



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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35th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, March 20, 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

CABINET MINISTERS

| NAME | CONSTITUENCY | PORTFOLIO |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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 |
| Hon. Nils Clarke | Riverdale North | Minister of Environment; Highways and Public Works |
| Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee | Riverdale South | Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice |
| 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 |

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Kate White | Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King |
| Emily Tredger | Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre |
| Annie Blake | Vuntut Gwitchin |

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, March 20, 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. Mr. Streicker: We have quite a few guests today for our tribute on International Francophonie Day. Please welcome from: the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, Jean-Sébastien Blais, président; de la Société d'histoire francophone du Yukon — bienvenue à nouveau — Yann Herry, président, et sa petite fille, Aria Gilday, qui a 13 mois; des Essentielles, Laurence Rivard, directrice; de la Garderie du petit cheval blanc, Jocelyne Isabelle, directrice, et Leslie Larbalestrier, directrice adjointe; de l'AFY, Luc Laferté, administrateur au conseil d'administration, Isabelle Salesse, directrice générale, Yannick Klein, directeur général adjoint, et Patricia Brennan, gestionnaire, services aux personnes âgées; et de l'équipe de la DSF, Manon Moreau, André Bourcier, Nancy Power, Marie-Claude Desroches-Maheux et Laurie Gendron. Bienvenue à tous et à toutes.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: I ask my colleagues to please help me in welcoming some very hard-working folks who are here today for a tribute on the upcoming hockey tournament.

We have from the Yukon First Nations Hockey Association, the president, Michelle Dawson-Beattie. We have a couple of directors here from the board: Shirley Dawson, Cheyenne Bradley, Jonny-Lynn Kushniruk, and Steve Smith. We have the hardest working coordinator in the territory, Karee Vallevand, who has been with the association for a very long time. I thank all of you for your all your hard work and I look forward to the tribute.

Applause

Ms. White: I ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming two friends all the way from Dawson City. We have Paul Towns and my friend Jason Cook.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Journée internationale de la Francophonie

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Monsieur le Président, au nom du gouvernement libéral du Yukon, je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour rendre hommage à la communauté francophone du Yukon

à l'occasion de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Je salue aussi tous les nouveaux arrivants et nouvelles arrivantes qui enrichissent le tissu culturel du territoire. Le thème de cette année est « 321 millions de francophones, des milliards de contenus culturels ».

La francophonie internationale, comme celle du Yukon, est riche, diversifiée et créative.

Aujourd'hui, rappelons-nous la chance que nous avons de pouvoir profiter, tout au long de l'année, d'une foule d'activités culturelles en français: théâtre, musique, découvertes culinaires, arts visuels. Je tiens à remercier tous les organismes qui rendent ces expériences possibles, comme le Nakai Theatre, la Yukon Film Society, la Fabrique d'improvisation du Nord, les Essentielles, l'AFY et bien d'autres encore. Ce n'est pas un secret: nous sommes le seul endroit au Canada où la proportion de personnes qui ont le français comme langue maternelle augmente. Il y a de quoi être fier, et l'immigration francophone joue un rôle dans cette croissance.

L'immigration francophone est importante pour notre gouvernement. Nous allons continuer à travailler avec le gouvernement du Canada et l'AFY pour recruter des immigrants bilingues et les aider à se sentir chez eux au Yukon. Je me ferai un honneur de mener à bien le nouveau mandat qui m'a été confié et de collaborer avec le ministère du Développement économique pour soutenir l'immigration francophone. Je profite aussi de l'occasion pour féliciter la Garderie du petit cheval blanc, qui a reçu le Prix Connexions Employeurs décerné par RDÉE Canada. Cette garderie s'est distinguée à travers le pays grâce à son engagement en faveur du recrutement, de l'intégration et du maintien en poste des immigrants francophones. Aujourd'hui, 14 des 18 employées de la garderie sont issues de l'immigration. Elles contribuent à faire de notre territoire un endroit où il fait bon vivre et participent à notre économie florissante. Je vous invite toutes et tous à célébrer la diversité et le dynamisme de notre francophonie en participant aux Rendez-vous de la Francophonie. Cette initiative nationale met en valeur la langue française et la culture francophone tout au long du mois de mars. Visitez le site Web de l'AFY pour en savoir plus sur le programme d'activités du Yukon.

Joyeux printemps et bonne Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party to pay tribute to francophones everywhere and especially to those who call the Yukon home who contribute so much to our communities.

March 20 is recognized as International Francophonie Day, or Journée internationale de la Francophonie. This day celebrates francophones around the globe. Here at home, we also celebrate Yukon Francophonie Day on May 15. The importance of the French language and diversity of culture is long-established in the Yukon. For over 150 years, that culture has continued to grow and thrive, and today we rank third of all provinces and territories across Canada in terms of our French-speaking population, after Québec and New Brunswick.

The francophone community throughout the Yukon is vibrant, and individuals have long been eager to share their language and culture with the rest of the territory. French immersion enrolment is at an all-time high, and French first language education enrolment numbers continue to grow. On February 18 during Rendezvous, my family enjoyed the sugar shack brunch at Centre de la francophonie. There was some music, and we met a lot of people in the community, we ate too much, and all I can remember after was that I had a sugar high.

I would like to give our thanks to all of our amazing community-based organizations, including Association franco-yukonnaise et Les EssentiElles, as well as those Yukoners from the French Language Services Directorate. These groups do incredible work, not only for the francophone community and for Yukoners who speak or are working to learn French, Association franco-yukonnaise offers a number of events to the francophone community, and they can be found on their website. There are performances, high-intensity interval training sessions, painting, and they can even teach you how to do your taxes if you are self-employed. And, if you want to volunteer, there are so many opportunities.

Merci et bonne Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Applause

Ms. White: Je suis fière de prendre la parole au nom du Nouveau Parti démocratique du Yukon pour célébrer la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Depuis mon enfance et mon adolescence passées à apprendre le français en classe d'immersion culturelle, je voue une passion à la langue et à la communauté francophone. Cette communauté ne cesse de m'étonner par sa vitalité, son imagination, mais aussi son désir d'inclusivité et d'innovation. C'est pourquoi j'aimerais rendre hommage tout spécialement à la communauté francophone du Yukon – et à tous les acteurs et les actrices qui rendent cette communauté extraordinaire. Il y a quelques semaines, je suis allée au lancement du nouveau programme *SERVIS*, le Service d'entraide et réseau de voisinage impliqué socialement. Vous pouvez en savoir plus en allant sur servis.afy.ca.

Ce projet a pour but de connecter des personnes, de leur permettre d'échanger des services et de s'entraider. Avec *SERVIS*, nous pouvons nous inscrire pour pelleter de la neige chez une personne aînée, aider aux courses, faire de la lecture ou encore aider avec les impôts. Une heure de pelletage de neige chez une personne peut devenir une heure à apprendre un nouvel instrument de musique avec quelqu'un d'autre. Merci à l'Association franco-yukonnaise pour ce beau projet et j'espère qu'il deviendra une grande réussite.

Applause

In recognition of Yukon First Nations Hockey Association and Yukon Native Hockey Tournament

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the Yukon First Nations Hockey Association and to celebrate the return of the much-anticipated annual Kilrich Building Centre's Yukon Native Hockey Tournament, presented by Victoria Gold Corp.

The inaugural tournament was held in 1973, when the Dawson City Sluicers brought home the first-ever tournament win, which has been coveted ever since. The Yukon Native Hockey Tournament is a highlight of the north's sporting circuit. It is an important weekend for people from near and far to gather, reconnect with old friends, and enjoy the spirit of competition.

After a three-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, we are thrilled to see the tournament return. Up until 2020, the tournament was never missed, and it has happened year after year, completely locally sponsored and run entirely by volunteers. This year, adding an extra day — from March 23 to 26 — 57 teams in eight divisions will participate in the 43rd Yukon Native Hockey Tournament. This equals 1,112 hockey players from across the country.

The Yukon government is a proud sponsor of the first-ever women's division, which will feature five teams. I can't wait for that puck to drop. As always, the hockey association has put a focus on our youth, with a total of seven teams in the youth division and nine jamboree teams playing in the newly added split A and B division.

The reach of this tournament is incredible, and we welcome all of the visiting teams and their fans to the territory. I am certain that the business community is also celebrating the much-anticipated return of this popular sporting event and economic driver. The event is a boost to business, with every hotel room fully booked, restaurants will be run off their feet, and, of course, there is a welcomed increase of retail sales.

With so many participants descending on the capital, we recognize the incredible amount of work that has gone into putting on the tournament this year and every other year, which I know starts many months in advance. I hold my hands up in gratitude to the tournament team for the work they do for the benefit of all Yukoners. A big thank you to the board, staff, and the army of volunteers. Thank you to the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council for hosting on their traditional territory for 43 years. I am looking forward to seeing all the players drummed into the Takhini arena during the official opening on Friday evening. I wish all the players the best of luck in the competition, and I'll see you at the rink.

Applause

Mr. Dixon: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 43rd annual Kilrich Yukon Native Hockey Tournament presented this year by Victoria Gold, which will take place from March 23 to 26 here in Whitehorse on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

It has been a long hiatus, as the pandemic forced everyone to take a long pause on events such as this. I know that teams, players, and fans across the territory are looking forward to meeting on the ice and at the rink once again. This weekend, we will see some of the best hockey to be played north of 60. Whitehorse will be a busy place as teams, volunteers, families, and friends join us from across the north and beyond.

I would like to give a very special thanks to the Yukon First Nations Hockey Association for the role they play in bringing

together and hosting these games and for all they do for the Yukon hockey community. Running a tournament like this takes a great deal of organization and effort, the vast majority of which is done by volunteers on the board and beyond. So, a huge thank you to the current board for volunteering to take on this leadership role for such an important event.

The association was created back in 1973, which, I believe, makes this their 50th anniversary and, of course, I want to acknowledge all the hard work done by previous boards to build this tournament up over the years. Thank you to the title sponsor, Kilrich Building Centres, and the presenting sponsor, Victoria Gold. I understand that each of them has signed on for another three years to continue their support of the tournament, which, of course, shows their long-term commitment to this wonderful event. Without these organizations and all the volunteers and sponsors, this event would not be possible.

Best of luck to everyone hitting the ice this weekend, and I hope that everyone has a safe and exciting weekend. And, of course, a special shout-out to the Tahltan Bear Dogs for finding a spot for an old pylon like me.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the 43rd annual Kilrich Yukon Native Hockey Tournament, which will be hosted on March 23 to 26 within the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

The Yukon Native Hockey Tournament is so important to many of us. It brings together athletes, families, and friends from all across the northern territories and many southern provinces. This tournament includes divisions for youth, women, and men to play hockey while showcasing the talent of sport that is strong across our communities.

Hockey has been known in our communities to be instrumental to the well-being of First Nation people. This sport was practised by many former students of the Indian residential school system as it gave them an outlet, not only to cope, but it also created space for lifelong friendships to be made on ice. Generations later, hockey remains so important, especially to our young people. Sport allows Indigenous youth to develop leadership skills and start early in life to build relationships and carry on bonds that were formed by their grandparents years earlier.

This weekend's hockey tournament could not happen without the hard work and dedication of our incredible board of directors and many community volunteers. They are the people who work from early morning until late at night, supporting families and players, and making sure everything runs smoothly. They are often the first to get to the rink and the last to leave.

I am excited to be joining this year's tournament as a volunteer to support this amazing work, and I extend my congratulations to the folks who are making this tournament happen for this year. Mahsi' cho.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Silver: I have for tabling, pursuant to section 101 of the *Public Service Labour Relations Act*, the Yukon Service Labour Relations Board annual report.

I also have for tabling, pursuant to section 103 of the *Education Labour Relations Act*, the Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board annual report.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling our mining intensity target "what we heard" report.

Ms. White: Today, I have for tabling three documents. The first is the Yukon Hospital Corporation 2018 people pulse survey. The second is the 2019 Yukon Hospital Corporation people pulse survey overall results and, finally, the people pulse survey from 2020 from the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to establish an electoral district boundaries commission prior to the next general election.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon Registered Nurses Association and the Yukon government to work together to speed up the licensing process for competent, foreign-trained nurses, including considering the feasibility of developing a fast-track approach for licensing nurses from a list of countries known to have high quality standards.

Ms. White: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Government of Canada to ensure that the northern residents tax deductions are available to all northern residents, regardless of the resident's household income.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Climate change and *Our Clean Future*

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Now more than ever, climate change is present in our lives and in our decision-making as individuals, businesses, communities, and governments. We face a unique situation in the Yukon. We are warming at more than twice the rate as the rest of the world, making it essential

that we take ambitious action to address the climate change emergency.

In 2020, we released the first climate action strategy for the Yukon, *Our Clean Future*. We are proud of the progress that Yukoners have made so far. Our government has successfully launched the Better Buildings program, where the Government of Yukon provides low-interest funding for upgrades to residential and commercial buildings to ensure that they are more energy efficient. We are pleased to confirm that all eight Yukon municipalities signed agreements to participate in program delivery with the government.

We currently have 31 active files with clients pursuing this program. We are also working to sign funding agreements with most of these for the 2023 building season. In fall 2022, we released the Yukon's first climate change risk and resilience assessment, which outlines the priority areas that we need to focus on to build climate resilience. This assessment was a significant undertaking, involving collaboration with Yukon First Nations, municipalities, academics, and non-profit organizations, as well as subject matter experts. While we take steps to fight the impacts of climate change now, we must also act with urgency to mitigate climate change by reducing our greenhouse gas emissions down the road. Our government is committed to reducing our emissions by 45 percent below 2010 levels by 2030. This is ambitious, and there are concrete steps we can take to get us there.

