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Tuesday, March 14, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Spring Sitting

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

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

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Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
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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
Tuesday, March 14, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would ask my colleagues in the House today to help me welcome some very special guests here for a tribute this afternoon. I will start with our guest of honour, Janet Burns, also lovingly known as Tadüra. This is her Southern Tutchone name; it means “sandpiper”. It was given to her by her grandmother and is a reflection of her time at Marsh Lake beach with her grandparents. Joining her are a couple of her family members, Stephanie Stewart and Miranda Blanchard. From Elijah Smith Elementary School, we have: Jill Mason, Jill Potter and her son Charlie, Lesley Hogan, Diana Hawkins, Kari Unrau, Chris Shipley, Jim Snider, and Kerry Huff.

Thank you so much for being here today for this special tribute.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Excellence in Education Award

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 2022 recipient of the Excellence in Education Award. Every year, the Department of Education recognizes a person or group that has shown an outstanding and positive impact on public education. In December 2022, Janet Burns — as I said before, also lovingly known as “Tadüra”, her First Nation name — received the Excellence in Education Award.

I was honoured to be able to attend a surprise assembly at her school and present her with this special award. Students and staff were asked to assemble in the gymnasium, and Tadüra had no idea that the whole assembly was in her honour to celebrate her great contributions and dedication.

As the award winner, she received \$1,000 to advance her education and a very beautiful, framed Ted Harrison print. Tadüra is an elder and a Southern Tutchone language teacher at the Elijah Smith school. She was nominated for the incredible commitment and humble behind-the-scenes leadership that she demonstrates. Her nominator shared many stories during the nomination process and information about how she does so much more than just teach language. She goes above and

beyond to ensure the success and well-being of the school students, and to help her colleagues.

Tadüra teaches respect, compassion, language, and First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being. Her colleagues say that, through her guidance, everyone learns to be a better person and a better educator. She reminds us of the positive influence we can have on an individual’s whole life by demonstrating persistence, attention, and patience. She shows the importance of truly listening, demonstrating consistency and care, and taking time to connect with nature.

Tadüra has gained the respect of everyone in the school through her compassion, leadership, innovation, and commitment. She shows great innovation in using simple, yet very effective, methods.

In the time that I spent with Tadüra after presenting the award, the love that her students have for her and the love of her colleagues was so evident to me. She continued to be very surprised that she was honoured that day and, to me, her leadership is so special and really, truly, I think — I have known her parents my whole life — the late Charlie and Annie Burns. They were truly knowledgeable and giving, and Tadüra is absolutely a reflection of them. So, congratulations, Tadüra, and thank you for your dedication to education. Shaw nithän; you are an inspiration to all of us.

Applause

Ms. White: Today, the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party wish to add our voices to the celebration of the 2022 Excellence in Education Award winner. Language is an essential part of any culture, and it serves many important functions. From expressing thoughts to connecting with others, language plays a vital role in our lives. It brings people together, it builds communities, and it allows us to communicate with the world around us. We gain a better understanding of culture and the people within it through language.

Native language teachers within education spaces in the Yukon are critical. They connect our students to culture, to space, and to each other. So, with that in mind, we say congratulations to Elijah Smith Elementary School’s very own Janet Burns. She brings Southern Tutchone to life for her students, making learning a language fun by sharing her connection to her own culture with those around her.

Nominations are open for the 2023 Excellence in Education Award until Monday, April 3, 2023. This is an opportunity to nominate an educator who makes a difference, either through their actions, the effect they have on those around them, their innovation, or their leadership, like we’ve seen with Janet. Again, congratulations and thank you, Janet. You have changed the lives around you all for the better.

Applause

In recognition of Pi Day

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I rise on behalf of all members of this Assembly. For the past few weeks, I have been one of the many folks watching the night sky. Two of the brightest objects in our night sky, Venus and Jupiter, have been crossing each

other's paths — a pattern known as “conjunction”. I am fascinated by the intricate dances of our natural world and our human journey to try to understand them.

Today is March 14, or Pi Day, when the date 3.14 approximates the number pi. On Pi Day, we celebrate mathematics, scientists, geeky engineers, numeracy, philomaths, infinity, and explorers of the natural world.

In the third century B.C., Eratosthenes, a mathematician and chief librarian of the famous Library of Alexandria, made the first known and pretty accurate measurement of the size of planet Earth. Using astronomy and two locations north and south of each other, he extrapolated to get the circumference of the Earth and then, using his friend Archimedes' estimate of pi, he calculated the diameter of the planet. Well over 2,000 years ago, this geographer/astronomer/mathematician/librarian measured the Earth to within plus or minus a couple of percentage points.

It wasn't until the late 15th century A.D. when people started to believe the Earth was actually round. Not long after, Copernicus and Galileo started to think the Earth was not the centre of the universe, rather that the planets orbit around the sun in circles. Then Newton gave us the laws of motion and gravitation, and showed that the orbits of the planets are actually ellipses. Then along came Einstein, who explained the theory of relativity, which refines gravitation as we approach the speed of light — which also brings me back to pi, because, it turns out, Einstein was born on Pi Day 144 — or 12 squared years — ago today.

Physics, cartography, epidemiology, economics, music, the flight of sandpipers, or designing thrilling roller coasters in Canada's Wonderland — so much of what we understand about our world is based on the language of mathematics. As I speak to you today, the words I speak about math are actually compression waves travelling through the air, going from my voice across this Legislature.

So, Pi Day makes us wonder. To paraphrase Carl Sagan, it's good to pause to appreciate the vast cosmic arena of our universe, the aggregate of our knowledge and understanding on this pale blue dot we call home, and the humble role we share here in this Assembly.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, before I end my tribute, I would like to put a call out that if any grade school class would like to go on a field trip to measure the Earth, please let me know. I would be happy to go along with them.

Happy Pi Day; happy 144th birthday, Albert Einstein; and a big thank you to our Yukon math teachers. Go pi.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support business owners in the Yukon by committing to mark the King's coronation without the creation of any new paid holiday requirements.

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

THAT this House continues to support the people of Ukraine in their heroic defence of their homeland against the illegal and unjust Russian invasion.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to support the continued operation of the Second Opinion Society by:

(1) reversing its decision to cease funding this non-governmental organization's mental health services at the end of March 2023; and

(2) providing the Second Opinion Society with adequate funding for the 2023-24 fiscal year.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Carmacks bypass project and north Klondike Highway improvements

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to highlight two major projects happening north of Whitehorse — namely, the Carmacks bypass project and the improvements on the north Klondike Highway. They are both large scale upgrades to our road system that will make our roadways safer while also benefiting industry.

I would like to touch on the economic benefits of these projects. The Carmacks bypass is part of the larger Yukon Resource Gateway program. The Carmacks bypass project includes a new road and bridge and it connects the north Klondike Highway south of Carmacks to the existing Freegold Road. The key part of all Gateway projects is ensuring that we have a project agreement with each impacted Yukon First Nation. These project agreements represent a road map for the project and a plan for how we get from start to finish together.

In the case of the Carmacks bypass, these include opportunities for subcontracting to local businesses and jobs for citizens of the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. This is already creating positive economic impacts for the community.

Further north, we are upgrading the north Klondike Highway. More than 200 kilometres between Carmacks and the Dempster Highway intersection will eventually be completely rebuilt. These improvements will reduce the restrictions on seasonal weight limits, allowing truck drivers to carry heavier trailers. This has significant impacts for Yukoners and Yukon businesses. Companies will require fewer trips, resulting in less money and time spent on fuel and travel, with increased access to goods and services for consumers. We know that this is

critical for many businesses during the spring load-restriction season.

Mr. Speaker, both projects keep people safe while creating economic benefits. The Carmacks bypass will, as the name suggests, allow heavy trucks to bypass the community. This work will allow parents to feel safer when their children play outside or ride their bikes throughout the community. On the north Klondike, we are building a better, more enduring road service. This will mean fewer cracks and fewer potholes. We are also improving sight lines along the road to reduce the chances of collision.

I would like to share what is next for these projects. Mr. Speaker, on the Carmacks bypass, more than 80 percent of roadwork is complete. The remaining work on the bridge and road is scheduled to be substantially completed this summer, and we anticipate the full project to be completed in early 2024. This gives us time to finish any remaining jobs on that project. Meanwhile, the north Klondike Highway has a longer timeline as it is happening in stages. With more than 200 kilometres of upgrades, the work will continue over the next seven years. Yukoners can expect to see our crews working hard again this summer.

Mr. Hassard: It is always great when the Yukon highways infrastructure gets mentioned here in the Legislative Assembly, and it goes without saying that highways and roads are an important part of connecting rural Yukon to Whitehorse and the rest of Canada. However, while we appreciate highlighting work on the Carmacks bypass and the upgrades to the north Klondike Highway, we do have some concerns.

So, can the minister tell us exactly what work will be done on the north Klondike Highway this year? This year's budget indicates the amount of money spent on work to the north Klondike Highway for the 2023-24 year has gone down by \$10 million from what was projected last year. Heading into the construction season, there were two jobs planned for the north Klondike, but now there is only one going forward. So, can the minister tell us why one was dropped and where the money is going that was originally allocated to that project?

Earlier this Sitting in Committee of the Whole, the minister said he looked forward to having municipal input into project agreements with First Nations. So, I certainly look forward to what the Village of Carmacks' input will be, in accordance with the agreement pertaining to the Carmacks bypass.

Can the minister confirm when other Yukon Resource Gateway projects will be constructed? I would like to remind the government that federal funding was first announced for Resource Gateway back in 2017, and since it is now 2023 and only a fraction of that work has actually been done, what should be concerning next to Yukoners is what is not in the capital budget for this year when it comes to highway improvements.

First off, we see one new highway project for the entire Yukon. Mr. Speaker, many of our highways need safety upgrades and one project just won't cut it. I also didn't see any major roadwork or upgrades in the budget to the Campbell or Alaska highways. According to a briefing note from the spring of 2022, bridge replacement was set for last year on the

Nahanni Range Road, but a fall 2022 briefing note indicates that work is now planned for 2023, and spring 2022 briefing notes indicate that two sections of the Campbell Highway were also slated for construction in 2023, and design and planning for upgrades to the Silver Trail were to start in next year's budget. However, it appears that this year's budget contains none of this work.

I know that the contractors are ready to tackle major highway projects in the territory, and it is unfortunate that there is nothing for them to bid on. So, I hope that the minister can provide some details on the status of the projects that I have highlighted here in my response.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you to the minister for the update on these projects. We are glad to hear that they are moving ahead and that the Yukon's highway infrastructure is improving. Anyone who has driven the north Klondike over the last few years knows it is in need of repair.

I am heartened to hear that road safety is top of mind for the minister. What I heard is that these improvements are to allow bigger, heavier trucks and straighter, flatter roads, which also allow for higher speeds. I do worry about what that means for travellers and Yukoners in smaller vehicles on the road. Will there be improvements for them? Will the shoulders be improved? Will lanes be widened to give more space for large trucks? What other considerations and improvements are being made to increase safety, beyond making it easier to drive quickly?

I also wanted to talk about the construction phase. A key part of highway projects is ensuring that people can still get where they are going safely while the construction is occurring. Unfortunately, over the years of the north Klondike Highway reconstruction project, I have heard from people that this is not always the case. I personally have experienced some pretty dodgy drives through the construction zones on this highway. I have heard stories of people following pilot cars through deep mud and rocks, and their vehicles being stuck or damaged as a result, or worse, arriving at a construction zone with no pilot vehicle and having to find their own way through a poorly marked construction zone. People have been stuck in their vehicles with no cell service available to get help.

So, my question to the minister is: What is he doing to ensure the safety of Yukoners and tourists while these construction projects take place?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Yukon is leading the country in economic growth. We are working to make sure that all Yukoners benefit from our territory's economic growth. Both the Carmacks bypass project and improvements on the north Klondike Highway are two examples of work underway that is moving the territory forward. These two projects are doing this by working in partnership with First Nations to upgrade resource infrastructure while providing benefits to Yukon communities.

In the months ahead, for the north Klondike Highway upgrades, I am excited to report that we will finish the work on the Crooked Creek bridge and the Moose Creek bridge. We will

also rehabilitate the bridge at McCabe Creek and continue to improve the surface of the highway.

In January 2023, we tendered the next section of the highway for reconstruction, which falls between Stewart Crossing and Dawson City at kilometre 642 to kilometre 652. In 2022-23, we completed 25 kilometres of road construction and 19 kilometres of bituminous surface treatment, which is, of course, a protective surface on the roads.

