



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, October 19, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall Sitting

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, October 19, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker absent

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

Deputy Speaker takes the Chair

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

We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This afternoon in the House, we have a couple of people here for our Great ShakeOut earthquake drill tribute. I have Greg Blackjack, who is the director of the Emergency Measures Organization, and we also have Julia Duchesne, who is a communications analyst with Protective Services.

I would also like to introduce a good colleague of mine, Carla Gostick, who is with us this afternoon.

Applause

Deputy Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of International ShakeOut Day

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker — such a quick turnaround.

I rise today about earthquake preparedness in the Yukon, including the Great ShakeOut earthquake drill. Earthquakes can happen at anytime of the day or night, anytime of the year. Most of the land in our territory is in a medium to high risk — zone 4 earthquakes. Today, October 19, is ShakeOut Day. At 10:19 a.m., Yukoners and people across Canada practise drop, cover, and hold on for the Great ShakeOut earthquake drill. Millions of people worldwide participated in the same drill, learning how to stay safe during an earthquake. During most earthquakes, you will reduce your chance of injury if you drop, cover, and hold on. Drop where you are, onto your hands and knees. This position protects you from being knocked down by shaking and reduces your chance of being hit by falling or flying objects. Cover your head and neck with one arm and hand. If a sturdy table or desk is nearby, crawl underneath for shelter.

I know that my good colleague once tried that in this House. I am not going to do that this afternoon because I

wouldn't be able to get back up, but that is what you are supposed to do.

If no shelter is nearby, crawl next to an interior wall, stay on your knees, and bend over to protect your vital organs. Hold on until the shaking stops. If you are under shelter, hold on to it with one hand and be ready to move with the shelter if it shifts. If you have no shelter, hold on to your head and neck with both arms and hands. If you use a walker or wheelchair, adapt this drill — lock, cover, and hold on. First, lock your wheels. Sitting on your walker or wheelchair, carefully bend over as low as possible, cover your head and neck with your arms, a book, or a pillow and then hold on until the shaking stops. After an earthquake, an emergency kit will help you be self-sufficient if the power is out, the supply chain is disrupted, or you can't get to help.

Emergency preparedness is a joint effort and starts with every individual long before an emergency occurs. I have said this many times in this House and I will say it again: This week, take the time to learn more about earthquakes and take simple steps around your home to protect yourself and your family. Visit prepared yukon.ca for more information on how to prepare your emergency kit and learn how you and your family can get prepared for any emergency.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize October 19 as International ShakeOut Day, dedicated to earthquake preparedness for families, schools, and workplaces.

Most of us remember the earthquakes that hit Yukon and Alaska in the early hours of May 1, 2017. A magnitude of 6.2 earthquake shook Yukoners awake at about 5:30 in the morning and caused some damage to buildings as well as power outages. The epicentre of this quake was located around the border between BC and Yukon, about 80 kilometres from Skagway.

Another quake came at about 7:30 a.m. and even more felt this one as they went about their morning routines. Aftershocks were felt throughout the morning. These earthquakes were a reminder that, while we may be isolated here from a lot of the natural disasters faced elsewhere in the world, earthquakes can happen anywhere anytime, and it's important to be prepared.

ShakeOut Day is an opportunity for families and for schools to review earthquake practices with children to learn what to do before, during, and after an earthquake. Remember to drop, cover, and hold on and to stay in this position for one minute or more after the shaking stops.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to congratulate the millions of people worldwide and the 3,628 Yukoners here at home who, today at 10:19, practised earthquake drills at work, home, or school with the Great ShakeOut. Practice makes perfect, and the more people who have practised the drill of drop, cover, and hold on, the more people who will be ready for an earthquake.

Thank you to all those in schools, businesses, and governments who organized and ran drills to make us all better prepared.

Applause

In recognition of International Pronouns Day

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to International Pronouns Day.

My pronouns are “she” and “her”. Pronouns play a major role in defining who we are and how we perceive others. They are essential in affirming people’s gender identities and acknowledging their authentic selves.

Our words matter. The language we use serves as a lens through which we perceive and interpret the world around us. The significance of International Pronouns Day extends beyond courtesy and linguistic correctness. It’s about validating individuals, fostering inclusivity, and ensuring that everyone feels valued and respected.

