Nations with assertions and traditional territory in those regions are ready to go as part of those conversations.

Also, at the Yukon Forum and into Yukon Days — conversations in the past and also planned for future endeavours in Ottawa — to continue the conversation where that obligation needs to be from all three governments, including the federal government when it comes to replenishing the money that is not there, seeing that so much of the money was spent in the Peel process and it took so many years.

We are advancing those conversations. We have been meeting with communities; we have been meeting with stakeholders. As I mentioned, the process for Dawson is on its way. We are meeting with other affected First Nations so that we can begin work on the four remaining regional land use plans.

Again, there are lots of conversations happening at a bunch of different levels. I'm not going to speak on behalf of the First Nations and the conversations that they have been having with Canada, but we are in consultation with both of those governments to ensure that we have adequate resources to support our obligations under chapter 11.

Mr. Kent: So, can the Premier tell us how much money they are looking for from the federal government as far as replenishing the money? What would the cost-sharing look like, and what is the request to complete the remaining land use plans?

Hon. Mr. Silver: To my knowledge, I don't think we started with a dollar value and are working backwards from that. It is more about what is currently available. There is still \$4.3 million available for the Dawson regional land use plan and all other remaining plans, unless more funding becomes available. There is the 2024 — that's when the funding review happens. So, if agreed to by the parties, a larger funding review will take place. From there, I believe, that will be the process to start deciding, based upon previous plans in the past, based upon willingness of participants, et cetera — and also what we have learned through the plans as far as what we expect as far as dollar values from here forward — again, learning a lot through these processes as far as the responsibilities of the council itself, the responsibilities of governments involved, and trying our best to learn as we go through the processes so that, when it's time for that review in 2024, those dollar values will become a lot more acute as far as understanding the need for each of the remaining plans.

Mr. Kent: I was just jotting down some numbers as the Premier was speaking. There's \$4.3 million left in the funding pot for the completion of the regional land use plans. I think he said earlier that he expected that amount of money to be expended by the end of the Dawson regional land use planning process. I just wanted to confirm that this is exactly what he said.

I'm also wondering about a budget line item for the implementation of the Peel final land use plan. Is there an implementation budget set aside for that, and if so, can the Premier tell us how much that is?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, my statements are speculative at best. Currently, there is \$4.3 million left. We have done two plans that cost us \$5.3 million. It doesn't take a mathematician to know that we are not going to get through the rest of the plans with the money that has been allocated in total. Talking with ministers responsible, I give them my concern that we could be in a position where that money dries up. Maybe that's before we complete Dawson or maybe that's while we start on another plan, but we definitely will not get to the finish line with the number of plans that are still left in the queue in that obligation under chapter 11.

As far as a dollar value for money spent to date on the Peel implementation plan, with all due respect to the member opposite, it's not a budget item for today in the supplementary budget, so I would have to get back to him with that information.

Mr. Kent: Yes, I look forward to getting a sense of what has been expended to date on the implementation of the Peel plan and then what the budget is, looking forward, in terms of costs to implement that plan for that planning region.

It doesn't look like that part of the CASA — about assigning resources to accelerate other land use plans — will be completed before the end of this current CAS agreement. I did want to just ask about another commitment that was identified in the confidence and supply agreement, which is successor resource legislation. We know that the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act* are under review. Also, my understanding from the minister in previous conversations that we have had is that, working with First Nations, obviously there was no way to complete it within the current CAS agreement, which would have meant tabling those new pieces of legislation this fall.

I am wondering if the Premier can give us an idea of where we are at in that engagement process. Does he have any sense for when those two new pieces of legislation will be ready for public engagement and when they will be ready for presentation on the floor of the House?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It probably won't surprise the member opposite that I'm not going to necessarily speculate on announcements that haven't already been made when it comes to successor mining legislation. Suffice to say, though, that we are working on this, and the conversations are going very well as we move into this next phase of policy in Yukon. Industry and environmental groups are involved in the process. We are working with our First Nation partners as well. All of these governments and organizations are providing their perspectives

and interests on key policy issues and providing feedback on ideas and options generated. This new made-in-Yukon legislation will improve the regulatory system, strengthen our economy, and also protect the environment and support the modern-day needs of the Yukon.

As far as anticipated public engagement and First Nation consultation, we are tracking that for early in 2023, but I really don't have too much more of an update for the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: So, early 2023 for public and First Nation government engagement on these two pieces of legislation. I guess I'll ask again: Would that mean that the Premier would anticipate legislation being ready for presentation in the next Fall Sitting of the Legislature?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I'm not going to speculate on any announcements that the department hasn't already made.