We have installed digital message signs to help make drivers aware of construction zones, cleared vegetation in the corridor, and improved a number of culverts. Mr. Speaker, these projects are helping to prepare the Yukon for the future — a future where Yukon First Nations are active partners and benefit from projects in their traditional territories and where industry continues to thrive. It is a future where Yukoners and travellers to our beautiful territory can reach their destinations more reliably.

I know that upgrades can cause delay for enthusiastic summer travellers eager to get where they are going. I understand the frustration, but this work is vital and is about ensuring long-term safety for Yukoners and infrastructure resiliency in the face of a changing climate. I ask drivers to have patience and to recognize that crews are working hard and doing their best to move the work along as quickly as possible. I have certainly heard from the Member for Whitehorse Centre about ensuring that the work zones are dealt with and administered in a safe manner.

Mr. Speaker, it is key to remember that Gateway projects also provide economic opportunity, employment, and training opportunities for Yukon First Nations and communities. For example, in the case of the Carmacks bypass, as part of the contract's commitments, there are dedicated Yukon First Nation labour hours for environmental monitoring, employment, and training, as well as general subcontracting hours. The First Nation participation plan for the contract includes a total of 96,000 labour hours to Yukon First Nations, which makes up 60 percent of the total wages paid over the course of the entire project. This is the equivalent of approximately 15 full-time positions for Yukon First Nation citizens to support the construction of this project.

Part of the contract also commits to subcontracting camp services to the Carmacks Development Corporation. In addition to labour hour benefits, this project is benefiting the community by providing scholarship funding, training funding, as well as a liaison position for Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. I am proud of the work being done and the positive economic impacts coming from this work.

I look forward to seeing projects happen on the north Klondike Highway this upcoming construction season and to seeing our highway systems continue to be modernized, improved, and expanded.

Briefly, Mr. Speaker, if I have a bit of time, I just note that I certainly look forward to general debate on the Highways and Public Works budget, but the complete transportation budget for Highways and Public Works has gone from — 2021-22 — \$104,912,000 — to an estimate now of \$154,000,000, which became \$191,000,000 with the addition of the Nisutlin Bay

bridge — and now, for this year, approximately \$162,000,000 — so, still a great deal of capital infrastructure investment on transportation.

Speaker: Order, please.

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Capital plan for schools

Mr. Kent: So, the 2023-24 budget revealed that the replacement of the École Whitehorse Elementary School will be delayed and will not be completed until 2028 at the earliest. Yesterday, in response to my question, the Minister of Education said this — and I will quote: “We have been engaged with the project advisory committee, working closely with them to facilitate collaboration and the exchange of ideas between key partners, stakeholders, and the Government of Yukon. This group meets regularly. The project timelines will be determined through further work as we undertake those discussions.”

So, I would like to ask for some clarity from the minister: Was it the project advisory committee that requested that the project be delayed, or was that decision made by Yukon government unilaterally?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to stand and talk about the investments that our government is making in school infrastructure. I think what is really important to note is that the replacement of the École Whitehorse Elementary School is in our five-year capital plan. It is a priority for our government, one that we committed to — replacing schools. We committed to replacing schools in our platform during the last election, and we are making good on that promise to Yukoners.

Mr. Speaker, École Whitehorse Elementary School has been identified for replacement with a new, modern facility that will meet the needs of the community for years to come. The current facility is not able to meet the current and future programming that the community needs, including access to spaces for innovation and inclusive and experiential learning.

We do have a project advisory committee in place to facilitate collaboration and the exchange of ideas between key partners, stakeholders, and the Government of Yukon. This group is tasked with a very important job to help plan this new infrastructure build. Again, what's important to note, Mr. Speaker, is that this is a priority, it's in our five-year capital plan, and we are moving ahead on this project.

Mr. Kent: So, my question for the minister was: What role did the project advisory committee play in the delays to the project?

So, this two-year delay in the construction of the project means that the earliest that students will be able to move from the current location to the new school will be the 2028-29 school year. That means that the existing school would need to last for at least five more years. Yesterday, the Minister of Highways and Public Works said that the current school needs significant seismic upgrades. It's clear that, despite beginning construction of a replacement, the current school will require some work. So, what is the Yukon government's plan for

seismic upgrades to ensure that the current EWES will remain a safe learning environment for at least the next five years?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I can assure Yukoners and the House that it's the priority of the Yukon government, the Department of Highways and Public Works, and the Department of Education that all schools meet seismic tolerances. I reported on that in various prior sessions, and we can provide those reports, which have been previously provided on that topic.

The Department of Highways and Public Works creates and maintains the infrastructure that children need to learn and grow. Highways and Public Works ensures that school buildings and their systems are always up and running for teachers and students. The spaces in which children learn need to be safe, comfortable, and functional, and we make it a priority to ensure that schools deliver on this expectation.

The department also ensures that schools are welcoming and a true reflection of our communities. The physical space of a classroom and a school is an important element in creating a positive learning environment. Mr. Speaker, the department maintains 32 schools across the Yukon and, as we have heard, work is underway for the construction of a new school in Whistle Bend — and that is well along the way — and the design for the replacement of another in Burwash Landing, which will make good on a promise — approximately 100 years ago. We take the safety of all Yukon schools very seriously.

Mr. Kent: I will look forward to hearing what the role of the project advisory committee was in the construction delays to EWES, and I thank the Minister of Highways and Public Works. I will look forward to hearing back from him what significant seismic upgrades are required for the existing school.

Now that a new project timeline has been determined and construction of the new school has been delayed for two more years, it is clear that students won't be moving to that new school anytime soon. Over the past several years, the EWES school council has expressed interest in several different improvements to the current school, so my question is: Will the Minister of Education and the Minister of Highways and Public Works agree to personally meet with the school council to discuss the needs of the current school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I am very excited to be working on this project to replace École Whitehorse Elementary School and to continue working with the school community. I am absolutely committed to working closely with the school council, and they are actually part of the project advisory committee as well. I do have a meeting scheduled with the school council in the coming weeks to discuss their school needs and will continue to work hard to ensure that our learning environments meet the needs of our students.

Again, our government is committed to the commitments that we made to invest in our youngest Yukoners and in infrastructure and the building of new schools. We also will be talking this week about some important work that will be going on around longer term planning — well, short-term, mid-term, and longer term planning — on the capital needs for Whitehorse-based schools. I am excited about that project. We will be talking about that in the days to come.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be working with Yukoners on important investments in our future.

Question re: Consultation on school replacement

Mr. Dixon: Yesterday, the Minister of Education suggested that she has not yet consulted with several affected stakeholders about the location of the replacement for École Whitehorse Elementary School. Here's what she said: "... we will, of course, be working with all of our partners and talking to folks who are impacted — the First Nation School Board being one and Softball Yukon being another."

My question for the minister is simple: Why is she only consulting with these stakeholders after the decision to locate the school has been made? Why did the Government of Yukon not consult any of these stakeholders about the location of the school before they chose it?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, our government is investing in infrastructure for the future needs of the Yukon. We have a growing population. It is very important that infrastructure needs are met. I am happy that the Yukon Party is now interested in infrastructure of schools. They certainly didn't seem to be very interested in investing in this type of infrastructure when they were in government. We have made this a priority for our government to invest in infrastructure of schools.

In terms of our work with stakeholders, I think that — the leader of the opposition has talked about a couple of the folks I spoke about yesterday in Question Period. There are a lot of partners that we will be working with, including Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and a number of other partners.

Again, there are a couple of large educational reserves that we have access to. One of them — being the largest — is the Takhini educational reserve. The other one is located in Riverdale. In terms of why this location was chosen, I will continue to build on my answer as we go forward.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister listing stakeholders and partners, but my question was about consultation. Why was there no consultation with those stakeholders or partners prior to the location being determined by the government?

Now, we know that the minister plans to consult these stakeholders going forward — that's great — but one aspect we heard about from several people in the neighbourhood is the traffic. Range Road is already very busy and getting busier with significant new residential complexes recently developed. Has the Government of Yukon done any work with the City of Whitehorse to study the impact of a new, approximately 500 student school on an already congested Range Road?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We have a couple of large educational reserves that we have to work with. The Takhini educational land reserve is a central location that can accommodate the very popular French immersion students from around Whitehorse right now. I will remind the members opposite that most of the students who attend the École Whitehorse Elementary School are bused to the downtown core of Whitehorse, where the school is currently located.

The Department of Education will continue to work with stakeholders. It is really important that we are working to ensure that our learning environments meet the needs of our educational programs and provide modern learning environments that can foster innovation, inclusivity, and experiential learning.

We know that the Takhini educational reserve is definitely a good location that gives access to the greenspace that is desired for modern learning. Again, we are in the planning stages. A lot of matters need to be worked through, and we will continue to work with all of our partners, including the City of Whitehorse.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's commitment to consult with these stakeholders going forward, but my question has been, over and over again: Why weren't they consulted about the location before the decision was made? In particular, the construction of a replacement for the largest elementary school in the Yukon directly in the backyard of another much smaller school will clearly be disruptive.

Has the minister had any consultation at all with the Takhini school community or the Yukon First Nation School Board, which now runs the school, about the impact of locating the replacement of École Whitehorse Elementary in their backyard?

Hon. Ms. McLean: A lot of partners in this important new infrastructure build were — the early stages of planning. Yes, of course, I have discussed the desire to build this school — the new École Whitehorse Elementary School — on the same reserve as the now First Nation-run Takhini school, which is run by the First Nation trustees of the First Nation School Board. I certainly have had discussions with them and will continue to have discussions with the trustees around capital needs of the new First Nation School Board and the impacts that may occur as a result of the building of this new, modern learning facility on the Takhini educational reserve.

I take note, of course, that the Official Opposition is trying to create a narrative here — I have heard a few things today — that this project is somehow delayed and that there has been no consultation. I don't accept that. It's in the five-year capital plan. We are working with our partners and we will continue to do that.

Question re: Mining sector greenhouse gas emissions

Ms. Tredger: Yesterday, I asked the minister about emissions targets for mining companies. The first shocking thing he said was that targets for mining emissions will start in 2035.

Aside from the hypocrisy of a special extended date for mining companies, the minister has lost sight of the fact that we are in a climate emergency. The year 2035 is 12 years away, but the fires and floods are already here. If we do nothing, 12 more years of climate change will devastate our home. We do not have time. According to the United Nations, global emissions must decline 43 percent by 2030, but this government seems to think that they know better than all the experts and can pick whatever date is convenient for them.

Why is the minister ignoring the recommendations of scientists in the United Nations and delaying the targets for mining emissions reductions to 2035?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There seems to be some clear misunderstanding, Mr. Speaker. It's not "to 2035"; it's "by 2035." So, the target that we're setting for mining here in the territory is a 45 percent reduction by 2035.

Now, the whole target, really, is 2050 — when we get to net zero emissions, and that's true for mining and that's true for all aspects of the Yukon. But we need an interim target because, if you just set it that far away, what we have seen is that governments — it's not necessarily industry, but governments — don't act. So, that's why we set an intermediate target. This is stronger than the Canadian target. This is a very strong target. I will check across the country, but this is actually a very strong target. It's a 45 percent reduction by 2035.

Ms. Tredger: I think the minister meant that to be reassuring, but it certainly wasn't for me. The second shocking thing we heard yesterday was that, even once this government sets its targets for mining emissions reductions, they have no plans to enforce them. To quote the minister: "What I think we should work with are more carrots..." We have some serious doubts about whether carrots, or incentives, are going to work, given that there are mining companies that regularly violate the terms of their licences even when threatened with fines and shutdowns. I don't know why the minister thinks that it's going to be magically different for emissions.

But fine, let's talk about these carrots, or incentives, that the government is planning to provide. Will they be tied to performance measures? Are mining companies going to have to meet any targets in order to receive these incentives? Or are they just an excuse to hand public money to mining companies with no strings attached?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, over the last couple of days, I have been concerned with the questions from the NDP. I find them disrespectful toward the mining industry — period.

Now, if I looked through *Our Clean Future* — and I did yesterday after this question arose about targets. We have just had the Climate Leadership Council working with us to try to get stronger targets for the whole of the Yukon. Nowhere in *Our Clean Future* — nowhere under those suggestions from the Climate Leadership Council — was there an expectation that a specific company had a target that they were going to be penalized for if they didn't meet it. Rather, we, as a government — the Yukon — has a responsibility, and that is what we are doing across the whole of the Yukon, including with mining intensity targets. We will work with the industry and we will help to get this transition, and I say again to the members opposite — well, to the NDP — that when I have sat down and talked with the mining industry, they talk to me about how we will work to get this transition because they, too, believe that we are transitioning off of fossil fuels.