Recognizing the importance of pronouns extends beyond today; it is a year-round endeavour that requires our ongoing commitment to education and understanding. The burden of normalizing correct pronoun use should not rest solely on the shoulders of transgender or gender-nonconforming people. I encourage all cisgender Yukoners to reflect on their gender identity and what it means to them. We need to affirm everyone’s gender identity and gender expression, as this is part of how we respect, value, and affirm all members of our community.

Even if you are not a member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and you think sharing your pronouns is not necessary for you, remember that you are not doing it for yourself; sharing your pronouns is an act of ally-ship because it creates a safe space for everyone else to share theirs without being singled out. Furthermore, when cisgender people share their pronouns, it deconstructs the idea that gender identity can be assumed based on one’s outward appearance. That idea conforms to and reinforces the gender binary and leads to harmful stereotyping of gender expression.

In the Yukon, we support the use of correct pronouns through inclusive policies and language guidelines and fostering safe and inclusive spaces in our schools, because education is key to building a society free of prejudice. Recently, we have seen a rise in political movements and legislation that targets the rights of transgender people in Canada and internationally. Teaching children about diversity and inclusivity is essential for building a more tolerant, equitable and compassionate society. It equips them with the skills and attitudes needed to navigate the world with empathy and understanding.

May this International Pronouns Day be a reminder that sharing one’s pronouns and being respectful of the pronouns of others is a simple yet powerful way to champion and normalize diversity and inclusivity.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize International Pronouns Day, which took place on October 18. This day was established in 2018 to help bring awareness to gender-inclusive language and provide more information about what pronouns mean to people. Respect for others is key to a healthy community, and it is important to recognize that using the preferred pronouns of an individual is one of the easiest ways to show respect and acknowledgement for someone who is transgender or gender-nonconforming.

Understanding when and how to use preferred pronouns may not come easily to all, and mistakes will be made. However, making the effort makes a difference to many. We will continue to do our best to make Yukon a welcoming place to everyone.

Salamat po.

Applause

MLA Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP for International Pronouns Day and I would like to say some thank yous. Thank you to the trailblazers who showed us what was possible, even when everyone told them it wasn’t. Thank you to the people who kicked and kicked at heteronormativity until the cracks began to show because, in those cracks, there is room for so many more of us. Thank you to Ivan Coyote for their poem, “A mantra for the misgendered”. I thought about trying to read it here and decided I couldn’t do it justice, but thank you for creating space and hope for so many — including myself. Thank you to Heather Kuttai, the Human Rights Commissioner of Saskatchewan who resigned this week over Saskatchewan’s discriminatory pronoun policy being forced into schools. Thank you to the students in Saskatchewan and New Brunswick who so bravely shared their stories about how these anti-trans policies are hurting and endangering them. Thank you to the people who are fighting back against anti-trans hate across the country through court cases, protests, and solidarity. Thank you to all of the people who support their family, friends, students, co-workers, and community members in so many ways. Thank you to all of the people who practise new pronouns on their own until they get it right. Most of all, thank you to the incredible members of the trans community who provide so much love, support, and protection for each other. Thank you for fighting for a place for all of us.

Applause

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

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. White: Madam Deputy Speaker, I have for tabling today a letter highlighting the teacher on-call shortage that has been sent to numerous people in this House.

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

THAT this House:

(1) expresses disappointment with the Government of Québec for their decision to raise tuition rates for non-residents of Québec attending English-speaking, post-secondary institutions in Québec;

(2) urges the Government of Québec to reverse this decision; and

(3) supports the Government of Yukon in their commitment to offering French first and second language education options in the Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to order a review of safety at the intersection of the Mayo Road and the Alaska Highway to determine how well changes made in recent years are working and whether additional measures such as improved signage or a flashing light are needed to improve safety.

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

THAT this House urges the Auditor General of Canada to conduct a performance audit of the Yukon business nominee program and the Yukon nominee program.

I also give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do order the return of documents showing the savings from the closures of:

(1) the Queen's Printer; and

(2) government stores.