Mr. Kent: Okay, I appreciate that. We'll follow up with the minister in the Spring Sitting and hopefully get a better sense on timing for when that legislation will be available for public review and tabling in the Legislature.

I did want to just ask quickly about another piece of legislation that's under review, which is the *Forest Resources Act*. Can the Premier give us any sense of timing on that act review and if that will be tabled anytime soon? I know it has been underway for a while, so I'm just curious about any update the Premier can give us on that piece of legislative review.

Hon. Mr. Silver: We are working with First Nations to review the act — the *Forest Resources Act* and its regulations — to make them clear and more effective. I know that the working group of representatives from the Government of Yukon, the Teslin Tlingit Council, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Kluane First Nation, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and the Acho Dene Koe First Nation has developed draft recommendations for updates to the act and to the regulations. We are asking Yukoners for feedback on the proposed changes this fall. So, we will be reviewing them and working with groups beforehand to make the final recommendations to the government.

Mr. Kent: So, there is a level of public consultation underway — I think the Premier said this fall. Is that underway now, or is it planned for sometime later this month or early into December?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe it is ongoing now, but I will find out definitively and report back to the member opposite if my assumption is incorrect.

Mr. Kent: Thank you very much, Acting Chair.

Just one other piece of legislation that was on the floor of this Legislature last fall, which was amendments to the *Lands Act*. It was to deal with resource access roads, essentially. It was an enabling amendment that would have allowed for the development of regulation to deal with resource access roads. It was our understanding last fall, when the act was passed, that the regulation would be ready in the spring. Then I asked in the spring, and the minister mentioned that it wasn't ready at that time, either.

So, can the Premier give us a sense of when that regulation will be ready? We know that a proponent withdrew — I think

it was a class 4 permit application — and was waiting on the development of this regulation. So, just looking for a status update on the regulation's development and when that will be ready. I'm assuming the work with First Nations is ongoing right now. The Premier can confirm that or not and when that will be available for public review.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will respond in terms of the resource road regulations. I was a little bit confused because the member opposite started with the *Lands Act*, which would probably be different information here.

When it comes to the resource road regulation, we are in the final stages of developing the new regulations which clarify the rules around the construction, the operation, and the decommissioning of the resource roads. That regulation is to address concerns about road access to the backcountry and will provide consistent rules for proponents. We are anticipating having a regulation in place for the spring of 2023, following consultation with Yukon First Nations.

Mr. Kent: I mentioned the *Lands Act*, because that was the piece of legislation we had to amend last year to enable this resource access road regulation to be consulted on and implemented.

I do have a few other questions for the Premier. The first one is about the mineral development strategy. Obviously, there was a fairly long engagement with Yukoners to come up with a mineral development strategy and the regulations. I know that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has mentioned to me in previous discussions on the floor here that some of the recommendations are captured within the review of the two pieces of mining legislation. I believe he made a commitment to get me a list of which ones there were. I would have to look back through some of the legislative returns to see if I received that list from him, but I'm curious if the Premier could give us a status update on the response to the mineral development strategy, which recommendations the government is considering implementing in the legislative reviews, and which ones they're not going to implement — which of those recommendations made by that independent panel they are not going to implement at this time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I probably don't have too much of an update for the member opposite if he is still waiting for confirmation on specifics. The strategy panel final report focused in on six strategic priorities, set out 125 specific recommendations for a future mineral development and management regime for the Yukon, and about half of those recommendations are related to or contingent upon the development of that new mining legislation.

Specifics toward that — I am not really sure that I have too much more to add to that. We agreed, under the MDS, to prioritize those that pertain to successful legislation, and as I mentioned, that would be about half of those. But as far as the specifics, I will leave that up to the minister and his correspondence with the member opposite, the critic.

Mr. Kent: Thank you, Acting Chair. I will follow up with the minister on that commitment that he made to get a list and see if it was actually just contained in a legislative return or

if it was a letter or something like that. So, I will follow up with the minister on that.

I do have just a few more questions left. The first one is on class 1 notification. Obviously, this is something that is now a requirement for any of the low-level — or perhaps not low-level, but class 1 activities. Anyone wishing to undertake them now has to provide notification to affected First Nations. I am curious; I know that the Prospectors Association and others were working with the government on coming up with a different class for non-mechanized or very low environmental-impact activities to see if that could be conducted without notification. You know, obviously, when individuals are out on the land and have to either book helicopter time or that type of thing to get out there, that is extremely expensive, so I think that some of them were hoping to be able to do some low-level, as I have mentioned, perhaps non-mechanized activities.