Ms. Tredger: So, yesterday was full of alarming yet not surprising, revelations about this government's plans for reducing emissions — or, rather, their lack of a plan. When

talking with the media, the minister said — and I quote: “... with the industry, I’m not saying it’s their individual responsibility; I am saying it is ours...” And he actually said it even more succinctly just now. Really? The minister thinks that the mining companies who benefit from permanently extracting minerals from our territory and making huge profits from our natural resources have no individual obligation to not destroy the planet in the process? Does the minister stand by — still stand by — his statement that mining companies have no individual responsibility to reduce their emissions?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I am saying is that we have a collective responsibility, and we will work with the mining industry, we will work with the forestry industry, we will work with the agriculture industry, and we will work with the tourism industry. We will work with all industries here in the Yukon to make this transition. Is it easy? No. Is it important? Absolutely.

In fact, what I also said yesterday to the media is that it is critically important that the mining industry works to get off of fossil fuels. It is also a necessary part of the transition to get off of fossil fuels. For example, we have critical minerals here in the Yukon and across Canada that are needed for this energy transition — like copper, like zinc. We need these minerals and so we are going to need mining. I hope that the NDP understands that we need mining in order to make this transition. It is an important transition to make, and I am thankful that we are working with a progressive mining industry here to help us in that transition.

Question re: Recreation infrastructure

Mr. Hassard: So, in 2020, the Department of Community Services retained an engineering company to explore conceptual layouts, capital costs, and O&M costs for a sports complex on behalf of Softball Yukon. That report provided the basis for the March 2021 Liberal platform commitment that was made by the now Premier. The Liberal news release during the election said that a Liberal government would — and I will quote: “... develop a flexible, modern fieldhouse complex for athletics...”

Can the Minister of Community Services provide an update on the work that has been done on this commitment?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Really, what we are talking about this afternoon is investment in recreational infrastructure across the territory. It is something that we take very, very seriously. We are proceeding with a recreational facility in Dawson City, which is something that the opposition promised for many, many years and never delivered on. It led the people of the Klondike astray, I would argue.

We also just recently, this weekend — we were out in Carmacks and saw the launch of a wonderful skating rink. I saw the Leader of the Official Opposition there. I saw the Leader of the Third Party there. Of course, we had a good contingent, too. All of us could see the joy on the faces of the people of Carmacks at finally having a rink, which had been asked for, for more than a decade, and we were happy to deliver on that promise for the people of Carmacks.

Our government believes in the importance of sport to keep young people active and to build strong communities. We

recognize Yukon’s immense potential and intend to enhance our ability to host multi-sport games in the future. We want to increase our capacity to host games and to actually improve our recreation throughout the territory. We’re going to continue to do that, and I look forward to future questions from the member opposite.

Mr. Hassard: What I am actually talking about is a commitment from this Liberal government. Here’s what the now Premier said in March 2021 — and I quote: “This facility would add much-needed sporting space and also encourage more public access to various recreational options year-round. Overall, this contributes to a healthier and more competitive Yukon.”

Despite this clear commitment from the now Premier, it seems that almost nothing has happened. There’s nothing in the budget, there’s nothing in the five-year capital plan, and when we asked last week, all the minister could tell us is that he toured a facility in PEI.

So, has the minister actually done any work at all on implementing this promise that the Premier made to the sports community here in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will take our record on creating recreational infrastructure in the territory over their record on creating recreational infrastructure in the territory any day of the week. I will take our record over theirs any day of the week.

The member opposite is absolutely correct. When I was in PEI, I actually toured the facility to see what was involved in building an indoor fieldhouse like that. As I said last week — I know that the member opposite heard my answer, because he just referenced it — the climate in PEI is vastly different from what it is here, as it is in Red Deer, which was the model that we were looking at there. We went down and explored the Red Deer model. We looked at and when we came back here, we realized that our snowfall, which is changing — we have much more snow here and our temperature variations are much greater — such a fieldhouse is not really a good fit for here in the territory.

But we were working on the Canada Games commitment and we saw how that played out. We are still looking at improving our recreational infrastructure in the territory, and we are going to continue on that road because we know how important recreation is to the people of the territory. We are going to continue to invest in our communities, as we have for the last seven years.

Mr. Hassard: So, in that news release, the Liberals made three very clear commitments: a new fieldhouse in Whitehorse; a varsity sports program for the Yukon University; and, of course, hosting the 2027 Canada Games. So far, it seems like the current minister has gone 0 for 3 on implementing these promises that the Premier made.

Can the Premier tell us if he has confidence in the minister’s ability to avoid striking out on all three promises that he, as Premier, made in the last election?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, complete confidence in the due diligence that was done concerning the fieldhouse.

There are a couple of other items that were touched on that I wouldn’t have time to expand on right now, but what I can say

about the fieldhouse is that Softball Yukon came to our government and wanted us to look at building this piece of infrastructure in conjunction with them. The first thing I will commit to is doing the proper due diligence to ensure that we are using taxpayers' money in the proper way.

We had sent teams out to Saskatchewan and, I believe, Red Deer and looked at the PEI model. The three biggest challenges with the fieldhouse were: First, the membrane that is used over the fieldhouse is not something that is going to stand up to potential fire risk, especially wildfire risk, as we see climate change; second, when you are transitioning from one sport to another, the cost is really prohibitive, and I think it was over \$5,000 every time you change from soccer to baseball; and third, it was very difficult to get insurance for this type of fieldhouse. So, we went back to Sport Yukon and, in those conversations, it seemed like the interest had waned because there was new leadership at Softball Yukon. We want to make sure that we are investing in infrastructure that's going to last, that can be insured, and that can play a great role.

So, if the opposition has more to add, my ears are open, but other than that — I think we did the proper due diligence and made sure that we can look at other types of infrastructure, as the minister was talking about, and that is what we will do.

Question re: Municipal recycling program

Mr. Istchenko: So, a press release dated February 27, 2023 from Raven Recycling announced that the territory's primary recycling processor will no longer receive materials through its public drop-off as of the end of 2023. The press release noted that Raven Recycling is stepping aside so that the government-run, city-wide collection program can be established. So, yesterday, CBC Yukon reported that the City of Whitehorse and the Yukon government are looking at developing a municipal blue bin program.

So, can the Minister of Community Services tell us how much this anticipated government-run blue bin program will cost? Who will be paying for it? Will it be the Government of Yukon, the City of Whitehorse, or the individual citizens through fees?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have reached out to Raven Recycling about their announced plans to close their public drop-off of non-recyclable items by the end of 2023. I have actually had two meetings with Raven Recycling since the announcement was made just at the beginning of this session of the Legislative Assembly. I have also met with the City of Whitehorse on this issue.

I have expressed my concern with any gap in service that would set us backwards in our effort to divert waste and look forward to working together to find solutions. The board of Raven Recycling has worked on recycling since 1989. They have built an incredible reputation in the community, and they have actually done a great job doing recycling. We are one of the few jurisdictions in the country to have a volunteer-run institution handling the recycling. It is normally held and done by municipalities. Waste is a municipal responsibility. So, I am working with the City of Whitehorse to make sure that we understand what is involved in getting recycling in a municipal

realm done, and we are working together with the City of Whitehorse and Raven Recycling to find solutions to take the city into the modern waste management facilities.

Mr. Istchenko: So, in the summer of 2016, the City of Whitehorse considered the development of a municipal blue bin program. CBC Yukon reported on July 25, 2016, that the cost of the curbside recycling program would be approximately \$1.2 million and would result in a fee of \$17 per month per household to Whitehorse citizens. Ultimately, the proposal did not proceed. So, does the minister have any updated projection of the cost — the stuff that I asked him in the first question — and how will this cost be shared between the city and the government?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: With all due respect to the member opposite, we don't rely on the media for our cost estimates for services in this government. What we do is our due diligence. We will work with the City of Whitehorse and with Raven Recycling. We have struck a committee now. We are working with Raven Recycling to make sure that we start to understand what is involved in their recycling operations. The City of Whitehorse is part of that, as are we at Community Services, and we are going to work with them to find out and assess what is actually involved in recycling in the territory. We're bringing in extended producer responsibility here in the territory. This is part of that whole thing. It should play into that, so the way we handle our recycling will certainly make that easier and that is what Raven Recycling has also told us about.

So, we are committed to working with local recycling processors and the City of Whitehorse over the next 10 months to assist in finding a sustainable recycling service for Whitehorse residents. We are taking steps together to do that, and I look forward to seeing what the results are, because I think it will be good for the City of Whitehorse and good for the people of the territory. That is really important to us — to make sure that we're doing our waste management in the territory much better, and that is what our goal is.

Mr. Istchenko: So, according to Raven Recycling's release, they will end their public collection service by the end of this year. Yesterday, CBC reported that the City of Whitehorse's associate manager of solid waste is working with the Government of Yukon on the possibility of a municipal blue bin program. That means that some system will need to be in place as of January 1 — like the minister said, 10 months away.

Can the minister give us an updated timeline on the development of this municipal blue bin program, and who will be paying for it?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is again putting suspect information to the public discourse, and I really would urge him not to do that.

I did say that we are working together with the City of Whitehorse and Raven Recycling to come up with a solution to the issue of curbside recycling in the territory. This is not just about funding; rather, the board is wanting to shift responsibility for collection services away from the not-for-profit and toward the municipality. It is the municipality's responsibility — garbage and recycling are the municipality's responsibility in the territory — and that is where this service

lies. We are doing this in anticipation of the extended producer responsibility program and our growing population in the territory. As the members opposite know, we have incredible growth and an incredible economy, and this is putting pressure on a lot of people, including the Raven Recycling institution.

So, what we have heard from Raven Recycling is that these pressures have now outpaced the capacity of the small, volunteer-run organization to keep up. They are asking the City of Whitehorse to step into this realm.

We, at the Yukon government, are working with our municipalities across the territory. Dawson is going to be moving into the recycling realm in the next couple of months, so we are going to now help Whitehorse to do the exact same thing.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Ms. Tredger: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, March 15, 2023. They are Motion No. 577, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre, and Motion No. 575, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Mr. Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, March 15, 2023. It is Motion No. 609, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 27: *Community Services Statute Law Amendment Act (2023)* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 27, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Mostyn.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I move that Bill No. 27, entitled *Community Services Statute Law Amendment Act (2023)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 27, entitled *Community Services Statute Law Amendment Act (2023)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is my privilege and honour to introduce Bill No. 27, the *Community Services Statute Law Amendment Act (2023)*.

This bill will amend the *Consumers Protection Act*, the *Insurance Act*, and the *Private Investigators and Security Guards Act*. Community Services administers these statutes by issuing licences, supervising compliance, and responding to complaints. The amendments will modernize licensing requirements and reduce red tape for businesses and individuals

working in collections, insurance, and security services. There is a tangible benefit that will flow from this new statute.

Bill No. 27 supports our government's priority to make it easier for people and businesses to get things done when interacting with their government.

We are committed to ensuring that Yukoners have reliable access to services provided by regulated businesses and professions. I would like to take a few moments to outline our key objectives for the bill. Professional licensing and registration involve reviewing required disclosures to assess an applicant's integrity, financial solvency, and competence to conduct a regulated activity.

This protects the public by ensuring that regulated activities are done only by those who are determined to be suitable in accordance with legislated criteria. The amendments will remove outdated licensing restrictions and support our move to online licensing. More efficient licensing will reduce red tape and enable greater focus on compliance with legislation. I appreciate members' interest in this important bill and look forward to responding to questions after I provide some details.

The amendments will affect 273 businesses and 3,140 individuals currently licensed under the statutes in collections, insurance, and security services. With this bill, all three statutes will be amended to replace affidavits and sworn statements with declarations that can be made online and authorize the minister or regulator to approve forms instead of prescribing them in regulations. The bill also has amendments specific to each statute, which I will briefly describe.

Under the *Consumers Protection Act*, businesses and individuals must not act as collection agents unless they are registered. Collection agents are in the business of recovering unpaid debts on behalf of lenders and creditors. Currently, about 84 collection agencies and 690 individual agents are licensed under the regulations. Amendments to the *Consumers Protection Act* will change the deadline to submit audited financial statements to June 30 to align with the registration renewal date for collection agencies. They will enable the regulations to prescribe registration procedures and classes of collection agents, as well as transition from licensing to a registration scheme in accordance with the act. They also validate the regulations and pass licensing decisions, since the act authorizes registration.

Under the *Insurance Act*, insurance companies, exchanges, and professionals who conduct business in the Yukon must be licensed. Insurance professionals are classified as agents, brokers, special brokers, salespeople, and adjusters. Currently, about 172 insurers, one exchange, and 2,320 professionals are licensed under the *Insurance Act*. Amendments to the *Insurance Act* will remove requirements to collect unnecessary personal information to align with privacy legislation and enhance information security, enable regulations to prescribe licence expiry dates for all insurance professionals, and adopt gender-neutral language since legislation is for everyone.