Most recently, we have enacted the territory's first energy and climate change legislation. The energy act is now in force, legislating our greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and associated reporting. I am encouraged by the reduction emissions we saw in our most recent data from 2020. Our emissions were down by 12 percent in 2020 from 2019 levels. These lower emissions are largely due to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the data is proof that when we change our behaviour, like our transportation and travel choices, we can drastically decrease our emissions. For example, we know that working from home helps to reduce transportation emissions. The Government of Yukon has transitioned to a new long-term, remote work policy, and as of December, 381 work-from-home agreements were in place.

Knowing that we cannot achieve our goals alone, we are also thankful for the support of the Yukon Climate Leadership Council. We most recently met with the council on January 18 to discuss the findings from their report and the 61 recommendations. We will continue these meetings with the co-chairs to determine the next steps and will respond publicly to their recommendations through *Our Clean Future* annual reporting. That work is currently underway.

An action in *Our Clean Future* also called for increasing the limit of the standing offer program under the independent power production policy of 40 gigawatt hours. The current project applications in the queue for this program already exceed the 40-gigawatt-hour-per-year cap.

Projects with signed energy purchase agreements currently make up about 18 gigawatt hours of the total 40 gigawatt hours with another potential 24 gigawatt hours per year's worth of projects in various stages of development.

While we are making progress, we know that there is more work to do to meet our goals. The work continues, and it must continue in a collaborative way. Only together can we keep building a cleaner, more resilient future for the next generation.

Mr. Istchenko: We, as the Official Opposition, certainly agree with some of the minister's statement today. Action is needed to combat climate change. So, I have a few questions for the minister about *Our Clean Future*.

When the *Clean Energy Act* was debated last fall, we believed that the government would stick to the original 30-percent target rather than the increased target of 45 percent from the CASA. I know that the minister cited emission-reduction numbers from 2020 in his statement; however, are there any updated numbers? Where are we at in 2023 with respect to our revised target of emission reductions? What is the updated amount that we are at under the 2010 emissions?

As we know, any numbers from 2020 are skewed because of COVID, and the minister cites the pandemic as a way that we can alter our behaviour to reduce emissions. The year 2020 was one of great economic and social turmoil. Tourism businesses were on the brink of collapse, schools were closed, travel was restricted, and all levels of government had to contribute significant amounts of money to keep people afloat. The minister mentioned working from home but forgot all these other issues, so I am hoping he can clarify his statement about altering behaviour like in 2020.

We are also curious about where we are with progress on specific items like zero-emission vehicles. Does the minister still think that the goal of 4,800 zero-emission vehicles by 2030 is attainable?

Atlin hydro is also a centrepiece of the renewable energy plan. We were told last week that the THELP request of the federal government to close the funding gap for the project to proceed is up \$106 million. If that doesn't materialize in next week's federal budget, then what is the plan?

We also heard that there is little progress on Moon Lake, which was originally expected to be online in 2028. Does the minister have a revised timeline for that?

What progress has been made since Roundup on talks to connect the Yukon to the BC power grid?

We are looking forward to hearing what the government is doing to respond to the recommendations of the Climate Leadership Council. We know that at least one of their recommendations has already been dismissed, so a formal response will be interesting to see.

We also look forward to asking specific questions about projects in this year's capital budget and how the climate change lens has been applied. However, I have to point out that the minister spoke about mitigation, and, as we know, mitigation and adaptation is key when it comes to fighting climate change. This year, there isn't much in the budget again to address the melting permafrost along the north Alaska Highway. As well, we have heard that gravel for the bridge project in Teslin will be trucked from Whitehorse. With hundreds of loads travelling hundreds of kilometres, what is the impact on that decision?

I thank the minister for his statement and we hope that he responds to some of the questions we have asked today.

Ms. Tredger: I would like to start by congratulating all the many people throughout the Yukon government for their work on *Our Clean Future*. They have done an impressive job of executing the plan that they have been given. However, the current *Our Clean Future* plan doesn't even get us to a 30-percent reduction by 2030, much less the 45-percent goal that we have committed to in this Legislature.

I had very much hoped that this ministerial statement would announce an updated plan that would get us to 45 percent, but that was notably missing from the minister's remarks. The 45-percent goal is not a number pulled out of thin air; it is the reduction that scientists have told us is needed if we are to stay within a 1.5-degree increase in global temperatures. Of course, we know that a 1.5-degree global increase translates into much larger increases here in the north.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change just released what is likely to be their final report before we hit that mark. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said: "Humanity is on thin ice — and that ice is melting fast. Our world needs climate actions on all fronts — everything, everywhere, all at once." You can feel the mounting desperation for leaders to start acting like the emergency they keep talking about is actually an emergency. So, where is the urgency from this government? Why don't we even have a plan to meet our promised reductions in greenhouse gases?

It is not for lack of information or ideas. Last year at the Climate Leadership Council, a group of knowledgeable and committed Yukoners from many perspectives came together to create a plan to get us to a 45-percent reduction by 2030. It is called *Climate Shot 2030*, and it lays out how to get us to that 45-percent goal. It has been more than six months since it was released, and we have had no public response from this government. We heard today that we should trust the minister, that he is working on it behind the scenes, and that he will get around to responding in this year's annual reporting, which typically comes out in August — 11 months to respond to that report. That is longer than it took to write the report in the first place.

Then there is the Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship, which delivered their report in February of this year. They put forward a bold and insightful vision of what climate action can look like. I would like to quote from their report: "... the heart of climate change lies within our disconnection from Spirit, Self, Each Other and Earth. This disconnection is at the foundation of the systems we live, learn and work within. This is the root cause of climate change and what we must focus on changing and taking action upon." That report changed the way I think about climate change, and it should be required reading for everyone in this Legislature.

We can go back to the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change. Their report was responded to last year in a letter that dismissed and deflected their recommendations in a way that was frankly insulting. But that report was smart and brave, and

its recommendations would go a long way to tackling climate change and its root causes.

Mr. Speaker, the ideas are there; the strategies are there. Yukoners have presented report after report to this government about how to reach our climate goals and rebuild our relationships with each other and the Earth. We have seen that the public service can breathe life into the plans they are given and make them into a reality. What is missing is a commitment from this government to a plan that will get us to our goal of 45 percent. That is what we are waiting on. That is what is missing.

Despite declaring a climate emergency and committing to a 45-percent reduction in the confidence and supply agreement almost two years ago, we are still waiting on a plan to get us there. We are still waiting on this government to do their part in fighting climate change.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, I will work backwards. First of all, in responding to the New Democratic Party, we did work with the Climate Leadership Council. They did make suggestions about how to enhance *Our Clean Future* to reduce emissions. Unfortunately, the suggestions that they gave us don't get us to 45 percent. We have been working diligently with them on that. I respect that they came up with a lot of ideas, but those ideas don't get us all the way yet, so we will continue to work on developing new strategies. By the way, when I say that it doesn't get us all the way, that's what I hear from the public servants who are working on the plan, those diligent people whom the member opposite spoke about. They are very intelligent people who really want to achieve this goal, and they are working very hard at achieving it.

What we did with the Climate Leadership Council was that we broke their recommendations up into various tranches — the first ones that we could do right away, ones that would take more development work and actual budgeting work, and other ones that might have other barriers like legislative change or things like that. But that is in the works, and I thank them very much for their work. Unfortunately, it still won't get us to 45 percent.

When I talk about the Yukon Party and their approach to climate change — when it comes to, for example, Atlin, I have said all along that we were looking to close the funding gap. After the last Sitting, I went with the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership to talk with the federal government about possibly supporting more — into Atlin. We will see where that goes in the new budget, but we have said often and clearly that we believe in projects like Atlin, which are about renewable energy rather than building a new diesel plant.

We have done lots of starting work on connecting — a grid connection to the British Columbia grid. I wrote this morning a letter on an update on that. There is ongoing work on that. With respect to the independent power production policy that was brought in by our government — the Yukon Party government did not get that policy done. It is enabling all of this work that is happening around renewables in our communities.

With respect to zero-emission vehicles, do I believe that we can attain 4,800 in sales? The answer is yes.

So, we will continue to work on all of these projects. Again, what I say is that 45 percent is important, it's a difficult target, but we will work diligently to achieve it for all Yukoners.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Yukon Liberal Party donations

Mr. Cathers: Last week, the Premier tabled a letter from the Chief Electoral Officer entitled "Foreign interference in Canadian democratic institutions". In that letter, the Chief Electoral Officer clearly states that one aspect of a strategy to prevent foreign interference in Yukon elections is strengthening political financing rules. This is a familiar subject for this Liberal government, as they have faced questions about their use of a loophole in the current rules that allowed them to hide the source of a large amount of political donations. Prior to the last election, they faced questions about using the other revenue loophole to hide the source of over \$100,000 in donations to the Liberal Party.

Now that the Chief Electoral Officer has weighed in about the need for changes to our campaign financing rules, will the Premier finally agree to close the loophole that the Liberal Party has previously used to hide the source of political donations?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to thank the Chief Electoral Officer for his response, and, of course, in complete transparency, I provided that letter to the House.

My sense from the response to his letter is that there are a number of different items that the Chief Electoral Officer would like to propose. I think that those will likely come through our Members' Services Board from recommendations. There were a couple of items that we are looking into, as well, from the letter. We are just looking back — and maybe when the representative from Lake Laberge gets up, he can speak to it, but we know that there was some sort of a change, an anomaly, that was made in 2014 and was passed by an order-in-council, but the Yukon Party was sort of out of rhythm from what we saw, and now the Chief Electoral Officer is asking to have that potentially put back to the way it was for transparency. So, again, we'll work very closely with the Members' Services Board and we will make sure that things here are accountable. Like I said, our democratic institutions are very important. That's what I believe, that's what our team believes, and we will work to keep those in place.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier is trying to dodge the question again. In the last report from Elections Yukon on political party revenues before the last election, it was revealed that the territorial Liberals received more than \$100,000 in donations from undisclosed sources. So, in the year before the last election, the vast majority of political donations that the governing Liberal Party received came from sources that were not disclosed. This prompted questions in the Legislature and media. Here is what the editor of the *Whitehorse Star* wrote about it — and I quote: "Yet many of the means by which their vehicle to power derived the overwhelming majority of its funding in 2019 remain unclear, needlessly exposed to distorted

and potentially malicious speculation. These consequences do nothing for the crumbling trust public trust in the political process nor the party itself."

So, will the Premier now agree to fix this loophole in political financing rules that previously allowed his Liberal Party to hide the source of over \$100,000 in political donations?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: What I will commit to do in the House is to work with the Members' Services Board and I will work with the Chief Electoral Officer. As I understand it, the Members' Services Board will bring forward, potentially, recommendations, and one of the recommendations may be to change some of the structures that are in place right now. I know, from my time on this side of the House, that one thing that we have always looked to do is to make sure that we are accountable to taxpayers. We know that the Yukon Party felt very comfortable on traipsing around on taxpayers' dollars to go and set up fundraising events. We were very clear; we understand that; we know that it is a fact. That is something that, certainly, we have never supported.

I know that our Yukon Liberal Party continues to ensure that they follow all of the rules that are in place, and that is something that we have always committed to doing. Again, I look forward to working with the Members' Services Board on recommendations as they come forward and making sure that our institutions are accountable and have the integrity that they should have in place.

Mr. Cathers: What we have here is — it is the Liberal Party that has exercised unprecedented secrecy around the source of donations. Prior to the last election, the Liberals received many questions and much criticism for their serious lack of transparency and openness when it comes to political donations. There were questions in the Legislature and concerns raised by the media. The Liberals had no interest in answering those questions or closing the loophole in the rules that they have been exploiting, and today the Premier has danced around the questions. He now has a letter from the Chief Electoral Officer making it clear that an important part of a strategy for preventing foreign election interference is strengthening political financing rules. The Liberals have had years to address this issue and refused.

Will the Premier now finally agree to close the loophole in the rules that previously allowed the Liberal Party to hide the source of over \$100,000 in political donations in one single year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: If I was hiding anything, I wouldn't be tabling a letter in the House. Of course, what I did last week was — I wanted everyone to see the response from the Chief Electoral Officer. Again, the rules that have been in place — the same rules that the Yukon Party has used and that were in place when we came into government. I think that the person I hear from the most is the Member for Lake Laberge, who loves to throw mud and cast aspersions, but the reality is that there have always been strict rules in place that we have followed and will continue to follow.

As I commit to the House — I know the Yukon Party likes to put words in my mouth, but what I said today — and clearly, to anyone who is listening — is that, as we see direction from

the Members' Services Board — if we see good suggestions from the Chief Electoral Officer — those will be things that the House will contemplate and, of course, look to putting into action if they are the right things to do. I want to make sure that things are as accountable as they possibly can be and that we have the integrity of our institutions. So, please, don't cast aspersions. What I am saying is that I am here to work with all members of the House — I said that from the start — and I want our institutions to be strong and continue to be strong into the future.