So, I am just curious if the Premier can give us any update on where we are at with working with industry and First Nations to develop some activities that would be allowable without notification.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I wouldn't have much of an update for the member opposite other than recognizing that he is correct in some of these suggestions coming forth from the different organizations — NGOs — that work with the industry, but as far as any update as to a “class 0” — I have heard it called — or a low-level classification, I think that those conversations are ongoing, but I will work with the minister to see if there is any update for the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that and I can follow up with the minister as well on that.

I have just a couple of questions on some energy issues. The independent power production policy, or the IPP policy, is something that was flagged in the Yukon Utilities Board's recent report on the energy purchase agreement on the Atlin hydro project. I don't have the report in front of me, but just to paraphrase, I think there was concern with the IPP in that it focused on summer energy rather than winter energy, and there was a recommendation that the government focus on different IPP projects that provided winter energy.

Does the Premier have any comment on that particular recommendation and where the government is going to go with respect to IPP winter energy generation projects rather than the summer ones that were flagged by the Yukon Utilities Board?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Well, supporting the locally developed sources of energy is extremely important through the independent power production policy. I know that the minister has been grappling with expanding that spectrum into the months when we really need it — into winter months. Again, based upon that, whether it's the IPP or working with Atlin or working with the Taku River Tlingit or other First Nations that may be interested in helping along the way or even with folks who are adding to the complement of energy by providing solar and wind and other opportunities — summer is obviously easier for certain types of renewable energy than others. It's extremely important to make sure that, as we move forward with the suite of different options, we are cognizant of the need in those winter months and the importance of the Atlin project to

provide that winter power. The importance of the battery technology as well as Moon Lake are other parts of the conversation — not necessarily connected to IPP specifically. I know that the minister is reviewing the IPP currently to meet the observations of those who have fed into this policy now that it has been a few years into its application.

Mr. Kent: I know that there is legislation being developed with respect to geothermal energy. Just doing a little bit of research into the topic, publications like *The Wall Street Journal* and *Business Insider*, Golder engineering, and even the Canadian Geothermal Energy Association suggest that, in order for the effectiveness to be maximized, it may require hydraulic fracturing to develop that type of energy. I know that there is a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing, but I'm curious if the Premier can comment on what others are saying with respect to this — that hydraulic fracturing to develop geothermal energy makes it more effective.

Is that something that the government would consider — lifting that moratorium on hydraulic fracturing as it relates to geothermal energy development? Obviously, not on the oil and gas side — they have made it quite clear about their position on that — but just with respect to geothermal energy development?

Hon. Mr. Silver: As a commitment in *Our Clean Future*, we are looking at geothermal as a renewable energy source with the potential to reduce Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on fossil fuels. This is something that has been of interest to me for a while now. I know that CanGEA has identified some areas of Yukon as being some of the best in North America for binary steam production. It is interesting to see that, with the geology that we do have, we could be considering this as an option as we look through the pages of *Our Clean Future*.

We are in the earliest stages of developing geothermal legislation, so we sought input on how those resources should be regulated in the territory in a public engagement that happened right through the summer until late September of this year. When implemented, that new legislation will establish a 10-year regulatory framework to manage geothermal resources in the territory.

So, research is on its way about fracturing in this pursuit — we are several years away from any type of geothermal resources in production in the territory — and considering that research.

Now, as the member opposite knows, I was a member of the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing. There are a lot of differences between fracking for geothermal resources compared to fracking for energy in the fossil fuel world. The chemical combinations are different and the deep well injection options after the fact for those fluids. There are a few different things to consider, but I won't get too far down the road about the comparison. I personally have not done as much research on the geothermal side of things with fracturing as I have — being honoured with a seat on that select committee where we had an opportunity to go down to Alberta, work with Schlumberger, and actually witness a frack in occurrence — and worked with companies

there — let alone going all the way through all of the Yukon to all the communities and having conversations on the risks and the benefits there in the context of fossil fuel. No research by me personally on how that pertains to geothermal — but that research is underway and will provide information to better characterize the geothermal potential in the Yukon.

Mr. Kent: I guess just to sort of close off on that, at this point, can the Premier just confirm that it's too early in the development of legislation — that they are not ruling out, at this time, hydraulic fracturing to develop that legislation and be a permissible activity for geothermal development? When the Premier is on his feet, if he can just confirm that.