Under the *Private Investigators and Security Guards Act*, businesses and individuals must be licensed to work as private investigators, security guards, security consultants, or burglar

alarm agents. Currently, about 17 private investigator or security agencies and 130 individual agents are licensed in the Yukon. Amendments to the *Private Investigators and Security Guards Act* will: require individuals to submit a criminal record check instead of an affidavit of convictions and fingerprints; remove a citizenship and residency requirement for agencies and their directors or partners since it is outdated and requires red tape; and more effectively deter non-compliance with the increase of an administrative penalty from \$100 to no more than \$5,000.

Our comprehensive approach to cutting red tape includes modernizing legislation and regulatory systems. In 2021, Community Services initiated development of an online licensing and registration system. The online system is now available for those in security services, real estate, and health professionals licensed by Community Services. On May 1, it will launch for collection agencies, collection agents, and insurance companies. On July 1, the final stage will launch for insurance professionals.

Together, the legislative amendments and online system will make licensing more accessible and efficient and will enhance the security of personal information. It will, in fact, cut red tape.

Stakeholders have expressed support for online licensing that the legislation amendments will facilitate. The bill will be supplemented by amendments to regulations that update licensing and registration procedures and remove the prescribed forms, since forms will be approved by the minister or regulator. The act amendments would come into force once the related regulation amendments and updated forms are completed by the summer of 2023.

I thank the officials from the departments of Justice and Community Services for their work in preparing the bill and for delivering the new online system for professional licensing. I will now sit down and wait for responses from members opposite.

Mr. Dixon: I am pleased to rise to speak at second reading to Bill No. 27, *Community Services Statute Law Amendment Act (2023)*. As the minister has explained, there is a series of small changes made to three different acts, which largely amount to housekeeping. From our perspective, there are some changes to some dates, some changes to some forms, and the enabling of regulations that will facilitate easier use for those affected by these pieces of legislation.

We would like to understand a little bit more in Committee about some of the consultation and what feedback the minister received from affected stakeholders about these changes. But largely, we think that it is a positive step forward in making these largely administrative changes to support those who are affected by these pieces of legislation.

So, at this stage, we are generally supportive of this bill and look forward to learning a little bit more in Committee but don't have much more to add to the conversation about this bill at second reading.

Ms. White: So, just briefly, in speaking to Bill No. 27, I appreciate the briefing that we received from the officials. I think there are things to note, including the fact that this bill has gender-neutral language within it, which changes the legislation, which I think is important. We will just have some questions as we go through as it is technical, but I am looking forward to that debate in Committee of the Whole.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really do appreciate the support for this piece of legislation from my colleagues opposite, and I look forward to discussion in the House. The aim of the bill is to make some really substantive improvements and make it easier for businesses in the territory to operate — cutting red tape, which is very important. I just want to make note of that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the debate.

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. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 27 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

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 207: *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — continued

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Of course, seeing as it is Pi Day, everybody is very excited today; I know that. I will just do two things while I stand, and then I will sit down to respond to more questions.

The first one is to welcome back our guests from the department who are here to assist: Deputy Minister Paul McConnell and Assistant Deputy Minister Heather Mills from our Sustainable Resources division.

The second one is that I need to correct something that I said yesterday during Committee of the Whole. I said that the incentive for harvesters was \$100 a cubic metre; it is actually \$10 a cubic metre — my apologies. I just want to correct the record.

I will work to get the other information that we discussed during Committee of the Whole, and I will find a chance to — like, maybe when I rise on the supplementary budget — provide that information for colleagues across the way.

I am looking forward to more discussion today on the supplementary budget for Energy, Mines and Resources.

Ms. White: Yesterday when we left off, I was asking about the deferral of the \$385,000 for elk fencing, and the minister answered that, but what I do want to know is: How does the department reach out to allow farmers to know that

there is this new funding — that there are additional funds available and that there is a program available? So, how does the department reach out to those who are affected by the elk with agricultural land?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There are a few ways in which we connect with the farmers in the area. The first way is that we work with the Yukon Agricultural Association. They sit on our working group. The executive director is part of the team, so they have an information network back out. We have a departmental agriculture newsletter that I think many farmers subscribe to, and then — we have not done it every time, but now and then — for example, when we first launched the project, we physically reached out to farmers in the area, or people in the area, to let them know about the program. So, there is a range of ways that we try to keep farmers informed.

Mr. Cathers: As the agriculture critic, I would just like to ask the minister if he could elaborate on what the department is currently doing related to managing the elk-agriculture conflict and particularly since there continues to be frustration by individual farmers within the farming community about the ongoing impact of wild elk damaging fences, breaking into their property, and putting at risk not only their livestock but, in fact, creating a situation where they could potentially be exposed to liability if their animals get onto the highway or another road due to the government's wild elk having breached the fence.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Last year, we pulled together the departments of Energy, Mines and Resources and of Environment to sit down with the Yukon Agricultural Association, the Yukon Fish and Game Association, and the First Nations in the area, and we worked to develop a new plan. The implementation of that plan will be this year. It has a few elements to it. First is more direct connection with the people affected, so there will be an implementation committee formed that is built up with local folks. It will include one-on-one work with both hunters and farmers. There are additional hunting permits that are going out — they are increasing — and we will do this one-on-one work to make it work for both the hunters and the farmers.

There is a piece of it where landowners themselves — farmers — can apply for a permit to shoot the elk if they are damaging their property. There is more work to get better data on the size of the elk herd with the Department of Environment. The team that came together to strategize about it has made these recommendations about how we go forward, and this coming year, we are doing the implementation.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that information from the minister. I appreciate him acknowledging the question of an accurate account of the herd, because I have heard multiple reports from multiple different farmers and other citizens that certainly seem credible to me and would suggest that the herd is being significantly undercounted.

I would remind the minister that both my colleague, the Member for Kluane, and I had written to this government regarding proposing making the entire Takhini valley an elk-exclusion zone. As well, we have advocated for increased permits allowing increased hunting opportunities.

In the interest of time, I just want to touch on another issue that the minister will recall discussions about earlier, which is regarding the ability to export eggs, and the question of Yukon's large producers being either specifically included or excluded from the national quota system so they could sell their eggs outside of the territory.

Can the minister update me on any progress made toward doing that?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The Minister of Economic Development and I met with Little Red Hen farmers, and we are working with them.

In that meeting with Little Red Hen — originally, they had been looking at a supply management proposal. In the end, that wasn't what they felt they wanted, but they do want assistance in helping their business to move up to the next step. It was around import, export, and questions like that and sort of the economies of scale.

So, we are working with Little Red Hen around support for applications, for example, through CanNor. So, we and Economic Development are both working with them.

Finally, I note, as well, that the Premier put in my mandate letter that I work to support local production through procurement within the government. There was a suggestion made by the Leader of the NDP around this front. I have asked our department to work with the Department of Health and Social Services to take a look at this.

Then, just last week, I think, I signed our new sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership agreement, and that agreement has some opportunities, we think, for funding. So, we'll take a look at those opportunities with the business and the Agriculture branch, given that new funding is coming in place this year.

Mr. Cathers: Another issue that the minister will recall that we have raised in the past is the impact of the carbon tax on farmers. As the minister is, I'm sure, aware, while there is the ability for agricultural processors to buy fuel and have the fuel be carbon tax exempt, that only counts for eligible fuel that they are purchasing directly. There are a number of ways that the carbon tax model has increased the cost of farming in the territory, which is already challenging. That includes that when the indirect costs from elsewhere in the country — the increased cost of transport of everything — all add on to the cost of trying to farm here in the territory and, for Yukon farmers and gardeners, there is currently no credit for those embedded carbon tax costs, which increase the price of feed imported from outside the territory, building materials for barns, et cetera. They increase the cost of fencing and increase the cost of irrigation equipment, to name but a few areas where the carbon tax is directly increasing the cost for farmers, but they have no ability to get any of that money back. Has the minister taken any steps, or is he willing to take steps, to look at changing the rebate structure so that farmers in the Yukon are not facing a higher cost of doing business directly due to the carbon tax?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Okay, the carbon price and the carbon rebate — really, the whole purpose of this is to help us to transition off of fossil fuels. The problem that the member

opposite is talking about is the volatility or the cost of fossil fuels. Somewhere earlier in this session, I mentioned that fossil fuel companies tripled their profits this past year — tripled. So, really, what we need to be doing is working to move off of fossil fuels — period — and to get away from all of these issues.

Now, the federal government does determine who is exempt from paying the carbon levy, and they really made some of these decisions around the cost of food for all Canadians. So, farmers are exempt from paying the federal carbon levy on gasoline and light fuel used in farming operations, and they can get that rebate on tax returns. That is a way.

I just mentioned in my previous answer the sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership. That was called the "Canadian agricultural partnership" and now it is called the "sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership", and the reason is that there is a lot more focus now on helping farmers, in this case, to move away from fossil-fuel dependency so that we get rid of that pressure on them and the volatility in the price of diesel in particular. So, that is an initiative. We certainly work, using that funding program, to assist our farmers.

The other thing that I will say is that, with respect to agriculture, it is a part of the solution around our transition off of fossil fuels. Years ago, when the Yukon Chamber of Commerce was talking about economic leaks to the Yukon, the two main ones that they were talking about were energy and food, so the more we can increase and enhance local food production, the better this is generally for the Yukon, so this is part of why we put such a focus on food and agriculture.

What I can say about the sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership is that it is going up this year. We have increased it by about 25 percent over the previous funding agreement, and thank you to the federal government for their support of that. That will be coming to Yukon farms and our production facilities this year.

Mr. Cathers: Well, the minister sidestepped the heart of the question. He acknowledged, as well, that agriculture is part of the solution in terms of dealing with climate change. I don't disagree with him on that; I absolutely agree that increased production of local food and other agricultural products is part of becoming more self-sufficient as a territory, as well as reducing our emissions footprint. But the government — through the carbon tax model that they, along with the federal government, have chosen to impose and the rebate structure that they implemented here, as the territorial government — has chosen not to compensate farmers for any of the embedded carbon tax costs that are driving up the cost of farming. That is a fact; it is driving up the cost of farming.

For the minister to talk about transitioning away from fuel, the reality is that, for farmers now who are trying to irrigate their crops — most of them have no realistic option other than using a fossil-fuel powered generator. The cost of installing transmission lines and the cost of power is cost-prohibitive for people to do that, so to suggest that, because he would like to move away from fossil fuels, that makes it realistic ignores the realities that Yukon farmers are facing today.

The government has options at its disposal. It could, either through its own carbon rebate act or through lobbying the federal government, push to move toward a model under which Yukon farmers are not paying those embedded carbon tax costs on feed, on building materials, on fencing, and on irrigation equipment, et cetera, that are driving up the cost of doing business here in the territory.

So, the question is simple: Will the minister recognize that the current structure is adding a carbon tax on the Yukon farmers and is making it harder for them to do business and harder to compete with the cost of goods from outside the territory, or will he continue to pretend that there isn't a problem?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Let's start with some of the stuff that the Member for Lake Laberge is talking about. First of all, the embedded price.

Actually, if a truck comes from, say, Alberta and then drives up here and comes along the Alaska Highway to the Yukon, they will be paying that carbon price in Alberta when they are driving in Alberta, and they will be paying a carbon price for the fuel that they buy in British Columbia there. So, what he is really talking about is that I should tell the Alberta government and the BC government to subsidize this for Yukoners. I think he is totally conflating where the carbon price is collected and how it is rebated. Alberta has its own rebate policy. We have our own rebate policy.

I am happy to work with farmers here, and, by the way, those farming here — there is an exemption that is a federal exemption, so they can apply for that exemption. So, I disagree with the member opposite.

Furthermore, when we talk about these solutions, it's really about how we can become more self-sufficient and self-sustaining around things like agriculture. We are a small territory in terms of population, so there will always be some dependency, but what I can say is that, over the past five years — and in recent time — farming has been booming here in the territory. It has been increasing significantly. That is moving us in the right direction.

Finally, I think almost all of our farms — well, I shouldn't say that. But most of our farms are on grid. I would be happy to work with farmers if there are potential solutions around power for irrigation — ways to move to rechargeable or using renewables. I would love to do a pilot project.

So, let me just put a call out to our farmers right now, as I stand here: If there are any out there who are interested in trying to move away from fossil fuels on those, please come and talk to the Agriculture branch. We have great folks there, and we can look for some of that funding that I just talked about under the sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership, which, by the way, I have just said has increased by 25 percent for this coming year.