Question re: Land development

Ms. Clarke: I have some more questions about the Minister of Community Services' inability to deliver on his commitments to develop lots. A perfect example is the challenges that he has faced in regard to phase 9 of Whistle Bend. On May 18, 2021, the minister told the Legislature — and I quote: "We are anticipating tendering phases 8 and 9 this year..." That did not happen, and phase 9 has not even been awarded yet.

Can the minister tell us when phase 9 lots will be available for lottery?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, from 2016 to 2022, we created 671 new lots in Whitehorse and 71 new rural lots. There are 20 to 30 lots to be released by lottery this fiscal year. Of course, multi-unit dwellings can be built on one lot, so these are just lot developments, but there could be plenty more places for people to live.

We have seen, in this territory, historic investments in lot development and housing. The budget from 2023-24 has \$26 million budgeted for land development in the Yukon, with an additional \$22.4 million for housing projects in Dawson City, Watson Lake, and Teslin. We just had a ministerial statement from the Premier about Frances Avenue in Watson Lake — another 40-odd lots down there. It's incredible. The territory needs more lots. We are working very, very hard to deliver them on time and on budget.

Ms. Clarke: In December 2021, the government told the public that phase 9 would go to lottery in the fall of 2022. Then, when it became obvious that the minister was going to miss yet another timeline, he told the public that phase 9 wouldn't even be tendered until the fall of 2022. Now we have learned that the closing date for phase 9 has been delayed yet again.

These lots are very much needed and the minister has promised several times to get them out. What has been the cause of these delays, and when will these lots be made available to Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will say again that we are making historic investments in housing and lot development across the territory. This year's budget includes \$26 million for land development across the territory, with an additional \$22 million for housing projects in Dawson City, Watson Lake, and Teslin.

We are following through on our promises. We heard from Yukoners. We know that housing is an issue, and we are doing all we can to deliver on the commitments we have made.

There are a lot of reasons why we are here, Mr. Speaker. I have said this before: The Yukon Party boasted about

population growth for more than a decade, but failed to take action to plan for the inevitable increase in demand for housing. The Yukon Party's record on housing is embarrassing. It is simply embarrassing, Mr. Speaker, and I will take our record on housing over the Yukon Party's record on housing any day of the week.

Ms. Clarke: This minister has had a hard time living up to the commitments he has been making to get residential lots to market, from cuts to land development in rural Yukon to multi-year delays in Whitehorse. This minister is quickly losing credibility.

In March of last year, the minister responded to a written question about Whistle Bend development. In it, he promised that there would be over 150 lots released in Whistle Bend in 2023, so my question is simple: Will he live up to that commitment this year — yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, 671 new housing lots in Whitehorse since 2016; 71 new rural lots; 20 to 30 lots to be released in lottery this fiscal year, right away.

We are very fortunate, because Whitehorse is such a vibrant, growing community, and we expect that persistent and long-term demand for housing. We are working hard to meet that demand. We work with our partners at the City of Whitehorse, we work with First Nations — the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council here in Whitehorse and other First Nations in rural Yukon — to meet those objectives.

Whistle Bend is our focus for lot development to meet demand in the rapidly growing city. Our contractors are on schedule to finalize the phases that we have outlined. When completed in four to six years, Whistle Bend will comprise \$300 million in investment and provide a full-service, sustainable neighbourhood of more than 2,000 lots to accommodate our growing population.

This stands in stark contrast to the Yukon Party, which failed to meet the needs of our growing community. It is frankly embarrassing — the record of the Yukon Party. I will take our record over their record any day of the week.

Question re: Support for substance use emergency

Ms. White: The Yukon is in a substance use emergency and has been for years, and this is such an important issue that the Yukon NDP included it as a top priority in both of our confidence and supply agreements. One of those commitments was to a supervised consumption site. This site, which is run by Blood Ties Four Directions, is preventing overdoses and is saving lives every single day, and they could help more people. A recent news article reported that they have asked for more funding from the government, and this funding would help them bring up more staff and expand the supervised consumption site to seven days a week. So, no matter the day, people could get the help they need when they need it. This funding should be an easy decision. The supervised consumption site saves lives.

So, will the minister provide more funding to Blood Ties so that they can expand the supervised consumption site to seven days a week?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The substance use health emergency is a call to action by all Yukoners, governments, individuals, and organizations to help respond to what we have declared to be an emergency here in the territory. This is not a surprise, perhaps, to anyone, but we continue to take tangible and meaningful action. The substance use health emergency has been aimed at a harm-reduction approach, but in addition to that, we are working keenly on the concepts of prevention and aftercare for individuals who may want to change their path in life and need assistance to do so.

We are working with partners across the territory. We know that individuals who struggle with substance abuse need support, and this is certainly not something that should be a political issue. It is a matter of life and death, and we must all work together. In the past year, our government has worked closely with community partners and First Nation governments to coordinate our response — and other governments — to make sure that we are working together with respect to the substance use health emergency.

Ms. White: Although I didn't hear an answer, I am hopeful.

So, thanks to the Yukon NDP and the confidence and supply agreement, this government also committed to safe supply across the territory. Safe supply is still almost impossible to access for folks living in rural communities.

Even for people in Whitehorse, accessing safe supply is a challenge, but the drug-poisoning crisis doesn't end outside of city limits. People in communities deserve and need the help. We have asked the government to expand the scope of practice for nurses so people can access safe supply via community health centres. This would be a huge help.

So, when will people finally be able to access a safe supply through a nurse in their community?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Back in September 2021, our government opened the supervised consumption site in Whitehorse in partnership with Blood Ties Four Directions, just one of the many incredibly important partners that work to respond to the substance use health emergency. Blood Ties Four Directions staff, of course, are experts in their field. The methods of drug consumption at the supervised consumption site include: injection, inhalation, oral, and intranasal. It is important that Yukoners know that the inhalation hood that was installed last year at the beginning of the summer at the supervised consumption site is only one of very few of those types of locations in Canada. Those upgrades at the supervised consumption site have been made to accommodate inhalation or smoking as a method of drug consumption. That was completed back in May 2022. It is one of the most common methods used in the territory. We heard from Blood Ties Four Directions that this was critical. We worked with them to make sure that this site was responding to Yukoners' needs and to their clients' needs. We have had over 2,000 people — or uses — of that particular site since the inhalation hood. We will work with them to continue to expand services for Yukoners.

Ms. White: We, too, appreciate the work of Blood Ties, but what I was asking about was whether or not people would be able to access a safe supply through their community nurses. I am hopeful. I am hopeful that will happen.

In the most recent agreement with the Liberals, the Yukon NDP secured direct support to First Nations to design and implement land-based healing programs. The government also promised to fund these programs. This is a direct way for folks to get help in their community by their community. We asked for this because we have heard, over and over again, that First Nation governments that wanted to access the funding had limited capacity to apply and design a proposal.

Can the minister tell us exactly what this direct support is going to look like and when Yukon First Nations will be able to access it?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the questions from the member opposite. They are specific to certain things that should be, and are, available to Yukoners through the responses to the substance use health emergency and to the expanded services being provided by Health and Social Services and by our government going forward.

A territory-wide challenge, as I have noted, cannot be solved alone. We are working with our partners, and I would just like to mention a few of the incredible responses that have been initiated in the past year, working with our partners.

We have developed Car 867. We have developed an overdose outreach team and have increased the opioid treatment services and access to safer supply. We have expanded the methods of consumption available at the supervised consumption site. As I have noted, we have held two mental wellness summits and increased access to resources such as Naloxone kits, and we are developing partnerships to work on land-based healing. I know that I am not the only one that has had many conversations; I know that our Premier has had many conversations with individual First Nations — and the opportunity for land-based healing in whatever form it may take. It might be a more established program in actual, physical buildings, or it may be smaller attempts to engage youth across the territory, and we look forward to all of those options.

Question re: Hospital staffing

Ms. White: Last fall when we repeatedly heard from health care workers about shortages, we asked a question about staffing for nurses and paramedics. When the minister didn't have the answer, we submitted a written question, hoping to get further clarification on how bad the shortages actually were. In her written response, the minister reported being short 22.25 full-time positions at the Yukon Hospital Corporation. The reply stated that this doesn't mean the shifts go unfilled. These vacant positions are papered over with nurses working overtime, agency nurses, and other measures.

So, we have heard many stories from hospital workers about the ever-increasing workloads and desperate pleas from their managers to come to work on their days off. This morning, I counted the number of job postings on the corporation's website. There now appear to be 72 vacant nursing positions. Can the minister confirm that the number of vacant nursing

positions has tripled in the four months since she last reported on the vacancies?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Government of Yukon remains absolutely committed to building healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities using a person-centred approach to wellness and to help Yukoners thrive.

It is no surprise to anyone that we are in the middle of a health care crisis. The Yukon health and human resources crisis is not one that we alone in the Yukon are experiencing; it is one of the greatest challenges facing Canada and perhaps internationally.

Since COVID has brought us unprecedented challenges, domestically and globally, they include a dwindling supply of health care workers. These challenges have been further exacerbated by the experiences of the last three years.

The Government of Yukon recognizes the seriousness of these shortages and is working internally and with partners across the health system, including federal, provincial, and territorial governments, to respond to this crisis.

Ms. White: I can't imagine that it's very easy to be healthy or to thrive if you are one of the people trying to cover that overtime.

So, also included in our written question to the minister was one about unfilled shifts in continuing care facilities, and the minister dismissed our concerns, saying that the staffing levels are not so bad at long-term care. While I was glad to hear that the level of service for our elders is being maintained, that's coming at a cost. Nursing staff are still being asked to do overtime on a regular basis and to pick up more and more shifts. And even with staff working so much overtime, the reply stated that service levels still had to be reduced for 32 days in the third quarter of 2022. So, that's a lot of days of reduced supports for our seniors.

We know that things will only get worse during the summer when workers start to schedule their much-deserved breaks. So, does the minister have a plan to prevent further staff shortages this summer and to ensure that well-earned time off is not being denied?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As I've noted, recruitment and covering shifts — at the Yukon Hospital Corporation, long-term care, home care nursing, community nursing — is a challenge that the Department of Health and Social Services and this government and, frankly, this community face every day. Recruitment is a national and international challenge. We are working with our partners to support physician and nurse attraction and retention. Of course, the health and well-being of Yukoners, including our medical professionals, is the foundation of a bright future for our territory.

Under our leadership, the Yukon's health care system is transforming into a national leader. We have expanded extensively the care that is available to Yukoners over the last number of years. The contribution of a local, national, and global shortage of health care professionals to this concern is, of course, being felt across the territory. We have continued to recruit through national and online forums, looking to international forums as well, and have supplemented staff with agency nurses, with out-of-territory resources, and with having

additional overtime available to local professionals who serve our communities.

Ms. White: So, we know that our health care system is being kept alive by overstretched health care workers, but the current solution of sending somebody, for example, who works in cancer care to staff the emergency room is not popular with workers. In fact, it may be making things worse.

Imagine that you get a job in a field you are interested in, and you have spent years of your life and thousands of dollars to specialize in it, only to be told that a nurse is a nurse and now go work in a ward where you have little experience, training, or interest.

So, the minister doesn't have to take my word for it, though. A while back, I went to review the Yukon Hospital Corporation's staff surveys. The link on the Hospital Corporation's website had been removed, so my office filed an access-to-information request for them. Since that request was made, any mention of their existence has been removed from the website. So, I tabled them today for Yukoners to read because the results are not glowing, to say the least.

So, can the minister tell Yukoners why the Yukon Hospital Corporation staff survey results — reminding the minister that she funds that corporation — are being hidden from the public?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I certainly will look into the speculation being dropped here this afternoon by the member opposite about something being hidden. I don't think that is our approach; we are transparent. We have provided many — I don't even know why you would need an access-to-information request to obtain such reports. They are publicly available — ask for them. It is much simpler and more straightforward.

We have a number of opportunities to address the health professions' professional crisis with respect to the Yukon. We have signed an agreement with the Yukon Medical Association which will incentivize doctors to come and work in one of the best jurisdictions in the country. We have provided bonuses for nurses — signing and retention bonuses — that have been very well-received. An effective health and human resources strategy requires collaboration from multiple government departments and stakeholders. That is why we have established a new Yukon health and human resources steering committee, consisting of representatives from across numerous departments, as well as the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon University, doctors, nurses, and the First Nation representatives. This group will work together to develop a strategy to address all aspects of the health human resources crisis in the territory. We are working to explore options to serve Yukoners.

Question re: Mental health services in schools

Mr. Kent: So, the 2023 version of the NDP-Liberal confidence and supply agreement commits to — and I quote: "create dedicated wellness counsellors or similar positions in all schools specifically dedicated to addressing the need for comprehensive mental health and wellness."

So, my question for the Minister of Education is: Will these positions be in place for the upcoming school year?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, the 2023 confidence and supply agreement sets out a new relationship between the Yukon Liberal caucus and the Yukon New Democratic caucus, founded on the principle of good faith and no surprises. There was quite a focus, of course, on education — one that we are happy to be working on with the New Democratic Party to improve Yukon's education system. To this end, the new confidence and supply agreement contains several very specific actions for the Department of Education and identifies funding commitments over three budgets. The one that is being asked about specifically today around the wellness support to create the dedicated wellness counsellors or similar positions in schools — we are, of course, working with our partners around this. As I stated in some of my responses in Committee of the Whole, we work with several partner groups, like the Yukon First Nations Education Commission and the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education, and we will continue to work with them, along with the New Democratic Party, around this commitment.