I have a question as well about the western Arctic offshore for oil and gas development. I know that we have been participating with our neighbours as well as the Government of Canada in those discussions. Is the work complete now on that development, or is it nearing completion with respect to oil and gas development in the western Arctic offshore?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, as far as geothermal moving forward — I'm not going to comment too much on what we will decide once the research is done — not only looking at the differences between hydraulic fracturing in the two different pursuits, but also research to date on which regions have the higher geothermal resource potential, where it is compared to the surface, and what that geology looks like. These things will determine the methods and technologies that will be used at the time.

There was a pairing in 2021 with the Liard First Nation to complete some geophysical surveys to identify targets for graded temperature wells in Watson Lake. A report from this study will be released soon — hopefully before the end of this year, but definitely this winter. In the Teslin area, there were a couple of geophysical surveys that were done and completed that will allow us to assess the potential of geothermal resources in that area. So, once we get this data about the potential in the actual areas, then comes a conversation about tapping that potential.

When it comes to the western Arctic conversations, there are ongoing conversations right now with historical royalties and also moving forward with the federal government and the Government of Northwest Territories.

Mr. Kent: I thank the Premier for his time here today. There are a number of other topics — quite a few — that I could have touched on here today, but in the interest of moving into departmental debate — and I believe, from House Leaders this morning, Economic Development would be up next.

I am going to take my seat. I thank the Deputy Minister of Finance again for his time in supporting the Premier during general debate. I am prepared to clear general debate and move into one of the four departments that we have identified in this budget.

Chair (Ms. Blake): Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause 1.

The bill's schedules form part of clause 1. One of the schedules is Schedule A, containing the departmental votes.

The matter before the Committee is Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in 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 15 minutes.

Recess

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

Department of Economic Development

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to start by thanking the officials from the Department of Economic Development who are joining us today — Deputy Minister of Economic Development, Justin Ferbey; and Director of Finance and Information Management, Beth Fricke — who are both here supporting today. I also would just like to make note that retired assistant deputy minister Steve Rose, as some may notice, has consistently supported us and continues to be passionate and interested in economic development. It is great to see him here with us as well today.

As the Minister of Economic Development, I rise today to introduce the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for the 2022-23 fiscal year. At the Department of Economic Development, our work is focused on assisting our partners in building a prosperous Yukon by creating and fostering economic opportunities and pursuing economic initiatives with the shared vision of prosperity, partnerships, and innovation and also forging, maintaining, and expanding partnerships with First Nation governments in the economic development of the Yukon.

The supplementary budget request includes additional funding to support the territory's media sector and labour market development. Concerning media development, the request is an increase in appropriation of \$250,000 to support our territory's performing artists. The budget for the new performing musicians fund has increased by \$300,000, of which \$50,000 will be covered by the remaining balance of the former sound recording fund.

The close of the previous fund and the implementation of an expanded performing musicians fund was informed by input from industry members and ensures that our programming meets their needs. This increase adds \$250,000 to the departmental budget. I am pleased to report that the first intake of the fund was on July 4, and nine emerging and two established musicians were awarded a total of \$85,663. The most recent intake for the fund was on September 15, 2022. Again, if funds are still available after the September intake, a third intake will be held later in the fiscal year.

Concerning labour market development, the request is for an increase of \$1,104,000. Additionally, we are asking for these funds for the Labour Market Unit, and this is related to carry-over funding from the 2021-22 fiscal year. This funding is fully recoverable from the Government of Canada and is part of two agreements: the labour market development agreement and the workforce market development agreement.

The Labour Market Unit supports workers and employers by providing funding for training and development and administering programs, which include Building UP. Projects under Building UP strengthen labour market participation of those not in the labour market, including foundational skills, skills for success, and vocational skills, disability supports, and employment assistance services. As well, there is Staffing UP, which provides funding support for employers seeking assistance to find, hire, and keep workers.

It is clear that the work of the labour market development unit is greatly needed to address the current labour shortage.

In closing, we are asking for a supplementary budget increase of \$1,354,000 for the Department of Economic Development. The work that the department undertakes using these funds will continue to build our local music industry and help to increase the strength of the territory's labour market.

Thank you, and we will stand down for questions.

Ms. Van Bibber: I would also like to thank the officials for joining us today to assist the minister.

I will start with a fairly simple question, I believe. I would like to ask the minister if he could please confirm what the 10 *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* procurement exceptions were for this year.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just wanted to identify — sorry, we are just pulling some information together — just to the fact that, although it's exceptions that are identified under the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*, the Department of Economic Development tends to be the lead on all conversations. This particular exemption really is — the intervention on it — or, sorry, the work that's undertaken concerning this exemption is done through Highways and Public Works. I will do my best to provide some updated information.