Mr. Cathers: A blinders-on approach by this minister to dealing with the carbon price is not helping Yukon farmers. To suggest that they should simply blame it on provincial governments is ignoring the fact that, for farmers and individual citizens, they are in a situation where governments collectively have imposed a carbon tax and a rebate model related to it. They

have repeatedly heard assurances — which are, of course, not accurate — claiming that they will get back more money than they pay, yet we see a situation where, for farmers, the model that has been imposed results in them paying more money in a situation where it is already difficult enough to farm in the Yukon without facing high inflation, some of it prompted by the carbon tax on feed, building materials, fencing, irrigation equipment, and the list goes on — not to mention other farming equipment that they might have to import from outside the territory. The cost of every one of those items is being increased by the carbon tax.

Now, wherever the carbon tax is collected — and I know that the Member for Klondike, the former Premier, finds this topic funny — I hear him laughing off-mic, but this is a cost that is being faced by my constituents every day.

The issue is that the carbon price — the indirect costs are not being compensated for. They are paying them, regardless of whether that tax is being collected by the federal government, notionally in the Yukon, Alberta, or Saskatchewan or wherever — the tax is part of the bill that they paid.

Unlike the goods and services tax — there is a model that exists and has been in place for decades here in Canada where essential items are exempted simply so that the cost of essentials is not driven up by government taxation. There are a number of ways to do it, whether it is through that approach or through the government amending their carbon rebate act or coming up with a rebate through another structure to help farmers offset these increased costs of the carbon tax. But instead, what they are hearing from the minister is the pretence that it isn't really an issue, when, in fact, my constituents are paying the bill.

The former Premier, the current Finance minister, acknowledged in the fall that the cost of the Yukon carbon tax just here in the territory is anticipated to reach \$100 million a year. This is a tax on business, including farming, Deputy Chair.

So, I guess the minister — it sounds like we're going to hear the talking points again instead of a willingness to recognize that more needs to be done here in the territory. But I would just ask the minister: Is he aware of the fact that, of the largest farming producers in the territory, most of them are depending on fossil fuels to power irrigation equipment for those that have fields? Is he aware of that fact?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Let me close my binder so I'm not using talking points. Let me talk about a carbon price and why it's an important thing, because the member opposite is clearly against it. We are interested in addressing climate change. This is an important piece of that. I think that the Yukon Party doesn't have a plan to address climate change, and I think that this is a very telling part of that.

What carbon pricing does is that it sends a price signal to all sectors of the economy that there is an important way to enhance our movement away from fossil fuels. The question that the member opposite asked me was whether I am aware that many farmers rely on irrigation and that this irrigation is dependent on fossil fuels. A lot of our world is dependent on

fossil fuels. If I ask for a show of hands today asking how many people rode in a vehicle that was fuelled by fossil fuels, I think it would be most of the people in this room. So, we still have a dependency — that's absolutely true — and we are working to transition off, and a carbon price is an important part of that whole transition. I have been a climate scientist and an engineer now for — I don't know, let's say for 25 or 30 years. And in all that time, the single biggest policy that we worked to try to get governments to introduce was a price on carbon. Now that the policy is finally here and it's doing its job, the member opposite disagrees with it. No problem. My perspective is that the Yukon Party doesn't really wish to address climate change.

I want to get us off of fossil fuels because I think that dependency is hurting both us, as a society — but I just mentioned that the fossil fuel companies are making record profits. So, we should work to get off of fossil fuels. His questions are about how we entrench the dependency on fossil fuels. Well, for me, that is Yukon Party math and it doesn't add up.

In my previous answer, I acknowledged that our farmers use fossil fuels, and what I said was that, if anyone wants to work on a pilot project specifically around irrigation — to see if we can find a way to help get them off of fossil fuels — we are happy to work with them. I said that the Agriculture branch would be interested in that work.

I think that it would be a great pilot project because, if it were successful and we could improve it, that would be great to replicate across the territory. I mean, we just saw — Mount Sima worked to get off of diesel for its snow-making machines — which is irrigation, in a manner of speaking — that they haul up and down the hill, and they found a way to do that. Can we work with our agriculture industry to try to do that? I would be happy to.

I said earlier in this House today that I don't think it is easy to transition off of fossil fuels; I think it is important. So, that is the work, and I thank our farmers for their initiatives. I remain open to creative suggestions around how we can reduce our dependency on fossil fuels. That is what I will continue to do.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Deputy Chair, unfortunately, it seems I am not going to get anywhere with the minister on this issue this afternoon because he refuses to acknowledge that the choice made, both by the federal Liberal government and this territorial Liberal government, has resulted in farmers of the Yukon paying a carbon tax on matters that are essential as part of their farming business, and that they do not get any rebate back for.

The minister's response to my point about these increased costs that my constituents and other Yukoners who are farming are facing was to suggest that anyone who disagrees with the model they have imposed must just be a climate change denier. Well, Deputy Chair, this is not a productive use of our time. It clearly seems that the minister is going to stick to his ideological guns and ignore the fact that they are making it harder for local food producers to grow their businesses because of a tax they imposed — without a rebate to offset it — and that they didn't need to do it this way.

I am going to move on to another area, which is regarding meat processing. Can the minister provide me information about what the government is currently doing regarding meat processing? As the minister knows, in the wake of the permanent, fixed abattoir shutting down, this caused challenges for a number of — particularly for red meat producers here in the territory. What is the government currently doing around that situation as far as meat-processing capacity?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Let me start with carbon pricing. Are farmers exempt for their fuel use here in the territory? Yes, they are. That is the federal program.

Are there rebates given to farmers as businesses? Yes, there are.

How do they get those rebates? Well, they are part of the whole system where all businesses are part of our rebate system. What we have always said is that the amount of money that businesses pay in and the amount of money that they get back — the amount of money that is given back to the sector is larger than the amount of money that they pay in.

How is that possible? It is because the government part of the contribution to it — we don't get a rebate. What we do is allow that rebate to go back out, so there is an exemption for farmers and the fuel that they are using here in the territory, and there are rebates that go back to all businesses.

Yes, as someone who has worked in this field for decades, I will continue to say that carbon pricing is a very good model to help us transition off of fossil fuels, and I will continue to disagree with the member opposite. I am not disparaging any farmer; I am disagreeing with the policy of the Yukon Party. Frankly, I think it is that they would not work to address climate change, and this is just an example of that.

With respect to meat processing and abattoirs, the solution that we came up with in working with farmers in the Yukon Agricultural Association was that we took our mobile abattoir and we made it stationary for this winter. We winterized it to allow it to continue on with processing. We have two private farmers who are indicating to us that they are going to be opening abattoir services this year, so we hope to have a suite of solutions that will be focused mostly on the private sector, but there may be a government side to it. We may maintain the mobile abattoir. It may also continue to be winterized in the future, but that will be through conversation with the Yukon Agricultural Association — the working group we created to deal with this specific problem.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answer on the abattoir. In response to the minister's continued comments on carbon taxation, I just have to point out to the minister that, again, if it's true — which we question, based on the amount of money the government is sitting on — that the government is providing carbon rebates to people and businesses beyond what they are paying in, then there is no reason that the government can't do that with farmers as well. Instead, they have chosen not to offer them a carbon rebate to offset the embedded carbon tax costs that are driving up the cost of essential items, including feed, equipment, fertilizer, and so on.

Instead of recognizing that there is a flaw in doing something about it, unfortunately, we hear the minister

choosing to characterize anyone who doesn't agree with their model as just being a climate change denier and against taking any action. Well, that is neither true nor a productive conversation. It is unfortunate that this government won't recognize that they can do something to help offset the carbon tax costs that are being faced by farmers and are driving up the cost of growing local food.

I am going to move on to another issue, which is the status of the Shallow Bay zoning initiative. As the minister will recall, this initiative began over eight years ago and ran into a situation under his predecessor, the now Premier, where the proposal that government had put out for consultation on draft zoning would have resulted in effectively expropriating property from Yukoners — or their rights to that property, at the very least — through a riparian buffer on titled property, which was absolutely unprecedented in the territory, taking away the ability of a number of properties to develop a secondary residence during what the government calls a “housing crisis”, I should note — so, government taking away a list of eligible uses from those property owners.

My question now to the minister is: What is the status of the Shallow Bay zoning initiative, and what are the timelines associated with it? When can people in the area expect that the government will be revisiting this situation and what does that process look like?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: You know, I rise to speak about carbon pricing because the member rises to talk about carbon pricing. I didn't raise this issue; the member did. So, each time he raises it and says things that I think need to be corrected, I will continue to correct them — no problem.

The exemption for farms is set out by the federal government. So, yes, you have to apply to get that exemption. The rebate system is designed by us, as a territory, and we've decided to rebate businesses. Farms are businesses, and so they can apply through that rebate system. We worked with the chamber of commerce, I believe, to decide what would be a good way to judge the size of a business. So, there's a mechanism based on some property asset class — it is something under their tax filings that would be used to judge the size of the business — and then we portion out according to that. So, that is what we're doing.

First of all, I am not talking about other Yukoners; I'm talking about the Yukon Party here. So, when I talk about what's being said and who I'm holding to account for their words, it's the Yukon Party. They are saying that they don't support a carbon price. I am saying that a carbon price is an important tool in addressing climate change.

I have not seen evidence from the Yukon Party about how they would address climate change. It's a complicated subject. I have seen three of their strategies come forward.

On the third one, I mentioned that they had not really even addressed transportation, which is 50 percent of our energy use here in the territory and more than half of our emissions. So, I question their sincerity around dealing with climate change. That is the Yukon Party; that is not Yukoners. I appreciate that not everyone supports a carbon price, but I think it is an important way to address climate change.

The member also asked about Shallow Bay. We put out a “what we heard” document late last month. I am not sure if he has seen it. I will make sure to draw it to his attention or send him a note where he can find it on the website, or I could table it — whichever — but it is there. What we have come to realize during — he mentioned that the planning process had been going on for quite a few years. In 2021, we saw that there was extensive flooding in the area of Shallow Bay. When you are doing any planning, you need to understand what those risks are around flooding, because the decisions that you make around, for example, subdivision — all those sorts of questions, really — you need to take into account that risk of flooding. So, the Shallow Bay area is part of our schedule of flood-risk mapping. I think that is anticipated sometime in 2024 for that area, but that is the next step we will be undertaking because it is so critical to know that before we do any further type of planning.

Mr. Cathers: Deputy Chair, I appreciate the information about Shallow Bay. I will wrap up my questions at this point. I would just conclude by asking the minister to ensure that property owners in the area are made aware of the “what we heard” document, if they have not already been sent letters, and that the government also include in that an update on the timelines that the government envisions for the commencement of that process.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: No further debate, but I thank the members for the questions. I would just like to thank the officials for coming in today and assisting with the responses to the questions.

Chair: Is there any further debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources?

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

Mr. Cathers: Deputy Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: The Member for Lake Laberge has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,687,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$575,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$2,262,000 agreed to
Department of Energy, Mines and Resources agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Deputy Chair: I will call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Department of Health and Social Services

Deputy Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the opportunity today to speak to the second supplementary budget for Health and Social Services for 2022-23. I would like to introduce and welcome — with me this afternoon is Acting Deputy Minister Tiffany Boyd for the Department of Health and Social Services, and Rob Ganzer, who is the director of finance for the Department of Health and Social Services. Welcome to both of them.

I will embarrass Tiffany, as I did yesterday with Mark Radke, by noting that this is her first time in the Legislative Assembly. I welcome her, and I ask my colleagues to welcome her and Rob Ganzer for assistance as we proceed with this supplementary budget this afternoon. Tiffany and Rob, along with the entire department, have been instrumental in ensuring that we put forward a supplementary budget that supports all Yukoners.

I welcome the opportunity to provide this important update on the Department of Health and Social Services budget and how we have continued to improve the health and well-being of Yukoners in a responsible way. I look forward to questions from the members opposite later today.

I would also like to acknowledge the tremendous efforts, daily dedication, and hard-working staff with the Department of Health and Social Services. Our front-line and service-oriented staff are ensuring that Yukoners have timely access to services, supports, and information to support their health and well-being. I am so proud of the work that they have done.

As we all know, we have been through three years of an extremely difficult time. Some of that seems to be maybe changing and other parts of it have continued to be difficult, as we have folks away and people who have changed their careers or changed their minds about the kind of work that they want to do — throughout all of our experiences, not just in Health and Social Services. Whether it is through staff responses to the

substance use health emergency, to COVID-19 or other public health matters, or the delivery of routine, new and person-centred programming, this is my opportunity to really thank them all. We owe them our gratitude as a community and as Yukoners, and I thank them and all of our health and social services system partners for their commitment to supporting Yukoners.

Through the 2022-23 main estimates, our government introduced significant investments in new programming to improve and expand access to care for Yukoners. We also continued to respond to the evolving challenges presented by COVID-19, the devastating impacts of the toxic drug supply in the Yukon, and the local, national, and global shortage of health care providers. In 2022-23, our targeted investments reflected our government's responsiveness to these challenges and to the priorities identified by Yukoners.