Deputy Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Sexual orientation and gender identity policy in education

Hon. Ms. McLean: As the Minister of Education and the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, I am deeply invested in ensuring that every student in the Yukon feels safe, respected, and included, especially students from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Just two months ago, we took an important step forward by updating our sexual orientation and gender identity — SOGI — policy. This move aligns with the Yukon's *LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan* and embodies our unwavering commitment to inclusivity. We have modernized the language, clarified roles, and turned our recent *Education Act* amendments into an actionable policy. Through training and professional development, we are translating this policy into actions that empower our educators to foster a culture that welcomes all identities.

Another example of our commitment to this work is the recently announced partnership between the Department of

Education and the ARC Foundation, a charitable foundation supporting SOGI-inclusion educational practices in K to 12 school settings.

The foundation's SOGI 1 2 3 inclusive education supports a collection of lesson plans and resources that are renowned for equipping educators to make all students feel safe and educated in school. The ARC Foundation is also supporting our schools in the development of school-based procedures and guidelines that will help them fully implement our SOGI policy. Rainbow rooms, gender and sexuality alliances, or GSAs, and planned activities to celebrate diversity in some of our schools are notable examples of how our communities are embracing this journey toward inclusivity for all.

Each elementary school and secondary school follows its own path on this journey based on the specific needs of their students. Our aim is to nurture an environment where every student feels valued and safe, irrespective of their age and grade.

I am aware that some parents and families in our community have concerns about SOGI education; however, it's crucial to understand that almost two-thirds of 2SLGBTQIA+ students report feeling unsafe at school. While families have every right to teach their own values at home, children also have human rights. These are protected under the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which includes the right to be safe in their schools.

Our schools also have a legal and ethical duty to ensure the safety and inclusion of every student. We teach about different religions and cultures at school, but we don't teach students to change their belief systems. No one chooses their sexual orientation or gender identity simply because they learned about it in school.

I am always open for discussions on continuous efforts toward fostering inclusivity in Yukon schools. Our doors are open for meaningful dialogue that contributes to a broader understanding and support for our 2SLGBTQIA+ students.

On behalf of the Government of Yukon, I want to express my deepest gratitude to educators, administrators, and all school staff in our schools.

Mr. Kent: I would like to thank the minister for delivering this statement here today on the updates to the sexual orientation and gender identity, or SOGI, policy, as well as for the August 17 letter that she sent us, outlining the changes made so far and what will be looked at in the next phase of the review.

We believe all students need to feel safe, respected, and welcome at schools in the territory. That's why the Yukon Party initially introduced a school SOGI policy in 2012.

In the August letter, the minister outlined three areas of focus for the changes: modernizing language to ensure that it is inclusive, current, and relevant; the requirements outlined in Bill No. 304; and finally, addressing the use of pronouns for students, updating terminology to trans-inclusive, and clarifying points of contact and responsibilities at both the department and school levels.

The issue that we have seen making news in other jurisdictions is the use of pronouns and the appropriateness of

parents being informed of their child's choice or, in some cases, needing to consent to that choice. This is something that we have heard about from Yukon's families as well that are seeking clarification from the minister on this issue. The policy itself states — and I'll quote: "Administrators, staff and students will recognize people's correct pronouns, as declared by the individuals themselves. This requirement applies to students who have not made official changes to their name or gender in school records."

The question for the minister is: What role do parents, caregivers, or guardians have in the child's pronoun choice? Is there currently a duty to inform them if their child chooses a different pronoun? Is the minister considering different rules regarding the need to inform families, depending on the age of the student? Obviously, circumstances will vary from child to child and family to family, so how is this policy reflective of those differences?

I think we can all agree on the need for students to feel safe, respected, and welcome at school. We can also all agree that the success of a student increases when their parents or guardians are partners in their education. It is also important that parents and students feel respected by the government and that all reasonable concerns and suggestions are treated seriously. This is an issue that many people have strong views on, and it is important that government sincerely tries to foster respectful discussions and dialogue where parents and students all are heard and treated with respect.

When the minister responds, can she tell us where to direct families who have questions or concerns with the policy as it exists? How can families offer their thoughts on the next phase that is being developed? What opportunities will they have for input on the proposed policy?