The Yukon government is helping to boost economic development across the territory through the use of trade agreement exceptions. The exceptions allow us to restrict procurement competitions exclusively to qualified Yukon businesses 10 times per year in order to keep government dollars in the territory and to support local businesses.

Over the past five years, manufacturing, construction, and consulting contracts have been awarded for work in communities across the Yukon. Since 2018, Yukon businesses have competed for and secured 49 Yukon-exclusive government contracts worth \$24.6 million. For the 2022-23 fiscal year, government has awarded three projects to Yukon businesses, totalling \$2.17 million, with plans to use all 10 exceptions within the fiscal year.

The criteria for selecting regional economic development exceptions includes how much of the money spent on the project will create economic opportunities in the Yukon and

whether the project supports the territory's industries and suppliers.

At the close of a project, suppliers are now required to report on the total dollar value expended on Yukon labour and materials to quantify the direct positive impact these projects have on Yukoners. To date, 12 projects have submitted reporting on their completed contracts, with eight projects using 100-percent Yukon labour and Yukon materials. The reporting from the 12 projects shows that just over \$1 million was spent on Yukon employee labour.

Ms. Van Bibber: On the three projects equalling \$2.17 million — and the suppliers are required to report — could we find out what those three projects are?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The three contracts that have been awarded so far within this fiscal year for 2022-23 — the first was for six direct current fast-chargers, and those were in the Yukon communities of Ross River, Faro, Burwash Landing, Beaver Creek, and Whitehorse. That was awarded to Solvest Inc., the green street paving project in the Whistle Bend subdivision of Whitehorse was awarded to Castle Rock Enterprises, and the community-scale composting program design and installation in Deep Creek, Tagish, Carcross, and Marsh Lake was awarded to Boreal Compost.

Again, these were totalling \$2.17 million, but it is also important to note that this work is still ongoing. There's still a number of opportunities that the Yukon government is looking to award through Highways and Public Works. Again, this is such a significant opportunity. The use of this was not always maximized, and I know that the department and the minister are doing their very best to ensure that we use these exceptions, understanding — with a mind to the best possible impact to the Yukon business sector and Yukoners in general.

Ms. Van Bibber: So, I'm assuming we are hoping that the other seven of the 10 projects will be awarded. That's a good thing.

So, the change in the supplementary estimates is for the performing musicians fund, which was an increase of \$300,000. From what I heard the minister say in his opening statement — the original sound recording fund was disbanded by its members? If this is so, why is it necessary to revamp the name and the program?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'll just make a small clarification. The original fund that was available for sound recording allotted \$50,000 per year. The comment I was making — and I might not have been clear enough in sharing that information — is that the new fund that is now in place — the development of it and the structure of it was the result of the consultation and advisement from industry. So, first of all, folks were looking for more funds available and then how the fund itself was structured. I'll share a little bit — for Yukoners who are listening — more background on what we have done there.

So, the Department of Economic Development released a comprehensive new funding program for Yukon musicians to foster continued growth in this vibrant, creative industry. It's important to note that the culture and creative strategies, which were shepherded in with the work of the previous minister and the now Minister of Education, was a really comprehensive

process. It really helped move forward our work in all of these areas.

So, what we're trying to ensure is that, when we look at the GDP contribution in the Yukon from the creative and cultural industries, we're looking at about two percent of our GDP. In Canada, if you look at that number, it's about 2.7 percent. So, we want to get to that number, and that means that it will increase by about — what it does, that percentage — that 2.7 is about \$21 million.

So, what we're trying to do is ensure, through whether it's music, traditional arts from First Nation artisans, any of these areas where we can help lift and support folks to increase their success. So, that's — going back to the sound recording, that's the idea.

So, we increase the annual budget of the program by \$250,000 from \$50,000 for a total of \$300,000 that's now available to support artists. The performing musicians fund was launched in June of 2022 and held its first intake on July 4. As I had touched on in my earlier comments, there were about 23 applications. It's also important to note that, when decisions are made, we have a jury of industry professionals from across Canada who make recommendations for the applications, and in this particular case, we had two established musicians and nine emerging musicians who received those funds.

What we heard from the industry was that there were a number of things that we had — the scope of what we could fund should expand. So, the range of activities eligible under the fund now includes music video content and sound recordings, marketing activities — such as touring and showcasing — and training and development of Yukon musicians.