We have made considerable progress in our work to implement the recommendations of the *Aging in Place Action Plan* and *Putting People First* report. We have worked closely with municipal, First Nation, and federal governments, health system partners, non-governmental organizations, and Yukoners with lived and living experience to take decisive and collaborative action to respond to the substance use health emergency. No one individual, family, organization, or government can address this emergency alone, but together we have continued and we can continue to build public awareness to reduce stigma, to increase access to harm-reduction tools, and to connect Yukoners to the supports that they need.

Since introducing the 2022-23 main estimates, our response to COVID-19 and other public health matters has also remained a priority for Yukoners. This is why we released *Charting the Course: Living with and managing COVID-19*. We released that back in November 2022. Since the arrival of COVID-19, now three years ago, Yukoners have risen to the challenge and remained adaptive to ensure that our small northern territory remained as safe as possible. *Charting the Course* provides us with a sustainable approach for managing and living with COVID-19, while protecting vulnerable populations and ensuring that we will respond to the health and safety needs of Yukoners moving forward. Thank you to all Yukoners for continuing to be there for each other.

Our government and our department are concerned and recognize that Yukoners are concerned with accessing primary health care services and the impacts of the global shortage of health care providers. We are taking these challenges seriously and continue to work closely with our health system partners and other levels of government to address these challenges, to develop strategies, and to create new pathways to access care. This is a top priority for all of our counterparts across the country. I speak to ministers across Canada on a regular basis, and this is a key priority on those agendas.

Deputy Chair, our government has entered into a three-year agreement with the Yukon Medical Association. This new agreement includes innovative initiatives to best support local physicians, attract new physicians to the Yukon, and will result in increased access to primary health care services through the attachment and attraction program. With

this agreement, we anticipate that the Yukon has become one of the most competitive and desirable places to practise medicine in Canada. The Yukon Medical Association has made public statements to express this same opinion.

In November 2022, we opened the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre in Whitehorse. This primary health care setting is the first of its kind in the Yukon and has created new pathways for Yukoners to access care. As of February 15, 2023, the program has already accepted 491 clients and connected them to care.

During the 2022-23 fiscal year, the Government of Yukon expanded the scope of practice for pharmacists and introduced an initial prescribing program.

On January 4, 2023, we launched the Yukon dental program with over 400 individuals already enrolled in the program.

This is just a brief highlight of some of the work over the last fiscal year, but our work does not stop there. The Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services hubs are providing services to approximately 956 clients across Yukon communities.

We provided 13 Yukon students with a medical education, nursing education, or health profession bursary to pursue their health studies. There are currently no wait-lists to access any of our four long-term care homes with their 263 permanent rooms and 25 respite rooms, while our home care program has supported an average of 717 clients across the territory during the 2022-23 fiscal year. There is more work to be done, but I assure Yukoners that we will continue to be there, to listen, to learn, to grow, and to responsibly invest in our health and social care system, in our providers, and in each Yukoner.

I am pleased to provide an overview of the second supplementary budget for 2022-23 and how we have continued to build upon the important work. The second supplementary budget, Deputy Chair, for operation and maintenance for the Department of Health and Social Services in 2022-23 is a total of \$506,661,000. This represents a 2.69-percent increase over the 2022-23 main estimates.

The second supplementary estimates include an increase of eight FTEs. This increase brings the department's FTE count for 2022-23 to a total of 1,598.03 FTEs. This total includes the 82.4 temporary FTEs associated with Yukon's COVID-19 response, as well as 20.6 temporary FTEs for the substance use health emergency. We are presenting a revised capital estimate of \$14.401 million, which is a decrease of 14.75 percent compared to the 2022-23 mains. This decrease is largely driven by a deferral of funding for the mental wellness unit, previously known as the "short-stay psychiatric unit" or the "secure medical unit", at Whitehorse General Hospital, as the Yukon Hospital Corporation conducts necessary design work to address seismic upgrades. Some of that money just won't be spent in this fiscal year.

The increase of \$13.268 million in operation and maintenance funding is for several initiatives across the department. We are providing \$1.9 million to the Council of Yukon First Nations to support the expansion of the waste-water surveillance for communicable diseases such as

COVID-19, seasonal influenza, and m-pox. This funding is fully recoverable from the Government of Canada's Safe Restart Agreement. In partnership with Yukon Hospital Corporation, we are providing \$483,000 to reduce the wait-list and wait times to access MRI services. Currently, the Yukon Hospital Corporation is meeting all of its benchmark wait times within its target timelines. We are transferring \$188,000 from Continuing Care to the Yukon Hospital Corporation to move forward with the creation of two long-term care beds at the Watson Lake Community Hospital so that community will have some long-term care options for its citizens. We have invested an additional \$9 million through the Insured Health Services to meet the costs associated with demand for medical travel and out-of-territory hospital claims. There is also an increase of \$1.15 million for the Yukon Medical Association. This increase is connected to the ratification of the new memorandum of understanding on October 6, 2022, which was retroactive to April 1, 2022.

Although we continue to respond to public health matters, the substance use health emergency, and challenges associated with the health human resource shortage, I can assure you and all Yukoners that we are taking action and the steps necessary to improve the lives and well-being of Yukoners. Our vision for the future continues to be guided by the *Putting People First* report and the feedback of Yukoners. Even as we respond to challenges and the unexpected, we are making meaningful and targeted investments on behalf of Yukoners and building a sustainable, person-centred, and collaborative health and social care system.

I look forward to answering questions about the supplementary budget for the Department of Health and Social Services, and I thank my colleagues for the opportunity to outline some of the work that we have completed in this fiscal year as it comes to an end and our plans going forward and to address the numbers associated with that in the supplementary budget.

Mr. Cathers: I would like to begin by welcoming officials here this afternoon and asking the minister: What is the current number of people on the government's wait-list for a family doctor?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The service to find a family doctor or find a medical provider is, of course, expanding, and this service connects Yukoners with a family doctor or a nurse practitioner who is accepting patients based on the expanded scope of nurse practitioners and our attention to having more nurse practitioners practise here in the territory. The service is available to Yukon residents, primarily living in Whitehorse and the surrounding areas. I note that because individuals living in the communities have access to either a resident or an itinerant doctor in that community, so they are not necessarily wanting to put their names on this list.

In order to get attached to the list, you provide your Yukon health care insurance plan number and are 16 years of age or older. As of February 20, we have matched 1,376 Yukoners with a physician through that program, and there are currently 3,783 people awaiting a match, which represents approximately 10.8 percent of the Whitehorse area population.

Mr. Cathers: With regard to the new Constellation Health Centre, can the minister confirm how many doctors are currently working there? Secondly, can the minister indicate if any of those doctors have moved to the territory since the government opened up the Constellation Health Centre, or were they previously providing services elsewhere?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The new bilingual health centre opened its doors to Yukoners in November 2022. It is currently located at the Nuvo Building in Whitehorse. We are anxiously awaiting its move from there to new offices that are being purpose-built for that health centre, which will be located at 9010 Quartz Road. There have been some renovations to that property required, and we are looking forward to them being able to move into that space because it's also larger.

The new collaborative clinic, of course, was recommended in *Putting People First*. In 2023-24, we will have budgeted, as members will know, in the budget of the mains going forward, for the Constellation Health Centre to continue. As I think I said in my notes at the beginning of this debate, 491 people have been accepted as clients and are able to access primary care at Constellation, and 860 individuals are currently on a wait-list. Applications from those individuals are being assessed and triaged to take appointments.

Once the Constellation clinic is fully staffed, the clinic staff complement will include one clinic manager, three nurse practitioners, one registered nurse, one licensed practical nurse, two medical office assistants, one social worker, and two full-time physicians.

At this time, we have a contract for a consultative physician — also with a local, bilingual physician — that has been finalized. So, the contracts for a consultative physician and a local, bilingual physician have been finalized. Recruitment is also underway for another full-time physician, and there are still a few of the other vacancies, but 491 individuals are being served at this time.

I am afraid I don't know the details of the local, bilingual physician who is moving to that clinic. We can look into that. I don't believe they had a full medical practice. If the question is if someone is leaving their own practice to go there, no, that's not the information I have right now. The consultative physician is doing that work, as I understand it, in addition to having their own practice here in the territory.

Mr. Cathers: The reason I mention that is that my understanding is that, rather than resulting in new doctor services being available in the territory, the government simply, through their contract structure — resulted in doctors practising elsewhere, which results in reduced services in another facility.

I want to move on to the YMA generally. Fresh on the heels of the Finance minister mentioning in the budget speech and the YMA taking what I believe is the unprecedented step of rebutting the budget speech in a letter issued the next day, the minister again implied an endorsement by the YMA in her remarks this afternoon. I do have to remind the minister of what the YMA said themselves in the letter that they sent on March 3. When talking about the potential of the new memorandum of understanding, they said — and I quote: “However, potential can only be realized if the new agreement

is accessible. To this day, many parts of the new agreement, including administrative details of the Attachment and Attraction fund, remain inaccessible to Yukon doctors.

“At a time when burnout amongst physicians is increasing across the country, uncertain access to large parts of the new agreement is only adding fuel to the burnout fire.”

That is a specific, clear statement by the YMA in their own words about their concerns about this agreement. I want to ask about the fee parts in particular. The minister made reference to the money that is in the budget for the YMA agreement and the fact that some of it is retroactive to April 1 of last year. Other parts of it, as I understand, began at the time of ratification. Now, we have heard from physicians that, despite the agreement being signed in the fall, they were still waiting for government to make good on elements of the new agreement — amounts they were owed retroactively — in some cases dating back to April 1, 2022, and that they had not seen money, as well, that had been for the fee changes that had been effective as of the fall.

Has the government resolved those delays in paying physicians? If not, when will they have their payment system fixed to ensure that those payments are made as per the agreement that they signed with YMA?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The parts of the letter from the Yukon Medical Association that was sent to me and the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party, dated March 3, are, in fact, what are in the centre of this letter. Unfortunately, the member opposite has been very selective in the quotes that he has made from this letter to exaggerate a point that they want to make, which, I believe, is a narrative that somehow the Government of Yukon is not properly working with the Yukon Medical Association or not dedicated to that relationship. That is simply not the case.

As a result, I will again quote from the same letter, only I will quote some things that the member opposite has not quoted here in the Legislative Assembly, despite having spoken to this on certainly more than one occasion — maybe three or four. In addition to what has been quoted already in the letter to me regarding the Yukon Medical Association's discussion — the line is: “RE: Yukon Medical Association's statement on the 2023-24 Budget address.” It starts by saying — and I quote: “Dear Elected Representatives:

“The YMA was honoured to be invited to hear the 2023-24 Budget address yesterday. We see the genuine efforts that the Government of Yukon is putting into improving the health and wellness of Yukoners during these challenging times.

“Yukon doctors are optimistic that the recently signed Memorandum of Understanding will support robust primary care. It has the potential to make the Yukon one of the most competitive and desirable places to practice medicine in Canada.”

That, Deputy Chair, is why I have said that they have spoken publicly and otherwise — the YMA — about this being one of the most competitive and desirable places to practise medicine in Canada.

The next two paragraphs have been quoted by the member opposite. The last paragraph has not. I will quote it here: “The

YMA remains optimistic that the new agreement will be supportive of Yukon doctors once it is fully in place. With the new agreement totally realized and with doctors supported and focused wholly on caring for Yukoners, the YMA looks forward to the collaborative road ahead in working with the Government of Yukon on *Putting People First*.”

Again, a characterization of the letter that came from the YMA that has not yet been presented — I am happy to continue our fruitful, cooperative, and dedicated relationship with the Yukon Medical Association, despite the narrative trying to be drawn on the other side of this Legislative Assembly — by, in particular, the member opposite — that somehow we are not dedicated to that relationship and that we are not working closely with them — all of which is simply not correct.

I understand the question to be about the attachment and attraction program with respect to the agreement that was made with the YMA in 2022. The attachment and attraction program will provide incentives for Yukon physicians to expand their patient rosters which, we anticipate, will reduce the number of Yukoners without access to a primary care provider. The program will offer funding for overhead costs to physicians who meet a minimum care delivery standard of patients and appointments. Family doctors who spend more days in clinic will have access to more overhead funding for each additional half-day that they see patients. For patients of participating family doctors, this means increased access to care and the availability of same-day, unscheduled appointments. We also anticipate this new program to help attract new physicians to the territory. The program is presently fully up and running with participating physicians while the department and the Yukon Medical Association continue to respond to inquiries, as with any new program.