Ms. White: There has just been a quick change on our side as we try to process, actually, the statement from the Yukon Party in response to this. First and foremost, let me just say that gender identity and one's chosen pronouns — not preferred pronouns — should be respected at all times. A child should be able to decide and it should be respected in school. What we have now just heard from my colleagues is worrisome for me.

Back to the SOGI policy, we appreciate the update. We will have questions at different points, but right now, more than ever, it is important that we, in this Assembly, stand by children as they are making these decisions.

This is not nearly as prepared as I expected it to be, but having been to schools and having sat with children, it is also important to note that when we talk about pronouns, we are not talking about preferred pronouns; we are talking about chosen pronouns. They identify who we are, and it is important that it is reflected in this policy and we appreciate that. We expect that there will need to be more work and more education around this, and I believe that it will be a conversation for another day.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the comments made. I want to reiterate just how important this topic is to so many Yukoners and how we share valuable information such as what

our schools are doing to increase safety and that it really does matter.

We are fortunate to be able to share this information with Yukoners and hear from all three parties on the record — I think that today is an important example of that — on this topic through the opportunity provided by ministerial statements. These statements are crucial for keeping the public informed, encouraging healthy debate in this democratic institution, and will serve as valuable resources for future generations, providing insights into current economic, social, and political landscapes. I have to just point this out because it is important.

In yesterday's issue of the *Yukon News*, I noted that the Member for Lake Laberge and the Member for — and I know that there are different topics every day — and the Member for Whitehorse Centre essentially said that these statements are not important. I hope that the members don't think that highlighting the importance of inclusivity in schools is a waste of the electorate's time. Our government certainly does not.

There are things worth repeating, and when we look at what is happening in Saskatchewan, where the government has tabled a bill with the notwithstanding clause to deprive trans children of their ability to feel safe, loved, and respected at school, I can say without doubt that this topic matters. The importance of a supportive environment for 2SLGBTQIA+ children and youth cannot be overstated.

When the lack of perspective and support is not shown, the risk for suicide, depression, and other negative outcomes increases significantly. Support for families, adults, and peers in schools can help reduce these risks. I have already talked about some of the tools that we are bringing in to support educators, to support this dialogue, to ensure that we have age-appropriate learning around Yukon's physical and health education curriculum, literacy around health and active living, social and community health, and mental well-being. In the months ahead, we will be engaging, again, with all partners in education, including parents, families, and others, to further refine our SOGI policy to address broader issues, such as trans inclusion in sports. That's another topic that we are talking about.

This collaborative approach ensures that our policies continue to evolve in line with the needs and aspirations of our diverse school communities. Madam Deputy Speaker, all youth and staff deserve a safe and supportive school environment. Our government is committed to advancing gender equity and championing equity in our schools.

I thank you for the debate today. I know that there will be a lot more to come in the months to come.

Deputy Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Housing development memorandum of understanding with Government of Ontario

Mr. Cathers: Madam Deputy Speaker, several months ago, the Premier travelled to Toronto to sign a housing development MOU with the Ford government in Ontario. The

agreement is supposed to offer the opportunity for the Yukon to learn from Ontario's "... significant public and private experience in promoting housing development..." The problem with this is that Ontario's housing development plans led to a scathing Auditor General's report, the minister resigning, and more recently, the launch of an RCMP investigation.

So, can the Premier tell Yukoners what actions have been taken to implement this MOU with the Ford government since he signed it?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Deputy Speaker, the focus of the work with the Ontario government was to look at having their Economic Development department provide a conduit for Yukon developers to access what you would call "patient funds" from institutional investors. We haven't seen a lot of institutional investment here — such as real estate investment trusts or even pension funds — coming into this market, but what we saw for a long period of time was only condos being built, because there weren't patient investors; so, that was the goal.

We have had developers in the Yukon reach out, and I know that our teams are going to be working to have them have opportunities to meet with institutional investors in Ontario.

Mr. Cathers: After questions and criticism from both the Yukon Party and the NDP about the MOU, the Premier did a radio interview. He was asked about his MOU commitment to host a familiarization tour in the Yukon for Ontario housing developers. The interviewer asked — and I quote: "And so it would be developers or business people from here going to Ontario, or people from Ontario coming here?" The Premier replied — and I quote: "No, it's about our folks going out there..."