Mr. Kent: So, the creation of these dedicated wellness counsellors to address the need for comprehensive mental health and wellness has raised expectations in many schools.

So, the question that I am asking the minister today is: Will these positions be in place for the upcoming school year, and can she also tell us what the budget impact of this commitment is?

Hon. Ms. McLean: This is a high priority for all of our schools. We will continue, as I have said, to work with our partners to have the positions in place and to work with each individual school community as we determine those steps and ensure that these positions, or similar positions, are in place. Yes, of course, we are targeting to have them in place by the upcoming school year, in 2023-24. If there is any way to have new positions that may be identified by school communities in place prior to that, I will certainly endeavour to have that happen. The mental wellness and well-being of our youngest Yukoners in our schools across the territory is very much a high priority, as it is for the New Democratic Party. I am happy to be working with them around this commitment, and I will continue working with all of our education partners.

I know that the member opposite knows that there are many that we work with at the Department of Education, and we will continue to do so to meet this commitment and to have these newly identified positions, if they are new for the school community, in place for the next school year.

Mr. Kent: I believe I heard the minister say that they are working to have these positions in place for the upcoming school year. The second part of my last question was whether or not she could tell us what the budget impact is for that commitment.

One of the concerns that I have heard from parents about these positions is about the qualifications of the individuals who will be hired. This is especially true, of course, as they will be dealing with mental health and wellness concerns. I am wondering if the minister can tell us: What will be the qualifications for these positions, and when will the public have a chance to look at the job descriptions?

Hon. Ms. McLean: There are a lot of details being worked out right now. As we work with our school communities and work with our school partners, of course, we will be looking at all of the qualifications that will be required for these positions — again, knowing that there will be differences from community school to community school. I think that's the beauty of this in terms of being able to be flexible with the school community as well as with the community at large. That is an important aspect of these new positions.

We are working to reimagine inclusive and special education. Mental health is certainly a huge priority for our government. We are working on a comprehensive mental health approach that will, of course, include all of these new positions. Part of the detail that we will be working on, of course, is costing for the positions, which, as I am sure the member opposite knows very well, is attached to processes within the Management Board and other processes within government to determine those costs — if there are additional costs that are needed or if they are found within. Thank you for the question.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Department of Environment — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I had the opportunity to provide some introductory remarks at the very end of the day on Thursday. I believe I have about eight minutes or so now, but I will just take two or three minutes to confirm what we are asking for in the supplementary estimates today, and then I will sit down and look forward to receiving questions from the members opposite.

Madam Chair, the supplementary estimates that I am presenting today will result in an increase of approximately \$947,000 in the Department of Environment's budget. These additional funds are due to an increase of nearly \$1.1 million in the operation and maintenance budget and a reduction to the capital budget of about \$135,000.

Due to the diligence, advocacy, and hard work of the Department of Environment staff, this additional \$947,000 increase in our 2022-23 budget is completely recoverable through our partnership with the Government of Canada.

I want to take a moment to explain how these additional funds will allow the department to continue critical work across the territory to protect the Yukon's environment and create a more sustainable territory for us all to call home. The increase in the 2022-23 supplementary estimates include \$450,000 in funding for wood bison monitoring, completely recoverable through the federal government's enhanced nature legacy fund, which is helping us to better monitor and manage this important species at risk. This increase also includes over \$380,000 to further support the implementation of the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement* to conduct wildlife research projects in the Yukon's North Slope, including Porcupine caribou research and monitoring. This agreement also supports seasonal operations at Herschel Island, also known as Qikiqtaruk Territorial Park.

There is \$150,000 included to aid the development of flood maps for communities across the territory. As I indicated on Thursday, over the next 10 years, the Yukon government will produce flood maps for all flood-prone Yukon communities. The first-draft flood maps for the Southern Lakes are anticipated to be released this year. These critical tools will give us important insights into flood-risk mitigation and land use decision-making.

The Department of Environment has also signed an agreement with Environment and Climate Change Canada that will bring an additional \$99,000 to our territory to hire a climate change scientist. Through their work, our territory will gain important insights into how climate change is impacting our environment and to help the Yukon government reach our territory's climate goals outlined in *Our Clean Future*.

In addition, \$20,000 is included for the extension for the federal government's climate change preparedness in the north agreement. This agreement funds climate change adaptation projects and assessments in the north and will help strengthen our territory's resilience to the impacts of climate change. Again, I would like to note that all the funding that I mentioned just now is 100-percent recoverable through our partnership with the Government of Canada. I think I can leave it there.

The other offsets, which I did mention on Thursday, were generally with respect to our launches and docks program, but I can certainly get into additional detail as required.

The bottom line is that no additional territorial spending is foreseen in this supplementary budget.

Mr. Istchenko: I want to thank the staff who are here today, and I want to reiterate what my colleague, the critic from the NDP, said when we were in the briefing. It is an awesome document for the supplementary estimates and for the main estimates. It is easy to read and it's very informative.

The first question I have for the minister — one of the questions I asked about when the staff was giving their briefing — was about the campgrounds that were going to get 20 new stalls — Ethel Lake, Congdon, and Wolf Creek.

Can the minister tell me how many in each campground, how these 20 spots are divided, and when the work is going to be done? As we know, our campgrounds are super popular. Basically, those are my two questions.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. We recognize that user demand for campsites has returned to pre-pandemic levels and is anticipated to increase steadily for years to come. To address this demand, we are actively working to increase the number of available campsites in the territory. As the member indicated, in 2023, we will add approximately 20 campsites across three territorial campgrounds, mainly Congdon Creek, Wolf Creek, and Ethel Lake. Our intent is to offer a range of recreation opportunities that appeal to a diversity of park visitors. Seasonal work to improve Yukoner and visitor experience at some of these locations will begin in the spring. To answer the member opposite's specific question, the information I have is that there will be 12 sites created at Congdon Creek, four at Wolf Creek, and four at Ethel Lake, and it is anticipated and hoped that they will all be completed in the summer of 2023.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for his answer. I was asking about the timelines for it. So, will it start in the spring? Will they do it at the end of the season when they are not busy? Springtime is really, really busy at most of our campgrounds. People are already starting to get ready to go camping. Can he get a bit more of a detailed timeline?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: So, I take the member opposite's point with respect to the enthusiasm of Yukon and non-Yukon campers and that they wish to be in these sites as soon as possible and, of course, this is the third year in a row when we have an earlier than usual start to the season. The start for selected sites will be in early May — approximately two or three weeks earlier than had happened previously. I am certainly excited for that to occur, and that is relatively soon.

The work at both Wolf Creek and Congdon is anticipated to commence in May of this year. I am advised that Ethel Lake is still under assessment with YESAB, although, asking my officials, they do not foresee there being any particular red flags. We do certainly look forward to the green light to be given on that project as soon as possible.

We will leave it that.

Yes, Congdon and Wolf Creek are in May of this summer. We certainly hope to complete the Ethel Lake campground infill project during the course of the summer of 2023 as well.

Mr. Istchenko: During the briefing, I asked the question about whether they needed to go to YESAB for this and the minister indicated that maybe they did. The department had said to me in the briefing that they didn't figure they had to because it was within an original park — if the minister could clarify that.

Another question is: Who is going to be doing this work? Is it private sector or will it be elements within the department?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: With respect to the Congdon and Wolf Creek campground projects, the analysis there was that no digging or no significant digging was required, but I am advised by my officials that, after the briefing, it was revealed that some digging is likely required at Ethel Lake and that therefore YESAB was engaged. Like I said, there are no red flags from the department, indicating that we do anticipate that there will be approval.

With respect to whether this would be a venture or project that would be addressed solely in-house by the Department of Environment or whether there would be private opportunities, I am advised that it would be a combination of both private and government in-house resources — Environment in-house resources — being brought to bear on these projects. That is the information that I have so far.

Mr. Istchenko: As the minister notes in the supplementary estimates, there was money lapsed when it came to some of the docks and boat launches, and this money is recoverable from Canada — 75 percent of it is and 25 percent from the Yukon government. We know that we have a budget coming next week — a federal budget coming next week.

So, my question for the minister is: If this work doesn't get done — and we are a year behind already — there might not be money for it and it will never get done. So, what assurances can the minister give me? What direction has he given to his department and staff to make sure that this work actually gets done?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In 2019-2020, the Department of Environment received \$4.135 million, which was 75-percent recoverable, in federal funding from the Investing in Canada infrastructure plan — also known as "ICIP" — to support a new boat launch and dock replacement program. This funding is currently available until the fiscal year 2025-26.

As I indicated in my preliminary comments, the lapse from 2022-23 to 2023-24, for various reasons, is forecast to be in the range of \$135,000 — a relatively modest amount — but I am advised that the ICIP funding is secure and that there is no material concern about lapsing any money.

Mr. Istchenko: Let's hope that this work does get done. The department did brief me on some of the reasons why, but I think, from the top, it needs to be pushed to make sure that this work does get done.

Sticking with campgrounds, I am looking in the Budget Address — in the five-year capital plan — and in 2023-24, there is \$100,000 to \$200,000 for development of Yukon's campgrounds, and then for 2024-25 next year, there is

\$2 million to \$3 million. So, if you go to last year's campgrounds and parks, development of Yukon campgrounds, for 2022-23, there was \$500,000 in there, so it has increased between \$100,000 to \$200,000 and, in 2024-25, \$2 million to \$3 million — the same.

What are we spending that money on? The minister has said that there is no new campground and you are installing 20 stalls. So, you have, this year, \$100,000 to \$200,000 for development of new campgrounds and, next year, \$2 million to \$3 million. So, what are those funds allocated toward, and where are we spending this money?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Yukon government is committed to upholding our partnership with Yukon First Nations as we continue to enhance campground planning in the territory. As outlined in the 2022-23 and the 2023-24 five-year capital plans, there is funding allocated for the development of Yukon campgrounds, including the potential for a new campground. We are looking forward to continuing these discussions with Yukon First Nations and working to enhance our territory's park system through the celebration of cultural values, developing more campsites, and improving recreational opportunities and user experiences. We continue these conversations in this fiscal year. If those respectful government-to-government conversations bear fruit, there is funding in 2024-25 for the actual capital spend.

Yukon Parks continues to meet with First Nation governments to further the *Yukon Parks Strategy* and to deliver on our commitments. Through these discussions, we hope to advance plans to significantly expand and improve some of our recreation parks. We are in the process of completing conceptual designs for potential expansions in recreational activities at several campgrounds. These include: Conrad, Little Salmon, Pine Lake, Snafu, Tarfu, and Twin Lakes. We will continue to expand the recreational opportunities available to Yukoners and visitors by working with our First Nation partners to develop sustainable solutions.

In addition, we will continue to add sites to existing campgrounds, as we already talked about this afternoon, over the next few years, such as the additional walk-in sites. We know, because we have heard directly from Yukoners, that they value and cherish their Yukon parks experience. We will continue to explore ways to enhance our parks systems for years to come.

So, I guess the answer, in balance, is that this is a five-year capital plan, and, of course, it can be modified over the course of the five years — would shift from year to year to year. But all options are still on the table, Madam Chair, so those conversations will continue with the impacted First Nations, as I have indicated both in Question Period responses and in further follow-up. So, that is where it's at. As I indicated, we are still hopeful, but while we have those conversations, we want to continue to improve the camping experience and hopefully continue to meaningfully improve infill site numbers at existing Yukon campground infrastructure.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that. So, I will remind the minister that he promised Yukoners a 150-campsite large campground within two hours of Whitehorse. So, I guess

my question for the minister is — and I understand that it is key to work with First Nations, but if the minister can elaborate a little bit on why the First Nations — the issues that they had during their negotiations and what work he is doing now to maybe alleviate those so he can move this project forward.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The member opposite has heard this response before, but in any event, it's important for Yukoners listening this afternoon to understand the context of these potential projects. Our government has built strong, respectful government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations to foster reconciliation. We continue to collaboratively explore ways to enhance our parks systems for years to come. We are in the process of completing conceptual designs for potential expansions and recreational activities at several campgrounds, and Yukon Parks continues to engage with First Nations on various business models in regard to furthering the *Yukon Parks Strategy* and delivering on our commitments. Just to be clear, these discussions take some time and I certainly support my officials and their ongoing discussions with impacted First Nations, and I'm certainly hopeful that these discussions will bear fruit. So, all possibilities are on the table, and we know what can happen when there is either inadequate consultation or no consultation. The current Leader of the Official Opposition did try to implement — or try to move forward with a campground that was proposed to be built at the tip of Atlin Lake in 2014. I wasn't in this Chamber at the time, but I imagine that there was some expectation by the then-Yukon Party government that this project would proceed, perhaps without any hurdles or without any concerns raised by impacted persons or self-governing First Nations.

We know that's not what happened. We know that the Taku River Tlingit First Nation advised at the time and said that they were not meaningfully consulted. They sued the then-Yukon Party territorial government, and that campground was supposed to open in May 2015. Of course, it didn't. It never happened. I have that as a cautionary tale as to what can occur.

First of all, the Yukon campground experience is an amazing value proposition in absolutely spectacular and stunning world-class environments — whether you are on the water or close to beautiful trails or close to our stunning mountains as well. In that respect, we are — I wouldn't say a "victim"; the demand is a product of their success.