So, what has become apparent and what we heard — in a previous iteration of this, a local musician would go, they would put their application in, and if they were successful through the process, they would then go — and if they were looking to record, they would go to a recording studio. So, we heard from industry professionals — like Daniel Ashley or Bob Hamilton, others whom we sat with who have a great global track record, as well as local — that, in the current state of the industry, even being able to put visual content together — some of us were in that time; you would be watching the video show with all the videos for half an hour on a Thursday afternoon at 5:30, if you made it home off the bus in time.

So, anyway, now they are shooting this content, and the content, of course, is on YouTube or it's on different platforms, and just being able to fund one of those to have that visual and work with a recording studio to ensure that they have that professional quality — that alone can be as important in many cases as being able to go in and record a complete number of tracks. When we think about it, we say a “record”, but inevitably, of course, the format has changed. Those are some of the changes that we heard and folks said that it was really important to make those changes. The new program increases the funding available to Yukon musicians, and it's up to \$10,000 for emerging musicians and up to \$30,000 for established musicians. Again, it is important to note that the music industry creates local jobs, builds capacity, supports

Yukon businesses and entrepreneurs, and contributes to our economic diversification.

For any creators who are listening, they can find information on programs online at yukon.ca or by contacting our media development team at Economic Development. It is also important to note that now we are seeing a cross-pollination between the sound recording industry and film, because in many cases, in the film industry, they also need to lean on tech digital creators for some of what they produce and, in some cases, when they get funding from entities at a national level in Canada, they also have requirements to do extra work. Some of that is digital content. They need to also lean on proper sound recording, and so now all of those industries are starting to really work closely together. That means that they will all have consistent business coming through the door. That means that they can invest in their businesses. That means that they can train and provide opportunities to build capacity. Then we can see that overall growth within that sector of our cultural industries.

I hope that gives a little bit of extra information as to why we have done what we have done. Of course, it is illustrated in the fact that the industry really drove the renaissance of this programming.

Ms. Van Bibber: I have a couple of items from your mandate letter that I would like to ask about. The letter indicates that you were directed to work with Yukon University to investigate the feasibility of a varsity sports program. As we know, it was announced that the Canada Games was cancelled this week. One of the things I noted in the bid was that none of the new sports infrastructure was slated to be developed at the university.

Given the department's mandate to help with the varsity sports program, that might have been an opportunity for leverage. In that regard, can the minister give us an update on the work of the varsity sports program, and were the department and the university ever considered as part of the bid or involved in the process?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will start with a little bit of information on this particular item. It is important to note that we have two departments working closely on this. The department is working on this project in collaboration with the Department of Education, inside of government, and that is, of course, because of the deep connection between the Department of Education and the university, but there are existing funding agreements in place between the Department of Economic Development and the university as well.

The department is working on this project in collaboration with the Department of Education, Yukon University, Sport Yukon, and the Aboriginal Sport Circle. Sidekick Consulting was the contractor that was selected to provide a feasibility study and road map of how Yukon University might develop a varsity sports program, including the estimated costs for each stage. The study was expected to be complete by mid-October. The deputy minister, again, has just mentioned to me that this work is coming to conclusion right away.

I will give a little bit more background that I have had the opportunity to hear from the Minister of Education. The

departments of Education and of Economic Development were working together on this. I will expand just a bit more on this feasibility study. Part of the work will be: the measurable and intangible benefits of varsity athletics for small- to medium-sized Canadian universities and colleges, as well as for the host communities; the process by which the university would gain and maintain admission to regional athletic associations; staffing requirements and O&M costs; viability of most likely entry sports — and what would that be? As an example, it could be curling, it could be futsal, or it could be badminton — along with cost of infrastructure and supports.

As well, requirements including cost to establish an athletics department at the university and a process by which the university could scale up a varsity sports program — and participation in regional athletic associations — and unique factors, opportunities, and challenges and opportunities for Yukon First Nation participation or partnership in varsity programs.

That, I think, gives a little bit of background. That work is just concluding. What I can share is that the university — I think that part of that question was: Was the university part of the bid for Canada Games? That might also be speaking about infrastructure, as well, or potential infrastructure. What I can say is that, in the early stages, I know that looking at housing and the potential of building housing on the site of the university was definitely something that was a live conversation. In my role as Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, that was something that we were looking at — and supporting those conversations with the bid committee.