The problem is that isn't what the MOU actually says. Section 2 of the MOU makes it clear that the Yukon government will host a familiarization tour, or trade mission, here in the Yukon for housing developers from Ontario to explore opportunities.

So, why did the Premier incorrectly describe what the MOU he signed with Premier Ford actually says?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: At the end of the day, this is what we are going to get. There is going to be no policy debate in this House with me. There are going to be no new ideas from the opposition. Every single thing that my team undertakes, whether it is a trip to Toronto to try to bring money here to build apartments, which we are talking about that we need, or whether it's a trip to India to go to try to recruit nurses, there is going to be something cast every single time — that is what it is going to be. It won't be a policy debate; again, they are going to try to throw some curve ball. I think that it does a disservice to the public servants who do this work. We think that bringing funds or even partnership, if it looks like that, between folks here and Ontario is a good thing.

We have done absolutely nothing incorrectly. This is a sad day when, every single time we try to do something innovative, we get attacked on something that seems to be, again, just really sad politics — always trying to bring it to the lowest common denominator; that is what we will see. I will wait for question 3.

Mr. Cathers: Madam Deputy Speaker, that wasn't an answer, and I would remind the Premier that I am not asking about his failed trip to India; I am asking about the questionable MOU with the Ontario government. That MOU is quite clear. It says that the Yukon government is hosting a tour for Ontario-based businesses to explore opportunities here in the Yukon. It clearly states that it is aimed at Ontario housing developers. Page 2 says — and I quote: "... for housing developers and professionals to explore opportunities in the territory." But the Premier tried to claim the opposite on radio.

The Ontario AG's report was highly critical of that government for giving preferential treatment to certain housing developers. Two questions to the Premier: Will any of the housing developers that the Auditor General said received preferential treatment from the Ontario government be part of the FAM tour hosted by his government? And who is picking which Ontario housing developers will be part of this tour the Premier's government is hosting?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that, if there are folks who want to invest in housing from Newfoundland, or Saskatchewan, or Ontario, or Alberta and they want to come here and partner with developers here, I think that's a good thing. I hope that the Member for Lake Laberge would. He touched on it and said "the failed trip to India". Again, I would like to know what metrics — because next week, we are meeting with another organization through Health and Social Services that is looking to help us support our needs and capacity when it comes to health resources. We have heard for days — specifically from the Member for Lake Laberge, who gets up and criticizes different areas of health.

So, when we go out and try to solve a challenge, we hear that there is a problem with it — I am answering the question. We will probably have questions today about rental housing, so we try to go out and make sure that the funds are here to build rental housing — from the person who had funds in his hands but decided that, because someone in his riding told him not to build affordable housing, he didn't. So, I'm not going to take any advice on housing. This is a person who got moved out of a portfolio because he didn't even know how to handle dealing with investment in housing.

So, the last person that anybody in this Assembly should take any advice from is the Member for Lake Laberge.

Question re: Rent control

Mr. Dixon: Yesterday, we presented stats that clearly demonstrate that the Liberal rent control policies are failing. Rents have increased dramatically since the policy was introduced, and the policy has failed to deliver any improved supply. In fact, the Premier acknowledged that the policy was causing people to leave the rental market and even lose their homes and used that fact to justify the launch of his new taxpayer-funded cash handout for landlords.

It was not lost on anyone that he launched this new landlord support program during Poverty and Homelessness Action Week. What message does the Premier think it sends to launch a landlord support program during Poverty and Homelessness Action Week?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Well, I think that during Poverty and Homelessness Action Week, standing up for individuals so that they will not lose their homes because of flawed legislation around the rental market is a good thing. What we heard, which was pretty clear from the Leader of the Official Opposition, is that he doesn't want to stand up for those people who are in a vulnerable situation, which I think says a great deal about his perspective when it comes to this topic.

Here is where we are: We are going out to try to make sure that there are more rentals. We hear the Member for Lake Laberge attack. We see the Leader of the Official Opposition quote something from the newspaper. It's a flawed methodology. I will state that. When the Leader of the Official Opposition gets up, with his background on these topics, I want him to tell me if he thinks that the methodology used to see if the rent cap was a successful program or is working — does he think it's a flawed methodology that was used by Mr. Halliday or is it an accurate one? I would like to know that when he gets up.