In speaking to the hard-working Parks staff, whether on-site in the campgrounds or at their offices here in Whitehorse or in Dawson, I have been advised that the user exit surveys by — certainly Yukoners but then non-Yukoners — tourists and other Canadians visiting the territory from afar, from all areas of this land, from sea to sea to sea to sea, advise that this is an absolutely incredible experience, an incredible value proposition — well-cared-for campgrounds.

By virtue of this, there is a great deal of demand. I will certainly — it is in my mandate letter, and between now and when I am no longer in this position, this is absolutely a priority of mine to increase the available opportunities. However, we know that — first of all, it is not a very good idea to not have discussions whatsoever with impacted First Nations. That seems to be quite a poor choice, resulting in that instance of

having no campground whatsoever and a lawsuit. I am certainly very optimistic that the discussions ongoing will bear fruit and that we will have more camping opportunities around the Yukon, and I am pushing for that.

The discussions with impacted First Nations are about areas around traditional uses, subsistence harvesting, obviously land use planning, and general First Nation economic opportunities.

We are advancing reconciliation through the collaborative management of parks and campgrounds, and it is one of the four building blocks of the *Yukon Parks Strategy*. These conversations are ongoing and we will continue to enhance these opportunities. I have been briefed on these conversations fairly regularly, and I am optimistic that they will bear fruit.

I understand the criticism — saying, "Well, you haven't delivered on the 100 to 150 sites in one location yet." That is true, so far, but there are a number of very exciting opportunities, and I will do this and I will encourage my team to continue the respectful dialogue with impacted First Nations.

Mr. Istchenko: I am going to switch gears a little bit here. I just have a quick question — more of a public service announcement or something like that. But I did write the minister about elk issues when it comes to farmers' land. We know the area that farmers are in. I understand this file. I sat on the elk technical team long before I was elected, and I have been part of this.

I just wanted to let the department know. In the letter that I received from the minister, he said that best efforts have been made to capture elk that are distant from private lands, including farmers' fields, in order to minimize disturbance of property owners. That was from a letter on March 7 written to me. I just got confirmation this weekend that something was going on in the air up there that drove some elk right through somebody's fence, and he spent the weekend fixing his fence. I just want to get that out there.

I guess the next question that I have is — when it comes to the management plan for the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area, one of the big concerns we heard during it was the fact that a lot of people were concerned about the ability to get a dock. A lot of that planning is finished. Is there the ability for people along the Tagish River to put in docks now?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Certainly, I'm happy to advise Yukoners that the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area agreement was signed with the Chief of Carcross/Tagish First Nation in November 2022. Certainly, I have heard loud and clear that the docks on the Six Mile River — known as the "Six Mile River" — are an issue. I know that this has formed the subject matter of many local advisory committee meetings, and I know that the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes — in his capacity as the MLA but also as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — has been actively involved on this. What I can advise is that there is an implementation committee that is in the process of currently being set up to review a number of issues but certainly the issue of docks on the Six Mile River.

I understand that this file will be led by Energy, Mines and Resources, and I know that the Minister of Energy, Mines and

Resources — both in his capacity as MLA and also as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — will be in a position to discuss that. We know that there have been some preliminary discussions with respect to perhaps sharing dock resources, but I am not going to get into speculation today as to how this matter will ultimately be resolved, but the status quo will remain in place until the implementation committee has been set up and they ultimately make recommendations. I can also advise, Madam Chair, that the celebrations to acknowledge the hard work that has been done by many stakeholder groups over the course of many years, with respect to the recognition of the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area, are planned for mid-April in Carcross.

So, I certainly provide congratulations to Carcross/Tagish First Nation, all persons within the Department of Environment, and other user groups for their hard work — but certainly recognizing that there is still some thoughtful work and discussions that will have to occur with respect to resolving the issue of the use and enjoyment and perhaps sharing of resources of the docks on the Six Mile River. But just to be clear, an implementation committee is in the process of being set up, and they will do the work, and they will come up with recommendations in the future.

Mr. Istchenko: This implementation committee — is there a timeline at all for those residents who would like to improve their properties or harbour a boat on their property? Is there a timeline?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: It is the intention of the implementation committee to get to work forthwith — so in the spring — to reach out to the impacted user groups and to start the consultation process and to hopefully ultimately reach an understanding with respect to the use and enjoyment of the Six Mile River area.

Mr. Istchenko: My last question before I turn it over to the Third Party is about fishing licences. I was online this morning and I thought I would renew my online fishing licence this morning. You have to put in a little bit of information that they require. When I went to the site, it tells me that, basically, I can't renew my fishing licence until April 1. I am not sure if it was the Yukon Party or me as minister who started this, but I just want some clarification because people were asking me this weekend. There was a very successful fishing derby out in my neck of the woods, up at Kluane Lake, and they were asking. Lots of people, this time of the year, will go out —

For example, the 31st is a Friday, and they will be out of cell range and gone to a lake somewhere. They have a fishing licence, and they would like to get their fishing licence so they can still be legal, but if you can't get it —

My question would be: Do we have to wait until the 31st, or does it open up a few days before?

The other question to go with it, basically, is the vendor books that the vendors receive — will they also be available for those vendors who handwrite fishing licences, like the local gas station in my neck of the woods? Will they be available on the 1st also?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: There are two questions, and on the second question with respect to vendor licences, we are waiting

for that information, but if I don't get that information this afternoon, I will certainly undertake to get that information to the Member for Kluane as soon as possible.

On the first question, which was with respect to when the new year fishing licences are available, I'm advised that currently it is March 27, but, on that topic — just as far as providing good service to Yukoners — I will inquire of my department as to whether that could be a little bit earlier.

I am thinking on the fly, which is dangerous in these circumstances, but I would encourage my department to perhaps be a little bit more nimble and be in a position to provide fishing licences perhaps even a little bit earlier than March 27. I can also inquire about that and give the department a gentle nudge, or at least they can tell me what the logistical considerations are. My information right now is March 27, but why could it not be March 15? Maybe there is a very good reason, but I can also get back to the member opposite on that issue as well.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for his answers, and I thank the staff who are here today. I will turn it over to the Third Party.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you first to the officials for being here — and all the folks, I am sure, who are listening in from Environment — for that very helpful briefing and all the notes. I really appreciate it.

I am going to save most of my questions for the mains, but I'm going to just touch on a couple of things that have happened in the last year that are relevant to last year. I want to start by talking about the wetlands policy. The first question is: Is the Yukon government itself planning to nominate any wetlands of special importance?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Just briefly, by way of background, as the member opposite will know, a policy for the stewardship of Yukon's wetlands was approved at the end of 2022 and was released publicly on January 10, 2023. The completion of this policy will provide much-needed high-level direction to achieve sustainable and responsible resource development in and around wetlands while ensuring adequate environmental protections. We have worked closely with partners to understand the diverse interests of Yukoners while developing a policy that supports the long-term stewardship of wetlands in our territory.

The Government of Yukon is already actively working on 10 of the 16 implementation actions identified in the wetlands stewardship policy. Collaboration and engagement with partners were essential to the development of this policy and will continue to be throughout its implementation. Since the policy's release, we have engaged, and will continue to engage, with other departments and agencies, regulatory bodies, external partners, and land use planning interests to discuss specific aspects related to the policy's implementation. This includes initiatives such as wetland mapping and inventory, developing guidance and a new legal designation for wetlands of special importance, and assisting with developing guidance and standards for proponents where developments may impact wetlands.

We have committed resources to undertake comprehensive wetland mapping across the territory. As well, we have initiated a multi-party research project designed to explore the extent of carbon release and potential for carbon sink restoration following placer mining.

To answer the member opposite's question, the short answer is no, not yet — the territory. However, wetlands may be nominated as wetlands of special importance by a government, whether it is Indigenous, federal, territorial, or municipal, or by a board or council with authority to make recommendations to the Government of Yukon — for example, a renewable resources council, a regional land use planning commission, or a wildlife management advisory board or council.

As the member opposite will know, the focus has been — for both the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Department of Environment — to have a policy be approved, set up the framework, and move forward. We look forward to the good work that will occur to put the metaphorical meat on the bones, but we are certainly open to receiving the nominations and to beginning the process of potentially identifying wetlands of special importance.

Ms. Tredger: I thank the minister for that direct answer. I appreciate that.

I would say that I think this is a missed opportunity. I think that the Department of Environment and the Yukon government have a lot of capacity to identify these wetlands of special importance. I imagine that it is quite a bit of work to put together the nomination for a wetland of special importance. I think the process isn't quite ironed out yet, but I imagine it will be quite a bit of work. I would really like to see the Yukon government take on some of that work, because they are not just neutral arbitrators of deciding whether these wetlands are important or not. They have a mandate to prevent the carbon release from the wetlands, to combat climate change, to protect the biodiversity that is represented in those wetlands, so that's my pitch to the minister.

He mentioned a project that is being started to measure the carbon release from wetlands. Can he expand on that?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We recognize that the topic of carbon storage and the release in the Yukon's wetlands is of high public interest. Peat-forming wetlands such as bogs and fens store large quantities of soil carbon. This carbon can be vulnerable to release when these types of wetlands are disturbed by human activities or climate change. Research on the role of carbon sinks in northern wetlands is an essential field of study both in Canada and around the world. To help fill these knowledge gaps in the Yukon and to continue to improve our reclamation practices, we have initiated a multi-party study, and for the record, I am in the process of getting some of the participants. We look forward to working with our partners — including First Nation, industry, and environmental organizations — to come together to coordinate additional research on this topic.

In conjunction with other planning tools, like the Dawson regional land use plan, we can provide certainty to the industry as they design their operating and reclamation plans in wetland

areas. Our regulators work with the industry to clarify reclamation requirements, design effective wetland reclamation plans, and review submissions as part of mining authorization processes.

In addition, the Yukon Water Board has drafted wetland information guidelines for placer mining applications based on the feedback from the board's public interest hearing on placer mining in wetlands held in 2022. We certainly know there is a perspective from the environmental non-governmental organizations with respect to peat and carbon storage, and there is a perspective from the placer mining community, which is why this work is incredibly important. I can advise, Madam Chair, that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has the lead on this research project, and they are contacting — and I am sure that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources will be in a position to answer questions on this side during the Spring Sitting when Energy, Mines and Resources is discussed in the main budget. Otherwise, they have contacted environmental non-governmental organizations, First Nation governments, and industry. The group will set its own research questions, they will help select who will do the research, and the focus is on the placer impacts on wetlands. The issue, of course, is that when there is a disturbance in wetlands, in carbon operations, and organic carbon or peat — organic material — has been restored, the important question is: What are the emissions of the disturbance? CPAWS has a view, and I have met with CPAWS on this topic and Ducks Unlimited as well and, of course, the placer miners have a view on this as well — that once the organic material has been restored, put in place, and you have put the organic material back, what is the net release of carbon?

We recognize that we must be responsive to new information as we continue to build our knowledge and improve our understanding of Yukon's wetlands. This includes issues such as wetland mapping and inventory, developing guidance and a new legal designation for wetlands of special importance, and assisting with developing guidance and standards for proponents where developments may impact wetlands.

We have committed resources to undertake comprehensive wetland mapping across the territory, as well as to initiate a multi-party research project designed to explore the extent of carbon release and the potential for carbon sink restoration following placer mining.

We will continue to support local, national, and international partnerships to increase our knowledge of northern wetlands. We certainly recognize that this is an incredibly important conversation and, in reviewing some of the articles on wetlands or peatlands, we know that there is an extraordinary abundance of peatlands in James Bay and Hudson Bay, as well, in an order of magnitude larger than the Yukon, but nevertheless, Yukon could be important as well. That's why it's important to form this research group and get to the bottom of this, employing best practices in the Yukon and also seeking guidance from both national and international sources.

Ms. Tredger: I don't know if I would call CPAWS' perspective so much as a view but as a well-researched and documented paper, but I'm glad that the minister mentioned the mapping of wetlands because that is actually my next question.

Briefly, back to the carbon project, I will follow up in EMR and hopefully look for some timelines around that project as well. It sounds really exciting and I'm glad it's happening.

Mapping wetlands — in *Our Clean Future*, action item P1 is: “Establish a standardized method to determine the health status of wetland ecosystems and complete a pilot study to measure the baseline conditions of various reference wetlands by 2022 to better understand future changes.”

I was trying to map that on the action plan or the implementation plan of the wetland policy and sort of match those up. I think — please correct me if I'm wrong — that the standardized method to determine the health status of wetland ecosystems is still coming. I don't think that has been done yet, but please correct me if I'm wrong.

Then, I was curious if the pilot study of various reference wetlands had been completed yet and what those reference wetlands were and, if not, when that was expected to be completed or if that has changed with the wetland policy coming out.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: So, the Member for Whitehorse Centre is referring to P1 of the *Our Clean Future* road map, and it says to “Establish a standardized method to determine the health status of wetland ecosystems and complete a pilot study to measure the baseline conditions of various reference wetlands by 2022 to better understand future changes.” The information I have from my officials is that this pilot study is complete. To anticipate what might be a follow-up question from the member opposite, I certainly can undertake to make best efforts to provide information about that pilot study after we finish today. I don't appear to have that information here, but I can advise that wetland maps and attributes for the Peel planning region, the Beaver River watershed, and the Mayo and McQuesten watershed are now publicly available on GeoYukon.