Concerning this mandate letter item, I would say that the early thoughts around varsity sports were to take into consideration a series of different options. One is: How do you feasibly undertake this understanding that some sports are more expensive to have in place than others? Then, looking at that study, what is the existing infrastructure that is in place and how do you use that? What I would share is that, of course, the university has always had a gymnasium and a fitness facility. The gymnasium has undergone a number of upgrades and is in great shape. I had an opportunity to play in a playoff game last year there, and it is as good as it has ever been, and you could host leagues there and you could likely host basketball or volleyball at a college or university level.

We know that when it comes to futsal — which is, of course, soccer but is done in a way where there are some adjustments to the game to be played indoors — it is something that there is a lot of interest in. Of course, we have existing facilities like the Canada Games facility and it has the proper revised turf and other infrastructure.

When we talk about curling, we have always had great facilities for that. Just to give you a snapshot, those are some of the things if you use an existing infrastructure.

Other things that I would just like to share with the Assembly is that part of the concept behind this was to enhance the interest in becoming a student at Yukon University. The element of sports programs can be a real catalyst to drive interest in the institution. One of the things, for instance, is that

there's a reciprocal tuition agreement between Alaska and the Yukon. If you are a student in Alaska, you can come and attend Yukon University, and you can do that in a way where that agreement makes it quite reasonable. There are a lot of amazing athletes in Alaska, and if they don't get a US scholarship to go and play NCAA Division 1 or Division 2 or even Division 3, sometimes they don't leave the state to go on to post-secondary, but they are really high quality athletes and they play a series of many sports. So, is there an opportunity to have those Alaska students become part of the student community at Yukon University? Is sport one of the things that can enhance their interest?

As well, some of the work that was undertaken here was to take a look at how many students are leaving. I think that a loan for just basketball last year — Tim Brady, a well-known community leader here, had mentioned to me that there are about 20, almost 25, young men and women leaving the Yukon to go off to colleges throughout western Canada and central Canada — but really wanting to stay here. Some of those individuals have grown up outside of Whitehorse and in some different communities in the Yukon. Of course, that's a really significant adjustment where they would like to have the support of their families here in the Yukon, they would like to be a student at Yukon University, and they still would like to pursue something they love. So, that's also something that they are really passionate about and they have spent a lot of time working on it.

The other opportunity that is really unique is: When you want to go and play, whether you're an amazing — as you know, the Yukon has an incredible number of cross-country skiers, whether they're from Old Crow or Whitehorse — if that's a sport that you have really been passionate about and you want to still compete at a national level or regional level, having the opportunity to attend at a university — but having a hybrid model is really unique. It's really difficult to be able to go and play varsity basketball or skiing while you're doing a trade, and that's the beauty — now you're in a position where you can actually — one of the many trades that are available at Yukon University and you're still playing varsity sports, which is not the norm. You know, being able to go and pursue a career — you know, whether it's in carpentry — and then being able to still play a sport is something really, really unique that they can also consider.

I'm looking forward to taking a look at the final work and study in the report. I know we have really good people at that table who have been part of this work. I think I would like to just — the one person I would like to point out and thank is Tracey Bilsky, because there is probably not a better person — in western Canada, at least — to undertake that type of work. I'm aware of that because some work was done on this about 10 years ago. And when it was done, I think there were some conversations between Yukon College at the time and the University of Northern British Columbia in Prince George. One of the comments made back then, when there was some exploratory work being done, was that, you know, the best person you could get in western Canada — you don't have to come to Prince George and have these conversations — to

speak with is Tracey Bilsky who, of course, was at Sport Yukon at the time.

So, a number of other folks and Ms. Bilsky have been a part of this, so I know that we have some very talented individuals providing us with the advice that's going to be needed for the university to inevitably make a decision on this undertaking.

Ms. Van Bibber: I thank the minister for that answer. The letter also directs the minister to create a mineral exploration fund to support junior mining companies that want to operate in the Yukon. Could the minister update the House on that work of the creation of the mineral exploration fund?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The department has done a preliminary review for a number of fund models since the mandate commitment to create a new mineral exploration fund was announced. The department tendered a contract for fund design in February 2022. Three proponents submitted bids by April 2022, but only one bid met the technical requirement at the time. That work was subsequently stopped on that undertaking.

The history of this item before the 2021 election and the previous mandate was that there was interest in this concept of a fund. There were unsolicited proposals on at least one occasion that came into the Department of Economic Development and Energy, Mines and Resources around this concept. There were also industry leaders in the mining sector who felt this could be a real tool that could be used to enhance exploration. The Government of Québec probably has the most substantial model, where they have used internal funds to help move forward exploration activities in something that is similar.