It may be a new idea, because we are on Thursday of this week, and the man with new ideas hasn't brought one new idea to the House.

Mr. Dixon: What's clear from the stats is that the Premier's policies have failed. I think it's clear to all Yukoners that the Premier is deeply out of touch on this issue. The rent control policy was introduced with the intent of keeping rents affordable. It's quite clear from the data that is not happening. It's quite the opposite, actually. Since the policy came into effect, we have seen rents increase much faster than inflation. We have seen the supply tighten as the number of rental units is not keeping pace with population growth. Affordability and availability of rentals are both getting worse. The Premier's solution to this is to hand out \$338 per unit to each landlord in the Yukon.

Does the Premier really think that limiting the amount landlords can charge with one hand and then handing them cash with the other is going to work?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: What we have seen is extensive investment in the rental market by this government. There are hundreds of new units being built. When we looked at new units coming online over a period of five years, we saw 12.9 percent of new units coming online with a population increase of 12.1 percent. So, yes, we were keeping up, even if we were dealing with some of the legacy challenges from my friends across the way.

I will also say, there is nothing within that methodology that says that this process did not stabilize our existing rental market. That's the thing; it's flawed.

The member opposite put an eloquent question together, but deep down, he knows that methodology does not take into consideration existing relationships in the rental market. What we wanted to do was to make sure that anybody who had a long-term rental was in an area — or that their rental rate was stabilized. All the new stuff we have invested in — yes, they are all coming on to the market with higher rates, so when you take the average, there has been an increase, but I will tell you

what it isn't: It's not an over 70-percent increase, which we are seeing in other provinces in this country.

So, yes, I think that the people who were vulnerable and who now have some stability — and during this week, appreciate it — and I do think that the landlords will appreciate the funds we are putting out over the next year.

Mr. Dixon: The Liberals have admitted openly that they did not campaign on rent control and have only implemented it because it was part of CASA. However, now the Premier has become the policy's most ardent supporter. His belief in the policy has only become stronger, he said last week. But now he is admitting that the policy hasn't worked and his solution now is to hand out cash to landlords, but this isn't fooling landlords or renters, Madam Deputy Speaker. The statistics are clear to everyone. The Liberal policy has failed, and this most recent cash handout is hardly the solution.

Does the Premier really think that giving landlords \$338 per unit will stabilize the rental market?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Deputy Speaker, what I will say — after signing on to our CAS agreement, there were two commitments that I made. One is that we looked at making sure that there was an increase for folks who were receiving minimum wage. We knew that would impact business as well, but we knew that the people who were going to receive that minimum wage needed it and appreciated it, and I support that policy. What we did say is that we would come back with something else. What we did was a nation-leading program for sick leave. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has stood up and applauded us on that program. Other provinces and territories are looking to support that.

At the same time, with the rent cap, I also committed that we would come back and we would offset if there was a delta between the five percent and CPI, which was 6.8 — 1.8 percent. We have calculated that out. We're providing a grant over this year. We are building new legislation because it is flawed and we don't need people getting rent-evicted and out on the street. We are not going to be like in the days when there was a tent city out there and all of these folks were walking into their offices because people were getting evicted and couldn't find a home, when, again, the Member for Lake Laberge decided to sit on money because one of the folks in his riding told him to. That is not how it's going to be. We are going to look after the rental market and we are going to see an increase in investment across the rental assets in this territory.

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: Consultation on school replacement

Ms. White: Twice a day, Takhini residents have to drive through their neighbourhood to get to work while commuters drive through Takhini to get downtown, the university, the Correctional Centre, and not to mention the office buildings on Range Road. Then there is the bicycle traffic and the many parents who drop off and pick up their kids at Takhini Elementary School. What we are left with is heavy traffic on a road with few crosswalks, limited safety features, and not enough lighting. Takhini residents are concerned about what will happen when this government quadruples the number of

students and parents using Range Road every morning and every afternoon. The traffic on Range Road is already too heavy to be considered safe. The City of Whitehorse was ready to improve traffic safety, but the government's failure to consult on the placement of this new school forced the city to wait.