To date, broad regional wetland mapping has been completed for approximately 16 percent of the territory, with more detailed local mapping covering approximately an additional five percent of the territory. So, the information that I have today is that the pilot study is complete, and I can undertake to provide the House and the Member for Whitehorse Centre with the results of the pilot study work. Mapping is certainly a priority and there are resources that will be brought to bear over the next four or five years.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that; it is great to hear that this is done. Thanks for letting me know where that can be found, and I look forward to looking through it.

While we are going through *Our Clean Future*, I also wanted to ask about L3, so that is: “Incorporate climate change risks into Government of Yukon departmental planning processes by 2022.” This, in the December report of last year, was marked as “in progress”, so I am wondering if the minister can tell us about what is happening — what that looks like in

practicality — to incorporate that into the planning processes and where that is at.

I will just give him a heads-up that my next question is going to be about L5, in case people want to look both those up at the same time.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Sorry, if the member opposite might be in a position to repeat the question — but it sounded like it was the question that I have been asked before with respect to planning on infrastructure projects. Is that what it was? If that is what it is, then I certainly am more than prepared to speak to that in my capacity as Minister of Highways and Public Works, likely in the next few days. I will likely have more information from that department with respect to incorporating the climate change lens on both current and future projects. But if that wasn't the question, then I look forward to having the question clarified.

Ms. Tredger: I am happy to clarify. I was asking about L3 in *Our Clean Future*. I am asking about it now because it says that Environment is the lead on that item. It says: “Incorporate climate change risks into Government of Yukon departmental planning processes by 2022.” I believe there is another item about infrastructure projects, and it's not this one.

I hope that clarifies it. Please ask me if more is needed.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We are pleased to see the strong alignment between the recently released national adaptation strategy and the findings of Yukon's climate risk and resilience assessment report, as well as with *Our Clean Future*. This includes recognizing the unique circumstances that climate change poses to the north and the importance of prioritizing adaptation in northern and remote communities. We continue to engage with our federal counterparts on specific elements of the national adaptation strategy and look forward to collaboratively advancing adaptation efforts in the Yukon.

In September 2022, our government released the first Yukon-wide climate risk and resilience assessment report. This report evaluated the climate change impacts that pose the highest risk to Yukoners. The climate risk and resilience assessment report is a key resource for our entire government, as it identifies where government and community actions are contributing to resilience and where further action is required.

We are continuing to build off of the findings of the climate risk and resilience assessment report through the implementation of *Our Clean Future* and advancing actions that will enhance climate resilience across the territory. The Government of Yukon is currently working on implementing more than 50 adaptation actions, as identified in *Our Clean Future*. These actions directly support the Yukon in adapting to some of the highest risks identified in the climate risk and resilience assessment report, such as floods, fires, and permafrost thaw. We will continue to build on our adaptation commitment like this and others in *Our Clean Future* while working with stakeholders on an all-of-government basis, experts, and knowledge-holders to advance climate resilience in the territory.

With respect to specifically L3 in *Our Clean Future*, which indicates that the government should incorporate climate

change risks into Government of Yukon departmental planning processes by 2022, I am advised that L3 is still in progress.

We are currently working with all departments to explore the integration of mitigation of climate risks via the departmental planning processes.

As I indicated, I will certainly be in a position to speak to that with respect to Highways and Public Works, but I will endeavour — and, I would imagine, the departments themselves will be in a position to speak to the actions that they have taken. My advice currently is that it is ongoing.

Ms. Tredger: I wanted to ask about L5 from *Our Clean Future*, which is: “Develop and offer climate change training for Government of Yukon employees by 2022.” I am curious at what stage that training is at.

I am also curious what that training is going to look like, who it will be offered to, and if it will be mandatory for anyone or just available to anyone who wants to take it.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, L5 is viewed as being largely complete; however, we will continue to work on this as we recognize that training is an ongoing need. There is an ongoing need to support Yukon government staff in making decisions on climate change. We have an ongoing partnership with Yukon University, and they have recently launched climate change training for YG employees. In 2022, a climate adaptation and resilience course was virtually delivered to a group of YG staff. We have also delivered greenhouse gas verification and validation training, and that will be delivered to a group of YG staff as well. Based on recommendations from the Yukon Climate Leadership Council and the youth panel, we will continue to advance this work.

The current status is that this training can and will be made available to all; however, at this point, it is not mandatory.

Ms. Tredger: I thank the minister for that. It’s very exciting to hear about those projects and that they are happening. I am delighted to hear that.

I wanted to switch gears a little bit and talk about biofuels. I know that the regulation of biofuels is being led by Energy, Mines and Resources, but my question is this: Is the Environment department using biofuels for any of its vehicles? I know that we are in Environment, but if the minister wanted to answer about Highways and Public Works, I would happily take that information. If not, I will ask about that later.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, the member opposite is correct. The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is leading this file. I certainly will endeavour to provide any additional information I can from Highways and Public Works as to how the Fleet Vehicle Agency — there is some preliminary information that Highways and Public Works might be piloting either biodiesel or renewable diesel in the relatively near future, but I can provide the House and member opposite information when I stand to answer questions with my hat for Energy, Mines and Resources.

Energy, Mines and Resources is leading but connecting with Environment where appropriate. We have some communication with Canada on the federal *Clean Fuel Regulations*. Navius modelling indicates that renewable fuels are among — at least potentially — the most impactful

measures to meet our net zero targets, particularly for industry. We are working to develop policy to introduce renewable fuel standards and complete action items T9 and T10 and have contracted legal and technical experts for advice.

We are researching the feasibility of the Yukon Climate Leadership Council’s suggestion of increasing the ambition of our clean fuel standards to meet BC’s clean fuel standards. As I indicated, we are planning to pursue a pilot program to confirm the viability of renewable diesel in the Yukon. There are challenges, but we will certainly try to meet those challenges. I think that our objective for at least a partial implementation was for 2025. I would love to have good data from parts of the Highways and Public Works diesel fleet, if that is at all possible, within the next year or two — but, yes, we are on it. As I indicated, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources has the lead, but if a viable option for the north — this represents a significant opportunity in trying to reach our greenhouse gas reduction targets by 2030. As we know from the *Our Clean Future* action road map, transportation and heating represent approximately 75 percent of Yukon’s greenhouse gas emissions. Anything one can do with respect to ameliorating the emissions that occur from transportation will go a significant way — or are certainly a significant part of the puzzle — to get to where we want to get to in 2030.

Ms. Tredger: That concludes my questions for today. I will save the rest for the mains. Thank you again to the officials and the department and to the minister for his answers.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment?

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

Ms. Tredger: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 52, Department of Environment, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 52, Department of Environment, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 52, Department of Environment, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures
Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,082,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures
Total Capital Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$135,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$947,000 agreed to
Department of Environment agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Yukon Housing Corporation

Deputy Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I first would like to welcome the officials who are joining me here today: our president of the Yukon Housing Corporation, Justin Ferbey, as well as Marcel Holder Robinson, who is our director of finance. Again, thank you for your work on preparation of this supplementary budget and thank you for your support here today.

As Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to outline the spending requested as part of the second supplementary estimates for 2022-23. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff and the board of directors for Yukon Housing Corporation for their hard work and dedication. They are working hard to make more affordable housing options available for Yukoners while continuing to deliver innovative housing solutions.

I would also like to thank the former president, Mary Cameron, for her contributions to this organization. I am confident that she will continue to serve Yukoners well in her new role at the Department of Education.

With that said, I would like to welcome our officials. Just to clarify that Marcel Holder Robinson is not just the director of finance but also of risk management, which is the full title for her work.

I will begin by discussing what we're doing to support seniors in the Yukon. The opening of Normandy Living in November marks an important milestone for this territory in its efforts to serve seniors. Operated by KBC Developments, Normandy is the first Yukon facility of its kind offering services for seniors, including three meals a day, weekly housekeeping, laundry services, and 24-hour security. It also presented us with an opportunity to connect low-income seniors to housing solutions. This furthers our efforts under the aging-in-place plan, the housing action plan, and the Safe at Home plan to end and prevent homelessness. This builds on our efforts to respond to the recommendations of the Office of the Auditor General's report to prioritize vulnerable populations in our housing programs.

From day one, our government has been committed to this partnership with KBC, contributing \$4.5 million to Normandy Living's construction. That includes \$3.5 million in pre-paid leases over a 20-year period and \$1 million in grants. We had originally intended for the pre-paid leases to provide 10 units

for low-income seniors on our wait-list. Now we are also providing them subsidized support services to accompany it. This represents an increase of \$201,000 in funding to our operation budget, offset by \$57,000 in supportive services revenue. Our government considers this a worthwhile investment to ensure that more seniors have housing security and can remain in the Yukon as they age.

I am grateful for the opportunity to work with KBC on this project and am proud of the additional 84 units that Normandy Living brings to this territory.

We are also reducing our capital budget by 28 percent.

We will continue to work with stakeholders to develop new land parcels, increase housing stock, and rapidly increase housing supply while also responding to the findings of the 2022 Office of the Auditor General's report on housing. That said, there are a number of challenges that can influence progress. Part of this is tied to inflation, resulting in higher costs for materials and longer wait times, and part is tied to reduced access to trades — the people required for project success.

This is further linked to the national economic insecurity that is resulting in more people thinking twice about advancing projects, including Yukoners who may otherwise access loans and grants to repair or build houses as a result of considerably lower uptake than expected in years prior.

So, the budget for the flood relief program is being reduced from \$2 million to \$500,000. This, however, is offset by a contingency that sets aside money for emergencies like fires, floods, highway washouts, and other emergencies. Again, before I start to receive questions concerning our capital, I want to emphasize the extent to which we must consider this budget in the context of Canada's current economic reality. We can see the increasing cost of living reflected in our rising electrical and heating costs for housing units, for which we have increased our tenancy supports branch by \$626,000 through our operational budget. I will note that we are also making efforts to reduce the impact of electrical and heating costs by extending the inflation relief rebate again for all ratepayers.

For Yukon Housing Corporation, however, costs are somewhat mitigated in our follow-up to the *Our Clean Future* plan. As a reminder, the *Our Clean Future* plan is the Government of Yukon's response to the climate emergency and was developed in partnership with our Yukon First Nations, transboundary Indigenous groups, and Yukon municipalities over the course of three years. With respect to the Yukon Housing Corporation and *Our Clean Future*, one example of our efforts is seen at 401 Jeckell, which opened in January with energy efficiency far and above what was required by building codes.

However, this has not changed the fact that the rising costs of heating and electricity is one of the many factors causing the cost of living to rise for most Yukoners. Inflation and high interest rates have made home ownership more of a challenge for many people than was experienced by previous generations of Yukoners. Again, this is, of course, not a problem that is limited to the Yukon, but it is one that we are working to address. In acknowledgement of the rising costs of construction, interest rates, and inflation, making this a

challenging time for new builds, we are seeing diminishing applications for the municipal matching rental construction and developer build loan programs. To remain accountable to Yukoners as good stewards of public funds, we are lowering those budgets again by \$9 million in response to this.

Yukon Housing Corporation, again, will bring more stock online. As important as it is to build quickly, it is even more important that we build right, and that involves community consultation.

With that, Deputy Chair, I will hand it over to the opposition to start questions.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the officials who are here today and the officials who provided the briefing last Thursday.

I do have a question on project delays. Can the minister please provide a list for the House of the projects that were delayed last year and hopefully a status update on each?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Our three capital projects that were delayed were the Watson Lake Housing First project — and I can add a little bit more information on that project. Of course, we went into further consultation on the Watson Lake housing project. Over the last year, we spent some time with stakeholders in Watson Lake, and that was really for gaining more information concerning what the community wanted. We had brought in a design. Of course, the municipality had representation there. I spoke about this in the House before. I know that the Member for Watson Lake was there. We had some good feedback from many community members. The Mayor of Watson Lake was there as well and the Chief of the Liard First Nation. I know that further consultation occurred concerning the Watson Lake Housing First project.

The Yukon Housing Corporation received first approval for construction of the 10-unit Housing First complex in Watson Lake, and we just released a request for proposal. That's the project that we did more work on last year to ensure that we had a really good sense of what the community wanted and had to move forward on.

I know that the Member for Watson Lake touched on — I think, last week — that there were concerns about the location. I know that previously it was the location. I spoke with a builder from Watson Lake this morning and I know that it was a location that was previously used for a multi-unit building. The location — and the concerns around the location — is not something that I have heard about, but I think the Member for Watson Lake touched on that. Again, when we were there with the mayor and others, we hadn't heard that, but I am not saying that it can't be the case — that it is an opinion that is also being felt by some.

But, again, we are looking to move forward on this project. Construction is anticipated to begin later in 2024, and we are looking at a completion date of May 2024. This project, as well, with support from the Department of Health and Social Services, will provide safe, permanent housing options for individuals experiencing homelessness who face barriers to stable housing, including mental health and/or substance use challenges. Of course, Deputy Chair, it is important to note that this is very in line with what we saw in our analysis of housing needs in Watson Lake, as well as the OAG report — and, of

course, we are trying to follow those recommendations very closely. This project will address a gap in supportive housing that was identified in the housing needs assessment conducted by a third-party group for Watson Lake in 2020.

Housing First, for those who are listening, is an approach to ending homelessness that provides vulnerable individuals with immediate access to housing without pre-conditions such as sobriety or treatment plans, and we have one building here that seems to have worked — it has been working quite well and has provided some very low-barrier housing options for some of our most vulnerable population.