I would just touch on and say, previous to 2021 when we received an unsolicited proposal, we ended up, as a government, going out and getting a legal analysis and some due diligence done around the proposal. In the end, simply put, we were advised that the proposal had some challenges. At that point, we decided to continue on doing our own due diligence on it.

Going out and trying to see if there are organizations that want to partner with government or undertake this, one of the recurring themes that we continued to hear was that building a fund, at the time, with a bunch of institutional investors was not of big interest because there needs to be enough investment opportunity. It's another way of saying "deal flow". There has to be enough deal flow in order for the fund to really be active enough and then, of course, present the returns that are required to bring investors into that area of investment.

We as a government had also reached out to the British Columbia government, because the Association for Mineral Exploration, which hosts Roundup every year, had requested that the BC government put a large amount of money aside to do the exact same thing.

Our Department of Economic Development reached out to the BC government, and we were also seeing if we couldn't partner, because there are so many synergies between British Columbia and the Yukon when it comes to mining. Many companies have offices in Whitehorse, but they also have

offices in Vancouver — or they have offices in Watson Lake, but they have offices in Vancouver. There is a reason that, when you go to these bigger conferences like Roundup, that even the awards that are given out by the host organizations have criteria as to whether you are a company in BC or in the Yukon. In many cases, you still qualify. It seemed like a natural partnership, if we could have both governments come together and share the costs.

Inevitably, what happened was the BC government, in their budget going into the last election, did not follow through on the request from the AME in British Columbia. So that left us in a position where we still wanted to undertake some due diligence; we still wanted to make sure we were taking that advice from the Yukon mineral industry and seeing if there was an opportunity to support it.

Where we stand at this point is that we have come to the conclusion that, in going out to institutional investors, there is a lack of interest, but we started early conversations from the department with First Nation development corporations to see if there's an interest in having the potential of First Nation development corporations potentially invest in early exploration. They're early conversations. As those conversations mature, I will bring that back to the House, but we're looking at that potential model if there's interest and if it looks like it could work properly and if the returns are there.

That's our update on that particular mandate item.

Ms. Van Bibber: It's noted in the letter that the Innovation Commission will help attract technology start-ups and grow the Yukon's digital ecosystem. The government announced the commission last summer. The press release noted that it would also develop a five-year innovation strategy to expand opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

Could the minister provide an update on the work with the Innovation Commission and perhaps outline how it will be attracting new tech start-ups, as well as have any already opened? Can the minister provide a timeline of when the strategy will be up and running fully?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'll start off on this question, and then we can maybe continue on in their next opportunity to discuss this Economic Development supplementary budget.

So, the Government of Yukon is committed to building a thriving innovation economy by supporting technological growth and entrepreneurship. We have completed, again, the public engagement on a five-year strategy, and we worked with the Innovation Commission and innovation experts to seek their professional and technical input. The strategy is under development, and it will outline the Yukon's unique strengths and identify actions that will foster the conditions for Yukoners to be able to create, grow, and mature their business ideas in the Yukon. By supporting innovation across sectors, we are creating jobs and building a strong, diverse Yukon economy.

Just a little bit of some data we can share — so, over the past five years, the Yukon's tech sector has continued to grow and now represents approximately 3.7 percent of the Yukon's GDP in 2020.

The strategy will seek to grow and attract technology start-ups and expand Yukon's digital ecosystem. Our strong

innovation and entrepreneurial culture in the Yukon will continue providing momentum to expand and diversify our economy. The innovation strategy, again, will encourage and support entrepreneurship and innovation in the Yukon.

Just in closing for today, I would state that we are in a position now where — hopefully, we will talk about this a little bit more later because there are some really exceptional individuals who helped on this commission. The work is just coming to a conclusion. We believe that in the first quarter of the next calendar year, we will be ready to roll it out. We wanted to add some things to the innovation strategy, just based on contemplating the geopolitical changes in the world over the last 12 months. They have been timely events that we have now taken into consideration and integrated.

I would also like to thank the officials for coming in today. I look forward to the rest of the questions concerning the Economic Development supplementary budget.

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

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek South 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 from the Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following legislative return was tabled November 16, 2022:

35-1-69

Response to oral question from Mr. Kent re: teacher staffing — Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board adjudication of grievance (Streicker)

The following document was filed November 16, 2022:

35-1-112

Bill No. 20, *Animal Protection and Control Act*, letter re (dated November 16, 2022) from Mandy Johnson, Vice President, Yukon Dog Musers Association to Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Environment (Istchenko)