The Government of Yukon continues to explore physician payment models as part of the implementation of the *Putting People First* report. We are committed to continuing to work with the Yukon Medical Association to implement the agreement and to continue to build a health care system that provides Yukoners with access to the right provider, at the right location, at the right time.

I can also add that some of the difficulties in resolving these final details of implementing this agreement result from some system modifications that are necessary with respect to how information is entered into the programs. We are working as quickly as possible with the vendors to resolve this particular issue. We have been quoted by the vendors who we are working with that this issue could be resolved by the end of March 2023. We look forward to that being the case. In order to provide as much support and attention as we can, we have dedicated a full-time person — who otherwise works within the Department of Health and Social Services — to work with the vendors to help resolve this issue. I look forward to that being resolved as soon as possible.

We continue our work with the Yukon Medical Association to fully realize all of the negotiated changes that came about with respect to how we proceed forward in making a system that is more modern, that is more responsive to

doctors’ needs, and, most importantly, provides service for Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the minister giving a timeline for paying physicians, but I would note that if, indeed, it is the end of the month as she indicated, that would mean that some of those payments will have been owed to physicians dating back retroactively to April 1 of the previous year.

We have discussed previously, as well, the government’s delays in processing physician claims. These are serious concerns and, while the minister can cherry-pick certain parts of the YMA’s letter, it is also very clear that while they are attempting to be diplomatic and demonstrate their dedication to the relationship with the government, when they rebut the budget speech with a letter the next day that includes the quote: “... uncertain access to large parts of the new agreement is only adding fuel to the burnout fire...”, it is quite clear that not everything is rosy, as the minister suggests.

But there are many items to deal with today, so I am going to move on to a few other areas. I am going to next ask about the obstetrics and gynecology program. There had been work in the past — discussions related to the possibility of adding a third OB/GYN to the program. Can the minister provide an update on what the status of that is?

Next, I want to address the very important issue of funding for the hospital and note, as well, that — well, the minister will again attempt to likely spin this issue as she has in the past — when we look at the non-partisan witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation and their own statements here in this Assembly last November, it is quite clear, in response to a question from me, what they said — and I quote: “... annual O&M budget for the fiscal 2022-23 is \$103.5 million. It is expected that is a core increase of approximately 3.3 percent, as well as additional funding for other — I will call them ‘one-time expenses’ — and that does not include any additional funding for pandemic-related impacts.”

So, Deputy Chair, we have established what the hospital witnesses said their budget was. I have noted as well, in the past, that we can see in the government’s supplementary budget that the revised total of O&M funding for Yukon hospital services for the 2022-23 fiscal year, according to their own supplementary budget, is \$88.9 million, and clearly that is a gap of over \$14.5 million before considering the impacts of inflation. Officials acknowledged during the briefing that there were amounts from the current year that needed to be addressed and told us that a Management Board submission was in progress related to the amounts that were required by the hospital for this fiscal year.

So, my question for the minister is: What is the timing of this pending Management Board decision, and how much additional funding can the hospital expect to receive for the 2022-23 fiscal year?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I had a difficult time hearing the member opposite, Deputy Chair, so I’m going to answer — I think that there was a question about obstetrics and gynecologists. I believe that there was a question about the number.

Obstetricians and gynecologists are based at the independent clinic at Whitehorse General Hospital, with care assessed by referral. In partnership with the resident obstetrician and gynecologist, we have recruited a second resident specialist who started back in August 2022. We are working to explore options to increase that team. Access is triaged, based on the level of need.

I can indicate that the assessment with respect to our population needs suggests that we need 2.7 OB/GYN specialists to provide the service for our population. We currently have two full-time specialists and are actively seeking a third to provide access and coverage, as required by our current population.

I think that was one of the questions.

I think the other question was about the Yukon Hospital Corporation and funds that we provide for them. I have some information — a bunch of numbers, but let me just say that I am going to focus on what is in the supplemental budget for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. As I said, I was having difficulty hearing the member opposite, so I would ask if he could speak a bit more clearly. I am happy to answer all of the questions that we have today.

I am going to express — I think there was some derogatory comments about how I would be saying certain things about the relationship with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, but we are their partner. We have met and exceeded all of their financial needs within this 2022-23 budget. We are very mindful of inflation and how it affects all of the services here in the territory, and we are working with all our partners — particularly with the Yukon Hospital Corporation — at this time to make sure that we address their needs this year as we go forward, as we have every year since we have been in government. I can indicate that, between 2016 and 2017 and going forward into the 2023-24 budget, the operating funding has increased for the Yukon Hospital Corporation initially from \$64.2 million to \$93.6 million — again, which is noted in next year's budget, which has been introduced in this House. That is an increase of 45.8 percent over that period of time. That is completely justified because the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the three hospitals that they run here in the territory do provide service for Yukoners that is absolutely essential. We must properly fund the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

It's clear that the member opposite is again crafting a narrative that we don't do that, but, in fact, we do. The member opposite is not correct.

Between the 2020-21 and 2022-23 fiscal years, our government provided a total of \$16.4 million in additional funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation in direct response to the COVID-19-related pressures that they were having.

While the majority of funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation is provided through Yukon hospital services O&M and capital budget, additional funding is also provided through other channels every year. In 2022-23, we budgeted \$88.3 million in Yukon hospital services O&M funding. So far, during the 2022-23 fiscal year, we have provided a total of \$99 million to the Yukon Hospital Corporation, including

O&M and funding through other channels. This funding does not include capital funds for the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

I hope, not having heard very well the actual specific question, that this answers and provides the information that the member opposite was looking for.

Mr. Cathers: It is interesting that when the minister doesn't like the question and doesn't like the facts, she says she didn't hear the question.

Again, what I am referring to is what the independent, non-partisan Yukon Hospital Corporation witnesses told this House their budgetary needs were. The minister claimed that they are meeting and exceeding the hospital's needs, but talking points are not a substitute for money. The number that the Hospital Corporation witnesses told us their O&M budget was for the current fiscal year, 2022-23, is substantially more than the \$88.9 million that the government has budgeted for them in these current supplementary estimates, and it's substantially more than the minister just told us they provided for the next year.

What I asked her to confirm — and she didn't answer — is that I had noted that officials had told us they were working on a Management Board submission to address the hospital's needs for the current fiscal year, 2022-23, and I asked when that matter would be addressed.

I do have other questions that I do need to ask the minister as well in the time we have available. I would point out that parsing the overall historical numbers that do not take into account the increase in staff costs, the increase in volume — and the increase in the costs of drugs, medical procedures, and so on — does not present an accurate picture. What I am doing is comparing what the Yukon Hospital Corporation witnesses said to what is in the government's budget.

I want to move on to the area of pharmacies, and I look forward to the minister answering the question about the timing of that Management Board submission addressing the hospital's needs.

The government, in the past, owed large amounts of money to pharmacies here in the territory retroactively. Have they resolved that and made good on what they owe them?

Next, in the area of the bonuses for nurses that they announced — which they are now facing a number of grievances around — I have two questions regarding that: How many grievances are they currently facing from Yukon nurses related to those bonuses? Secondly and importantly: Who, if anyone, did the government consult with in designing that bonus program which they are now facing multiple grievances over?

Deputy Chair, in the interest of time, I will add on another question, as well, which is with regard to the substance abuse emergency that the government declared last year: How many new treatment spaces has the government created since declaring a substance use health emergency?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Deputy Chair, for the time to sort out the information that I have.

The Government of Yukon is and has been committed to working with our health system partners. This, of course, includes Yukon pharmacists to expand access to care and

ensure that Yukoners are connected to integrated and person-centred health care services. There are 55 licensed pharmacists in the Yukon. Yukon pharmacists administered vaccines in 2021 and 2022, and, of course, they were assistants in the COVID-19 challenges, including testing and other access to services for Yukoners. We worked closely with the Department of Community Services to support their work with pharmacists to develop a pharmacists regulation back in 2019 to expand their scope of practice and create new pathways for Yukoners to access services.

In June 2022, the scope of practice for pharmacists in the regulation was expanded to further reflect the changes that were introduced on a temporary basis under the COVID-19 state of emergency. These changes take better advantage of pharmacists' clinical expertise and training. Participating pharmacists are licensed through the Yukon and can now choose to extend their existing prescriptions on all prescription drugs. There are a number of other details with respect to what they are permitted to do. These changes support our territory's response to the substance use health emergency and to provide better access to a safer supply of opioids as individuals require.

I can indicate that — I think what the member opposite is asking about is back in 2021, when we negotiated a pharmaceutical markup and a cap with local pharmacists, which came into effect back in July of 2021 — in some limited cases, there were issues with respect to the markup and the cap, and those were identified during the dispensing of a certain class of drugs. We came up with interim solutions as far back as August of 2021. Those were implemented to support pharmacists and long-term solutions were identified. The interim solution remains in place at this time while we work to permanently adjust the system-level changes that are required. All outstanding payments to pharmacists have been provided. I appreciate that this is quite a dated issue, but I'm happy to give updates to individuals and to this Legislative Assembly and to Yukoners about this.

I have then been asked about the nurses' bonuses and how many grievances have been filed. I think the member opposite knows full well that those grievances are not filed with the Department of Health and Social Services but are filed through the Public Service Commission. Through the miracle of information-sharing, I understand that there are two grievances that have been filed to date.

I should also take the opportunity to make sure that I speak about the fact that the nurses' retention and recruitment bonuses have been extremely successful. To date, the vast number of them have been extended to individuals who are qualified in that they provide services to Yukoners as nurses and, as a result, were properly classified to receive those bonuses. What I can also say is that those recruitment and retention bonuses have had an immediate effect, in some cases, of keeping individuals' positions that they already had and were thinking about moving to different jobs. Others — it has been quite successful in that we have been able to recruit nurses into some previously very difficult-to-hire positions in Yukon communities.

Over the next two years, the recruitment and retention bonuses will be provided to registered nurses, nurse

practitioners, and licensed practical nurses who are employed as of December 1, 2022 and who are in a position requiring a nursing designation and are performing those duties.

The new bonus packages serve to acknowledge the incredible work of our nursing teams, address the wage gap that we face with other Canadian jurisdictions, and help us with the ongoing recruitment and retention challenges that we are facing by creating tools to effectively attract and retain staff to serve our communities.

This is certainly not a reflection of the work of hundreds of other front-line and health care providers who worked tirelessly — and these staff truly can never be replaced — but the focus here was on recruitment and retention of nurses. I can note that the registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and others performing the required work of the nursing designation will receive a one-time lump, immediate retention bonus — and most of them have already received them — of up to \$15,000. Licensed practical nurses performing that designated work will receive a one-time lump sum immediate retention bonus of up to \$8,000. Then the bonuses are spread out further over their employment over the next number of years. I think it's incredibly important to note that there are also signing bonuses for new registered nurses and nurse practitioners. There is a signing bonus for new licensed practical nurses. Included in this package is the reimbursement of exam fees for new nursing graduates hired after December 1; I can say that proudly.

Is this the only solution? Absolutely not, but it has been successful in not only recognizing the importance of our nurses and their work, but we are making sure that, as we go forward, there are financial incentives to recruit and retain our nursing staff.

I think the third question was about the substance use health emergency. I have quite a bit that I can —

Deputy Chair: The Member for Lake Laberge.

Mr. Cathers: Just in the interest of being mindful of the time, I am going to conclude my questions and hand it over to the Leader of the Third Party, who I am sure has questions about Health and Social Services as well. I do look forward to hearing additional information that the minister seemed to be about to provide regarding the substance use emergency. I would thank officials for their assistance this afternoon.

Ms. White: Sometimes it is just hard to tell where to start. More than anything, I actually think I would really like to have the conversation when we get to the mains and then talk about forward motion. So, I thank the officials for being here today, and I appreciated the briefing. I will say on the record that my understanding of the briefing was perhaps a bit different from the interpretation of what we heard today on the floor from the opposition sides, but I do appreciate the briefing. It was very clear, and it was very concise, and it answered lots of questions. So, I look forward to having a conversation about the mains.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services?

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

Ms. White: Deputy Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of

the Whole to deem all lines of Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried, as required.

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$13,268,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$2,491,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$10,777,000 agreed to

Department of Health and Social Services agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Department of Education

Deputy Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Deputy Chair, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present the Department of Education's supplementary budget for 2022-23, Bill No. 207. Before I begin, I would like to welcome and introduce the officials who will assist me today: Mary Cameron, Deputy Minister of Education, and Megan Foreman, the senior advisor at the Department of Education.

It really is a historic time in education. We are reimagining Yukon's school system. It continues to be very complex work. We are focused on the important work of recovering from the pandemic and responding to the Auditor General of Canada's review of kindergarten to grade 12 education in the Yukon, the review of inclusive and special education, the Child and Youth Advocate review, as well as the work that we have done on the *Safer Schools Action Plan*.