Programming will be delivered using Housing First principles, with Health and Social Services overseeing the provision of on-site support services on a 24/7 basis — again, like the way in which the Whitehorse Housing First residence is currently operated. Supportive services are offered to help people maintain their housing, promote recovery, and foster self-sufficiency.

Just a little background — I know that it was talked about. The building site for the Housing First complex is the former site of the Lakeview Apartments, and that was previously owned by the Liard First Nation development corporation. The building was closed in 2019 due to some health and safety concerns, and then the Town of Watson Lake took ownership of the property in late 2019, and Yukon Housing Corporation purchased the property from the Town of Watson Lake.

Of course, in those discussions, my sense was that the Town of Watson Lake was aware of what the Housing Corporation had planned to build, and then we determined that the building that was there — it was unfeasible to repair structurally and, through a tendering process, the building was demolished in 2021. So, on this project as well, the design for the complex was awarded in the fall of 2021. In December 2021, a number of stakeholders were together to engage, and then consultations with the design took place with the Liard First Nation chief and council in December 2021 and January 2022 and with the Town of Watson Lake mayor and council in January 2022. In May 2022, Yukon Housing Corporation hosted a Housing First open house. So, that gave us the time. We want to make sure that we de-risk this project as much as we can, and we know that last year was a really strong year for capital spending over — I believe close to or over — half a billion dollars in capital projects throughout the Yukon.

The second project that was delayed was the Dawson City community housing project. I will get a little background on that.

So, in 2021, the Dawson City housing needs assessment identified several gaps across the housing continuum, including lack of rental housing and shortage of home ownership opportunities. As Dawson continues to grow — and I believe that Dawson City is our fastest growing community outside of Whitehorse in the Yukon, so we have seen really significant growth there and some economic strength based on a number of factors over the last number of years. But as Dawson continues to grow, we're seeking to address some of these housing pressures with the construction of a duplex that will be

completed his spring, so that's one project that was out the doors and is being built. Again, it gave us a sense to see what the housing costs were. There was a little bit of a discussion about some of the cost estimates that we have.

Deputy Chair: Order, please. The member has 10 seconds remaining.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Okay. I will sit, and if the member opposite wants me to continue, I can speak to the question which was about the projects that were delayed last year.

Ms. Clarke: So far, I got the Watson Lake Housing First project and the Dawson community housing project delayed. I would like the Premier to continue.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you to the member opposite. Yes, I just touched on the Dawson duplex, but that one is actually under construction. This is in addition to planning construction. So, it is a 34-unit, multi-family housing complex on the Korbo lot. That's located at 954 6th Avenue. A request for proposal for design of a new housing complex is currently being developed and is anticipated to be released later this year.

One of the things we are trying to do with the Dawson City project is ensure that we take into consideration other things that are happening within the community in the sense of capital builds. We know that there is a lot of work being done on recreational infrastructure. There was a lot of horizontal services work that was done and being upgraded. We are also very cognizant of the fact that we're likely to see even more significant growth in the tourism industry in Dawson City this summer. We are also weighing the fact that, because of the growth in the community, we have seen more pressure on housing. Of course, that is why we are looking at investing in this infrastructure, but it's also important to understand what kind of pressures some of the construction will put on housing. We want to maximize the capacity within the community for contractors and subcontractors, but we also know that, with one or two very large projects like this, we have to really be coordinating with Highways and Public Works as they look to tender these over the next while.

Dawson City, again, was the second project. The other project that was delayed is the Teslin sixplex. In 2019, Yukon Housing demolished the staff triplex, which was deemed beyond economical repair. Yukon Housing was replacing this building with a new sixplex, which will include a new housing community office.

I want to note that the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin did reach out to me. I want to make sure, as we go down this road — I know there were some ideas around whether this is something that potentially the private sector could look at having a role in. We will be looking to have the private sector build this project out, but I will check with the president on that just to see. I know there was the housing office. The officials are just letting me know that there are two challenges happening. We are waiting to get the rezoning done, I believe, by the Village of Teslin, and there needs to be a consolidation of lots as well. That's all under play.

We are looking to get that work done. Of course, we are working with the Village of Teslin on subdividing and rezoning this property to enable the project. Those are a couple of things

that are underway, and that's what my officials are sharing with me. I am just going to make sure I have the right information.

I hope that answers the question, and I look forward to the next question from the member opposite.

Ms. Clarke: I have a clarification question regarding the Housing First project. I just want to clarify the dates for that. I have here May 2024 as the target for the completion, but I missed when it would start — just the dates.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The tender is still active, so for the start date, we are anticipating that the project would start this spring, but we are waiting to see the close of the tender. Our scope for the project — we are anticipating that the project would be completed in the spring of 2024.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the minister for that answer. Deputy Chair, I am going to move to the rural homeowner loan program. Can the minister please tell the House what the uptake was for the rural homeowner loan program?

I did ask this question in the briefing that was provided by officials, but no numbers were available at that time.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to let the member opposite know that I did have an opportunity to speak with officials today. I know that there were a few questions that were asked and there was information committed to being provided, so there is a note that they will provide to me that I can table. There were some questions around the supplementary budget but also concerning the mains, and so we will make sure that we get that ready for her and that we provide it. They did a pretty good job of getting some materials ready, though. The home ownership loan program — the first thing that is important to note is that previously — and I think that is the number the member opposite touched on — it was focused on a rural area up until this next fiscal year in the mains coming up, because now we have included Whitehorse.

The reason for that was because we went through a period of time when there wasn't a strong uptake in Whitehorse because people were going out and just using financial institutions that had extremely low interest rates and it was easy for them to get access to loans. We did learn some things through that process. We did learn that when you buy a lot and you want to build your own structure it can be quite challenging, and so that was one of the main reasons that we felt it was important to get Whitehorse included again. But also, spending time out in the communities, I will say that it was very clear to us that it was important to have this. We even made some adjustments to the program. I was in Teslin and Gord Curran — at that point, the mayor but also former president of AYC — was really lobbying about the fact that we needed to ensure that the cap of what we would loan out increased, and it was also hard for people in rural areas to leverage the dollars. It was also hard in some cases to get estimates or comparisons to other houses of similar scope so that people could get approval at the bank. That is, in some reasons, because the costs had become more significant after supply chain disruptions and geopolitical unrest.

Again, we listened and we did that work. As I said, Whitehorse residents will be eligible for the program in the first quarter of the fiscal year.

Since 2021 to date, the program — getting back to the core of the question — has supported 22 clients in seven rural communities, for a total of \$8.6 million. Again, this number does not include applicants approved but who did not advance their projects. Each approved, built, or purchased project may result — sometimes people will get approved, but there could be some delays.

There were five approved loans last year for that program in rural Yukon. I believe about \$635,000 was not used for that program. We believe that we are going to be more highly subscribed to this year, with the addition of Whitehorse now being included in the program.

Ms. Clarke: I just want to clarify: Was the rural homeowner loan program fully subscribed? How many applied? The minister mentioned that there were 22 clients in seven communities. How many applications were received?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No — there is confusion. The number 22 was the total quantum over the life of the program while we were delivering it in the communities. That is when I spoke to that total quantum of over \$8 million. Last year, I believe we were undersubscribed; we had five clients. We can get back with the exact number — the delta off the loan program versus what was fully used.

I think the other part of the question was: Were there other applicants? If there were applicants turned down, it wouldn't have been because of financial reasons; it might have been a challenge with the application. So, we didn't use all of the money; five people were approved. We will find out how much money the difference is for the member opposite.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the minister for that answer. I do have one more question: On Normandy, can the minister please provide a breakdown of the \$201,000 increase for supportive services for 10 units in Normandy Manor? I see that this cost includes one full-time position, but what would the rest of the costs cover?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The question, as I understood it, pertains to the just over \$200,000 that was used. It's broken down into two areas. There is three months of a position in the fiscal year as it closed out and then the rest of the full year. Some of the support service items that we do cover in the building sometimes concern recreational activities and some meals or other services that we provide the clients who are in need and are using those leased spots. It's going back to that 20-year lease. What we are trying to do is ensure that individuals who might be seniors and in a lower, more challenging financial spot have the access to this, and then what we have tried to do is offset not only the cost of the spot, but we also are providing some additional services to those individuals.

Ms. Tredger: I will start by thanking the officials for being here and thanking all the folks over at Yukon Housing Corporation who are listening in and are working to help get the answers for today.

I want to start by asking about the wait-list. We were provided the wait-list at the briefing, but if the minister could just tell us again: How many applications are on the Yukon Housing wait-list? And if he could break those down by number

of seniors and number of families and, if possible, by number of people in the priority groups, as well, that would be great.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Right now, as of our latest numbers, there are 244 people on the wait-list — 244 applicants. We have 108 seniors, 131 non-seniors, and five Yukon government employees on the wait-list.

I think the next question was by category. Let me sit down, and then if the member opposite wants to clarify, then I can get a sense of whether she wants a community breakdown as well. Those are the three categories, and that is where we stand as of today.

Ms. Tredger: I was wondering about the number of families on that wait-list, and I was also wondering about the number of people in priority groups, which, I believe, are those with mobility issues, people fleeing violence — and I can't remember the exact one, but the minister will have that, I think.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to make sure of the level of specificity that we have. I think I can probably bring numbers back on the victims of violence as a breakdown, but, yes, I can come back. I have the application numbers. I have the demographic numbers but not broken down into the number of individuals who are part of each application — two people or a family. I will do our best to go back and look at that data, and then we can cross-reference that against some of the categories concerning mobility challenges or victims of violence and then come back to the House. I don't have that at my fingertips today.

Ms. Tredger: I look forward to receiving that. Perhaps I will ask about that again in the mains. That might be a good time to give that information.

My next question is — I understand that Yukon Housing, during COVID, paused the requirement to submit a notice of assessment each year, and that has restarted again, so applicants are required to resubmit a notice of assessment; I believe that is correct. So, there were some people who did not submit notices of assessments this year, and I believe they have been taken off the list. I am wondering how many people didn't submit a notice of assessment. I understand that there are probably many reasons people didn't do that — everything from having found other suitable housing, which I hope is the case for all of them, but also perhaps there were people who didn't receive the notification that they needed to submit that or had difficulties doing it. I am just wondering about the number of people who have been taken off the list.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It's interesting. It is something that, in my role, I have really tried to dig in to understand. We know that we were in a position where the wait-list had crested over 500 applications. One of the things that I asked the team was to really ensure that we were in a position to understand who is on the wait-list. Are they new Yukoners? Are they people who have just moved here? Are they people who have been long-term residents of the Yukon? We have to understand this data. I don't think that there was a period of time when it was really understood before. It grew up to, I think, 514 in August 2022.

Part of our process, which is important to note — I am going to touch on a couple of things. It is difficult. It's a tough conversation that we've been having in the House, and some of

it has to do with how many people are on the wait-list — also, seniors and how have decisions by the board of the Yukon Housing Corporation affected seniors who would be looking to apply? What I mean by “affected” is: If you have your asset cap — which is what the Auditor General of Canada said we need to put in place — we need to look after the most vulnerable folks. We also know that we need to have the right data, and that is something else that we have been told by the Auditor General.

So, I can go with that number of, let’s say, over 500. Where we are now is that — my latest number here is that there were 204 applications removed. Out of all of those individuals, nine were put back. There were nine. It wasn’t a situation where — it was that people went out to find other places to live or they were not seeking to be part of our Yukon Housing process anymore. It really gave a better sense of what the needs were.

There are a couple of things that I’m still live to — the by-name list, keeping a sense of that, and then what this wait-list is as well. It was nine who reapplied following the December NOA removal. I have been trying to watch that too — to see if some people are lagging behind. I will bring those numbers to the House as they come through, but that’s how we got to 244 on the wait-list.

Now, I also want to be transparent with the Assembly. There have been 37 applications removed from the wait-list that are for seniors, 37 applications across the Yukon due to the asset cap, and that still leaves 104 seniors currently wait-listed. So, there are 104 applications; we have been told by the Auditor General to focus on those. I even said to our team today that if we are in a position where the units that we have available — or the opportunities that we have available for seniors — if we are in a position where we had empty spots, then we would, of course, look to try to adapt where we are. But, right now, we know we have to fill these spots and we know that there are 37 seniors who are above that cap. Of the total wait-list, just to give a sense, about 41 percent are seniors of the total wait-list that we have — about 58 percent non-seniors. One percent is staff housing, which we don’t do in Whitehorse, but some of the communities still have it, and really about 75 percent of the total quantum is in Whitehorse and we’re seeing 25 percent in communities. We think that, if we look at the pressure points right now, they are really around Watson Lake and Dawson City, so we want to make sure that we support that.

But that doesn’t mean that we’re not looking at other opportunities as well to help work that wait-list down. We met with Carmacks Development Corporation last week, and then I met with the Chief of Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation last week as well on Thursday night. We’re just looking at different ways that we can partner up with either the private sector, First Nation governments, or NGOs as well — where we can de-risk a project so that we have units in some of those other communities. I hope that provides some of the details that the member opposite was looking for concerning the wait-list, the transition on NOA, and I’ve added a little bit more information there concerning the asset cap.

Ms. Tredger: That was very helpful, and actually, that anticipated my next question about the asset cap as well. One

quick question about the NOAs — I think there are 195 people then who haven’t reapplied. If any of them reapply now, will their application be treated as a new application or will it be backdated to their previous application date?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to check on that. I think that it is two parts. My sense is that if individuals provide an updated NOA and they meet the criteria — let me make sure that you have the most accurate information here.

So, a letter was sent to the wait-listed clients on November 22 to inform them that a notice of assessment process was being reinstated and that documents would be accepted until December 9. A follow-up letter was sent to those who missed the December 9 deadline, notifying what steps could be followed to be reinstated on the wait-list, and then Yukon Housing Corporation staff spoke with many applicants to help them maintain their status on the wait-list as well. Those who did not resubmit their notice were placed on a separate list and granted an additional six months to submit documentation to be reinstated.

So, people still have — there is a period of time. As mentioned, the request for wait-listed applicants to resubmit their notice of assessment marks a return to the normal procedure. So, there is a fairly significant amount of time that is there for individuals to submit. Applicants will be reinstated if they provide an NOA by — the date exactly — June 30 of this year.

Ms. Tredger: I appreciate that. I am glad they will have until — I think June 30 was the date mentioned. I guess I would ask for flexibility even beyond that date. Even when you move occasionally, it is quite hard to keep up with your mail going to past addresses, and I can really only imagine what it is like if you are couch-surfing or actually homeless. Trying to get your mail on a regular basis is, I think, next to impossible. So, I think it is extremely possible that there are people who did not get the letter or follow-up letter, and I really hope that there will be flexibility for them.

I wanted to ask a little bit more about the asset cap. I also understand that there was change to the way locked-in retirement assets and registered investment funds are being considered for seniors who are on the Yukon Housing wait-list. Could the minister clarify that?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Actually, just while we are getting the information, I just want to get clarity specifically as it pertains to that. I will go through some of the information that I have, and if I haven’t spoken to the part that speaks to some of the financial portfolio pieces — and if an individual has — then I will do my best to get back up and speak to that.

So, in 2022, now again, concerning the asset cap policy, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada’s report to the Yukon Legislative Assembly on Yukon housing identified concerns that Yukon Housing Corporation has applied different asset cap criteria for seniors versus non-seniors in community housing. So, we had an asset cap in place, of course, for non-seniors. Our government recognized the importance of ensuring that program eligibility is transparent and equitable for all tenants. This winter, Yukon Housing Corporation updated its asset cap policy. Our board, which has members from

Whitehorse and the communities and a number of different perspectives, supported the change to reflect the requirement that all future applicants must have assets under \$100,000. Again, we are committed to ensuring that housing access is available to Yukoners who are most in need. I know that all members in the House — from the questions — feel the same.

I think there was a very specific question there concerning investment portfolios — and RSPs, I think, is what it was. We will get that ready for the mains. Anything that pertains to our treatment of specifics — and maybe when the member rises to ask the next question, just to clarify — I will take a look broadly with our scope, but if there are particular investment vehicles that the member opposite is thinking of, please let me know, and I will do my best to speak to that as well.

Ms. Tredger: I have heard from someone on the wait-list that there had been a change so that locked-in retirement assets and registered investment funds were now being considered assets instead of income. I was hoping to get a bit of clarity on that to see if that was accurate. I will just give the minister a chance to respond.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have a better understanding now. If there is a locked-in retirement investment fund and if there is a treatment to that in a different way versus an income source as an asset, I will come back to the House. I'm not sure about the specificity of that question — or even an RSP. I will try to get a sense of what that is and if there have been any big changes.

I will say this on the record: Anyone who has been in the portfolio of housing minister for the last number of years has been briefed on these challenges. I believe that the Yukon Housing Corporation has seen the need for an asset cap. Would I rather not be having to sit here and have a discussion about an asset cap for seniors? Absolutely, but we are in a position where, right now, the Auditor General's report — which has come forward and which the House has quizzed us on and quizzed me on, on a number of occasions — had said that we have to put an asset cap in place, you have to be fair to your clients, and you also have to be in a position where we make sure that we prioritize those in need. That is the direction we have. The board of the Yukon Housing Corporation has implemented an asset cap.

As I said today, if we are in a position, over a period of time, where we have enough units and the most vulnerable seniors have now been able to, through their application process, get a unit that they're looking for and that will fit their needs, of course we can still adapt. If we have more units, of course the board can then look at it and make a decision. I can go back to the board and say that the most vulnerable folks who are seniors have now been put in a position to get a unit, and we think we have some room. Those are the things that can happen, but right now, we have to focus on those 104 seniors who are on our list. Again, I don't know if this has been a change or not, but registered retirement income funds are considered assets. I will find out if there's a difference between a locked-in versus an RRSP — I assume that both investment instruments are being considered under the same scope and I will find out if there has been a change in our view of that over

the last six months or a year — when this asset cap change has been made — something that's new.

I think that previous to this, we probably weren't dealing with seniors and an asset cap, so probably a lot of the clients we were working with didn't have some sort of a retirement fund put away. I will look to get further information and detail.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. I do appreciate that it was a specific question. I was just hoping to get some more information and I appreciate him coming back with that.

I really do get his point about wanting to make sure that the seniors who are the most in need are the ones getting housing. It is a tough, tough situation. I appreciate that. I appreciate that we all want everyone to be housed and we also have a very long wait-list.

I just want to acknowledge that there are people who are in a situation where that puts them in a very difficult spot. We all probably read that article about the couple in Watson Lake who had just over \$100,000 and was hoping to be able to get into an accessible Yukon Housing unit but couldn't because they had a home that was worth just over \$100,000 in combination with their vehicles. You can sort of think — like, what is that couple supposed to do? Are they supposed to sell their mobile home and move into a rental unit? But there are very few rentals available in Watson Lake, so I guess they have to move to Whitehorse and wait for that money to run out and then come back to Yukon Housing. It is just a really tough position for people to be in, and it's hard to know what they are supposed to do. This is particularly true for people in the communities, because there is not a lot of rental housing available in the communities outside of Whitehorse. People in Whitehorse may have some more options. There are still not a lot of options, but there are some available for people to rent, but that gets even harder when you are outside of Whitehorse.

I know that we need to have asset caps. I know that we need to prioritize people, but I am just asking for the Housing Corporation to consider some flexibility around these cases that are kind of on those borderlines.

I want to switch gears now and talk about the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. I have a letter that a constituent received from the Housing Corporation saying that she does not qualify for the Canada-Yukon housing benefit, and it's because she is a single person, so she only qualifies for a bachelor-sized unit. It's fair enough that single people should be living in bachelor-size units; I understand why they would make that decision. The problem is that I actually can't think of any bachelor units that are available to rent in Whitehorse. Maybe there are some, so I guess my question is: Does the minister know if there are any bachelor units available to rent? I think there may be some coming in Keish Street, but are there bachelor units available for people to rent? If not, what are people supposed to do when the only thing available to them is a one-bedroom unit, but they don't, as a single person, qualify for a one-bedroom unit?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am just going to share a little bit of information with the House about the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. The benefit is a rental subsidy program run by Yukon

Housing Corporation that provides financial support to help Yukoners meet their housing needs. The subsidy is paid directly to the individual, allowing portability and confidentiality. The Canada-Yukon housing benefit is currently helping about 137 households, for a total of 300 households since the program launched in November 2020. It comes in four different increments: \$200, \$400, \$600, and \$800. Our cap of applicants — I think it is right around 200. That is usually how many people we can support, and there have been ongoing conversations with the housing minister — Minister Hussen — on the program.

I am just going to go through a little bit of background for folks — some other information. So, you have to have an annual combined household income of all adults — 19 or over — who are living in the home under the affordability household income limits. Again, it is the same — it is that \$100,000 in assets — and file an annual Canadian income tax return — income from a qualifying source. Approved clients receive cheques before the first day.

What I will endeavour to find out, which we will look into, is — I agree. This is about supporting people who are looking for a spot. We know that we have money; we know that we are undersubscribed. What we are going to need to do is — and this is where it gets tricky. I need to find out if it is policy-driven on our side or if it has to do with the transfer payment agreement with the federal government, because we have gone back and forth a lot on this. I can share with the House that there was a lot of interest from CMHC around ensuring that the funds that we receive are focused on VOV clients — victims of violence. Then, it was also the scope of that. It was also about gender-based violence broadly. Our team has done a really good job. I know that there have been some comments from the opposition about: Are we supporting victims of violence? But we have done a really good job of making sure that we are consistently prioritizing and supporting those individuals. So, we went back to Canada and said: “Look, we still want the funds that you are willing to provide us, but we want to use them with more flexibility.” We will always ensure that our priority list is the most vulnerable, victims of violence, and those experiencing gender-based violence.

We will make sure that this is the first thing we do, but if we have extra funds — I know that the criteria sometimes can be hard to deal with, because we receive it from the federal government and then we are rolling it out.

The subsidy provided is based on the unit that they qualify for. A single person can still rent a one-bedroom. It is based on an income, not unit rented. I can find out if that’s driven through our policy or not. So, it might not be a two-bedroom for one person. I will find out what that policy is, but certainly it can be a bachelor or a one-bedroom unit. To answer the question — I don’t have that number right now of how many bachelor units, but I know that there are one-bedroom apartments out there — probably not a lot, but there are — and there seem to be more coming online as we see projects come to completion.

Ms. Tredger: I really appreciate the minister’s commitment to looking into it.

I will just quote from this letter that was received from the Yukon Housing Corporation. It says — quote: “A single person living alone qualifies for a bachelor-sized unit.” Then the household incomes are based — there is a different household income maximum for a bachelor than for a one-bedroom. I believe this person, who is a single person, would have met the income level for a one-bedroom but not for a bachelor, and there were no bachelor units available for her. I really appreciate the minister’s willingness to look into that. I really hope that we will be able to support people who are single people to still qualify for a one-bedroom unit, because that is just what is available, as far as I know.

I had a question specifically about the supplementary budget. There is an increase of \$626,000 for increases to utilities. Of that, it says that \$396,000 is to cover electrical costs. I was unclear on what that was because, to the best of my knowledge, electrical rates haven’t gone up.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: So, there are two reasons for the increase in the supplementary budget. We have been doing a pretty job in managing any increases in our costs for utilities over the last while. We have had two drivers. We did have an increase in fuel cost, but we also brought more units online. So, this last year, of course, we had Jeckell, which is our 47-unit building; we also had triplexes, duplexes — a number of different buildings across the territory — and taking all of that together drove up our utility costs. That’s why, at the supplementary budget, it was no longer something that we felt we would try to shoulder inside our O&M budget, but it was appropriate to go back and request additional funds to offset those costs.

Ms. Tredger: That is really helpful; thank you. I want to dive into Normandy a bit, and I am seeing the time and that we don’t have a lot of time, so I am going to flag my question and the minister can respond if there is time, and if not, we can pick it up after.

So, I was doing a little bit of math on a sticky note, so it could stand to be corrected. If there is \$201,000 for supportive services for the last fiscal year — my understanding is that people started moving into those 10 units in December. So, that works out to about \$20,000 a person for those 10 units or about \$5,000 a month. If the minister could confirm that it is about \$5,000 a month per person for each unit for supportive services, I would appreciate that. My question is: Were those 10 units fully occupied as of December?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: So, we have — the fees are about \$33,000, but that was three months for the FTE. So, we have an FTE — the person who is there doing supportive services and helping with that. Then some of the other pieces, which are meals, recreational activities, and other services, so — let me come back at the mains and I will break down exactly what else is there, because I want to make sure that the math is correct. But again, part of that is for three months for an FTE and then the remainder is for those supportive services that we are putting in place for individuals. I’ll make sure that I can get a sense of move-in dates and other pieces just so I have accurate information for the member.

Ms. Tredger: Why is YG paying for a staff member as well as paying for individual costs for the units?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Well, first of all, our goal within this project partnership was to ensure that there was some de-risking done at the start, which was really those 10 units that were used and the 20-year lease period. I think there were different ideas about how the units could be used. This predates my time; there was another minister in place at the time. But I think that it was also to take into consideration folks who were coming into town and how we could use units.

What we've decided to do is to work with Health and Social Services to try to reduce our wait-list that we talked about earlier with those 104 seniors, specifically the seniors who are in Whitehorse. How do we do a number of things — how do we ensure that we get a unit — now that we have those units — but also, how do we consider if we are going to provide some of the services that are in place around the meals, security, laundry — but some of our clients may have more needs than a lot of the clients who would be seeking that opportunity. So, we're providing a support service that can help our clients who are a little more vulnerable, a little more in need. I know that I have met with some of our clients. Some of our clients are going to have more intense mobility issues. Some are going to have more needs just in comparison to the other clients, so that's why we are trying to support those clients in a different way, and that's the full-time position that we had three months of — that we paid for — and ongoing. Now, this is not, in some ways, dissimilar — of course, some of our other projects that we solely own do have individuals who do provide supportive services as well. I will try to get some more information. I know that the Department of Health and Social Services was also deep into this conversation and ensuring that we understood what the needs of the clients were.

If you go back and remember the OAG report, it talked about our most vulnerable clients, but it also talked about ensuring that there were stronger services in place for those individuals.

I will do my best, in the mains, to come back with a bit more of our decision-making process on that.

Ms. Tredger: I do have some follow-up questions, but seeing the time, Madam Chair, I move that you report progress.

Chair (Ms. Blake): It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled March 20, 2023:

35-1-91

Annual Report 2021-2022 Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board (Silver)

35-1-92

Annual Report 2021-2022 Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board (Silver)

The following document was filed March 20, 2023:

35-1-131

Mining intensity target — What We Heard — March 2023 (Streicker)