We are also making investments in universal child care, modern learning environments, and training and employment

supports for adult learners. I am proud of the work that our government has done to support the establishment of the First Nation School Board, which offers First Nations a path for greater authority and responsibility in the administration and management of educational programs.

As a department, we work to be fiscally responsible for the benefit of Yukoners. Our supplementary budget reflects just that. We are making investments in capital infrastructure which are required to address our aging infrastructure, meet growing enrolment, and create modern learning environments and community spaces.

In this supplementary budget request, we are not requesting an increase in our O&M; rather, we are aligning our budget to achieve the department's mandate. We are also asking for a net increase of \$514,000 in capital.

Thank you for the opportunity to go over the changes in the capital and operation and maintenance funding in more detail and to explain how the department is effectively and responsibly allocating funds and resources to support learners of all ages.

First, I would like to talk about mental health. The health, safety, and well-being of students and staff is our first priority. We take the mental wellness of students seriously, particularly as we recover from the pandemic, and we are continually assessing the needs of students. The Department of Education is developing a comprehensive mental health and wellness approach that is both developmentally and culturally responsive.

Conversations about mental health are important, and through Education — our curriculum and development supports — we give students an understanding of the language to talk about — and seek support for their mental health and wellness needs. This work is very important and part of the overall work we are doing to reimagine inclusive and special education, also known as "RISE". In total, we committed \$400,000 in O&M spending on this work.

I will speak a little bit about RISE. We are working with our partners and stakeholders to reimagine and create schools that are safe, inclusive, and that build on student strengths and ensure that every child feels connected and supported to thrive. There is an urgent need to build and implement a common understanding of how to take a positive behavioural and brain-based approach to working with students. A key initiative was launched this past fall. Ready-to-Learn Schools is based on the ground-breaking work by Dr. Bruce Perry — Dr. Bruce Perry's neurosequential model. This model trains teachers and staff to be developmentally responsive to recognize that a child's chronological age may not match their emotional, cognitive, or social age. It also helps educators understand how developmental trauma and toxic stress impact brain development, functioning, and learning. Only when a child feels safe and calm are they ready to learn. This school year, we have moved forward at Jack Hlland Elementary, Grey Mountain Primary, and Selkirk Elementary School in Whitehorse, St. Elias School in Haines Junction, and Nelna Bessie John School in Beaver Creek. Pre-engagement work has

also begun in other schools. I look forward to advancing this program and sharing progress on its implementation.

The Government of Yukon is pleased to continue its partnership with Victoria Gold Yukon Student Encouragement Society. We increased our annual contribution to the Every Student, Every Day initiative by \$20,000, bringing our total funding support now to \$70,000 per year. This partnership with Victoria Gold Yukon Student Encouragement Society supports school-based projects that address underlying reasons why students experience challenges attending school. This funding supports educators, schools, community organizations, and First Nations throughout the territory.

We know that locally developed, youth-led, and culturally inclusive projects are more likely to meet the specific needs of each community, and we know that this initiative continues to have positive results. I acknowledge Tara Christie, president of Victoria Gold Yukon Student Encouragement Society, for her unwavering dedication to this important work.

We are making investments in capital infrastructure to address our aging infrastructure, meet growing enrolment, and create modern learning environments and school spaces. With respect to capital, we are asking for a net increase of \$514,000 for the 2022-23 main estimates. Capital is offset by a \$929,500 increase in recoveries from Canada — for the Investing in Canada infrastructure program for the Robert Service modular project. I understand that the addition has been welcomed by the Robert Service School since its opening in mid-January. I appreciate the opportunity to highlight the primary drivers for the change in capital budget. We continue to ensure that the Ross River School is safe for students and staff, and are investing in remediation and stabilization work as well as completing ongoing maintenance and upgrades to the school.

The budget notes an increase of \$2.337 million in the costs of the Robert Service remediation project, for a total project cost for 2022-23 of \$4.33 million. This increase supports the releveling of the school and the relocation of the mechanical room, which is needed in order to facilitate the releveling. There is also a small increase to the site-based information technology of \$177,000 for increased licensing costs of our multi-platforms, for a total project cost for 2022-23 of \$2.35 million.

Last year, I was honoured to participate in the groundbreaking ceremony for the Whistle Bend Elementary School. Just last month, I got to do a site visit and tour the amazing work underway on the construction of the building. It is truly an inspiring elementary school, with some fabulous design pieces that will foster learning for our students. It is the first new elementary school in Whitehorse in more than 25 years and will ensure a modernized learning space that will allow families in this growing neighbourhood and the surrounding area to thrive for years to come.

The Whistle Bend school is a key investment, with construction underway and expected to be completed in the winter of 2023-24. The school will help accommodate student enrolment growth in Whitehorse. Based on the revised project schedule, we see a deferral of \$2 million for 2022-23 to the 2023-24 budget.

I would like to inform members of the House that, as part of our commitment to reconciliation and long-term capital planning for Yukon schools, we are pleased to continue our partnership with the Kluane First Nation to relocate the Kluane Lake School from Destruction Bay to Burwash Landing. We continue to uphold the memorandum of understanding, which outlines our shared commitment to plan and construct a new school in Burwash Landing to be known as Kêts'ádañ Kù, meaning “house of learning”. This has been a long-standing request of the Kluane First Nation, and I appreciate hearing Elder Mary Jane talk about education and the history of the Kluane First Nation school request during the events to commemorate the 50th anniversary of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*.

I would like to note that, as part of the overall plan for the Riverdale education campus, the Selkirk Elementary School staff parking lot is advancing. The parking lot will be relocated behind the school. This project will support a safe school drop-off approach for students and families. Construction for the new staff parking lot is expected to begin in June 2023 and finish before the school year begins in August.

The last comments that I will make on capital are in respect to more investments. We are planning for addressing aging Whitehorse schools. It is important that we ensure that the portfolio of schools meets the demands of the growing population and provides modern learning environments for students to learn and grow for years to come. I'm pleased to note that the public engagement is now underway with the survey that is open from today to May 15, 2023 and in-person open houses to be hosted in April. Through this engagement, we want to hear from the public and school communities to better understand their user experiences with their school facilities and how to better meet the K to 12 programming needs. The engagement will inform the long-term plan for replacing and renovating aging Whitehorse schools. I must highlight that we will continue to invest in all of our schools across the territory, and conversations about capital projects and rural schools will continue at the community level.

I would like to acknowledge and thank educators and operators across the full learning continuum for their dedication and tireless efforts, learners of all ages for their resiliency and adaptability, Yukon First Nation partners in education and colleagues from across Yukon government for their ongoing collaboration and solidarity in our efforts to support all learners.

I look forward to answering questions regarding the Department of Education supplementary budget for 2022-23.

Mr. Kent: I would like to welcome the officials here today who provide support to the minister and also thank them for the briefing that we received on the supplementary and main estimates this morning.

I am going to jump in with a question regarding support that was requested by the Hidden Valley school community, through the Hidden Valley school council. Last year, they sent an open letter to the minister on what they deemed to be a failure to follow through on public commitments to support Hidden Valley Elementary School. I will just quote a couple of things from the letter.

The first quote is: “Our school has suffered tremendously over the last year. The Department of Education has acknowledged missteps they took following this incident, and we were promised over and over that any supports we needed would be provided. To date, we have not received the critical supports we have requested.” That closes that quote.

Then, going down a little bit further in the letter, it says: “Hidden Valley School Council openly and formally requests the following supports for our school. This request should be honoured immediately so recruitment or assignment can begin for the 2022-23 school year.” So, what they were asking for was an additional 1.0 FTE for a two-year term to fill a vice-principal role. As well, they asked for a clinical counsellor, licensed to practice in the Yukon, assigned to Hidden Valley Elementary School for a two-year term.

So, I am wondering if the minister can update us on those requests from the Hidden Valley school council, and — if they are in the 2022-23 budget — if those amounts were absorbed within the budget or if they were as part of a supplementary budget.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The health, safety, and well-being of students and staff is our first priority. We have worked on a number of fronts, I think, to address the matters that came to light from Hidden Valley. I will speak a little bit about some of the other safer schools action plan items that have arisen from the work that we did as a result of the review of the handling of the matters in Hidden Valley. Again, we continue to uphold the dedicated staff at Hidden Valley who are ensuring that children feel connected, supported, and safe at school. A range of supports, including access to counselling, continue to be available. As I have stated before — really working toward not leaving any family behind.

We increased the staffing support in 2021 and again in 2022-23. There is currently a full-time principal and full-time vice-principal with time for administration duties alongside the student, teacher, and family support. A learning assistance teacher with a specific focus on autism is supporting program planning, IEP inclusion within the school community, and ongoing communications, of course, around that initiative with families.

Supports have been, and continue to be, available to families and staff. Examples of this type of support are supports coordinated as needed via the school community consultant, school administration, and school — in terms of services through Family and Children’s Services, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, and Victim Services — available directly from Whitehorse-based private practitioner Marie Fast, who provides emotional support and counselling for families, helps participants to focus on self-care and well-being of their families, and helps parents to find ways to discuss relevant issues with their children. Also, Mental Wellness and Substances Use Services facilitated a succession parent support group that involved evening sessions with a clinical counsellor and an outreach worker. This was held off-site to best accommodate the request and privacy of families.

The child and youth and family treatment team has been attending the school to monitor the needs of staff, students, and

families, providing service to parents and families, and has delivered sessions on resilience and social-emotional skills for grades 5, 6, and 7 students. Staff participation on services and supports available to them, including crisis counselling services through LifeWorks, and information on broader employee and family assistance programs — all of these services and inclusion of requests for additional staffing are part of our O&M budget and did not require a supplementary budget at this time.

Mr. Kent: So, just for clarity, the Hidden Valley School Council requested an additional one FTE for a two-year term to fill the vice-principal role, as well as a clinical counsellor licensed to practise in the Yukon and assigned to Hidden Valley school for a two-year term. I just want to give the minister a chance to clarify. What was the response to those two requests, and are those individuals in place at Hidden Valley Elementary School?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I stated, we increased staffing in 2021 and we have again in the 2022-23 school year. We will work with the school community on their staffing needs for the 2023-24 school year. As a result, there is currently a full-time principal and full-time vice-principal in place — and we will work closely with the school community administrator and school council on what the needs are for the 2023-24 school year.

As I have mentioned, available directly from Whitehorse-based private practitioner Marie Fast — who is providing emotional support and counselling for families. She is helping participants to focus on self-care and the well-being of their families and helps parents to find ways to discuss relevant issues with their children. That is in place along with all of the other supports that I went over. She is available directly to the school community.

Mr. Kent: It doesn’t seem to me that either of these two specific requests of the minister by the Hidden Valley school council from last year have been met. I am just curious if the minister can tell us why she and her department decided not to put in place these two very specific requests from Hidden Valley Elementary School.

Obviously, it was a very trying time and it probably still is a very trying time for that school community. They reached out to the minister with this open letter, requesting those two specific, two-year-term positions — the additional one FTE for a vice-principal as well a clinical counsellor licensed to practise in the Yukon — assigned specifically to the school for that two-year term. I am curious why the minister decided to not honour these two requests from the Hidden Valley school council.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will continue to clarify. There is currently a full-time principal and a full-time vice-principal in place. I’m not sure what we are not understanding here in terms of meeting the school’s needs. I can go into more detail about what this is. I have already talked about the work that Marie Fast is doing with the school. We have also made commitments around ensuring that we have wellness positions in all of our schools. We are going to be undertaking that in 2023-24 to really work with each school community to ensure that this is

in place, but I will go into more detail about this if the member would like me to as well, because this whole area here — a learning assistance teacher with a specific focus on autism is supporting program planning, IEPs and inclusion within the school community, and ongoing communication with families. That is a new position. Right now, they are working directly in the school. Again, we will work with the school community around the needs as we move into the needs for the 2023-24 school year.

I certainly have had some discussions with families around how things are going this year in the school — and from families that struggled last year. I have spoken directly to them. The information that is coming back to me is that things have stabilized, that their children are doing very well, and that they are happy with how things are working in the school and the supports that are in place.

I can continue to clarify this as we go through this round of questioning, but I believe that we are supporting the school in their request, so I am not understanding what we're missing here today in Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Kent: I guess perhaps the easiest way to clarify this would be — I will ask the minister if she responded in writing to this open letter that was sent to her by the Hidden Valley school council, and, if she did, would she be able to provide us with a copy of that response letter?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will go back. Again, this is some time back, so we will go back and review our files and, if it's possible, provide a copy of the response.

Mr. Kent: I would appreciate that. I look forward to hopefully receiving that, and I would imagine that the Third Party, the NDP, would also appreciate a copy of that.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:22 p.m.