What traffic and safety studies were conducted by this Yukon government before the minister decided to drop a school on this part of Range Road?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would like to start by saying that, of course, our government is proud to be investing in new school infrastructure. École Whitehorse Elementary School has been identified for replacement with a new modern facility that will meet the needs of the community for years to come.

In terms of the work that has been underway, we are in a planning phase right now for this new, important elementary school. We have been working — and I have spoken previously about the project advisory committee that has designated seats from the Whitehorse Elementary School Council, Whitehorse Elementary School administration, City of Whitehorse, Government of Yukon, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and Kwanlin Dün First Nation.

In August — and I have had a chance already to speak about this today. We have the project advisory committee to facilitate collaboration and the exchange of ideas between key partners, stakeholders, and Government of Yukon. This group meets regularly and we have recently hired our prime consultants, Kobayashi and Zedda Architects Ltd., who are doing the site assessments.

Ms. White: Notably left out of the minister's list was any representation from the Takhini neighbourhood. This government has made a series of unilateral and heavy-handed decisions about École Whitehorse Elementary School. The Liberals haven't bothered asking what parents think, what educators think, what school councils think, or, in fact, what any of the stakeholders think. Instead, they rushed through a process that affects hundreds of people without talking to anyone who would be affected first. They just made a decision and expected everyone to be fine with it. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, they aren't.

We have spoken to experts whose voices need to be heard, teachers who are experts in education, parents who are experts in what their children need, educators and principals who are experts in how to run a school, and residents who are experts on their neighbourhood. Why has the government repeatedly refused to consult and engage with parents, teachers, neighbours, and others on finding the best way forward?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we are very proud to be investing in our school infrastructure. The Takhini land reserve is a central location that can accommodate French immersion students from around Whitehorse. The Department of Education has established a project advisory committee to facilitate collaboration and exchange of ideas with key partners and stakeholders, including the residents of the Takhini neighbourhood. Project timelines will be determined as further planning work is undertaken.

Again, in August of this year, Kobayashi and Zedda Architects Ltd. was awarded the prime consultant contract for École Whitehorse Elementary School, a replacement project through a public tender. A preliminary site assessment is currently underway. This is an important investment for our government. When we looked at the Takhini education reserve, it's one of the largest in Whitehorse and has enough room to accommodate the type of infrastructure that is contemplated. There are not a lot of other sites that are centrally located and would meet the needs of a new school. There is not a lot of vacant land, plus it has all of the infrastructure that is already in place.

Ms. White: Takhini residents have made it very clear that they are upset about being shut out of consultations about the new school. The tender documents, which were blocked from public view after they were published this summer, state that Takhini Elementary might have to be demolished. Along with everything else in this file, this was yet another surprise for my community, which has been left in the dark every step of the way.

This government has done nothing to understand the impact that this project will have on our neighbourhood — no studies on safety and no study on how this will affect the greenbelt, sports facilities, or the walkability of the neighbourhood. So, when will this government formally engage with Takhini residents about the impacts that this school will have on our neighbourhood?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have gone over the information about the committee that's in place. In August, we hired Kobayashi and Zedda Architects Ltd. as the prime consultant. This work is underway. I appreciate the information that the Leader of the New Democratic Party is bringing forward today. We are in a full planning stage, and folks will certainly be brought into the discussion, including sporting groups and other partners that need to be part of this conversation.

We are moving forward in building new school infrastructure. We certainly did inherit a deficit when it came to school infrastructure, particularly elementary schools and particularly in the City of Whitehorse, and we are catching up to that and building new schools. We will have Whistle Bend come online soon and we are building a school in Burwash Landing, and we're moving forward on the planning for the new École Whitehorse Elementary School in Takhini.

Question re: Better Buildings program

Mr. Istchenko: When the Minister of Community Services proposed the creation of the Better Buildings program, he promised that it would meet the targets set out in the *Clean Energy Act*. The minister committed to a target of 2,000 residential, commercial, and institutional buildings in the next six years. Yesterday, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources revealed that the Better Buildings program has had only, in his words, about a half a dozen successful applicants.

Does the minister think that we are on pace to meet the goal of 2,000 buildings retrofitted under this program?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am happy to talk about all the work that this government is doing to adapt to our changing climate,

to reduce our energy consumption in the territory, and to make life a little bit more affordable for Yukoners, which is exactly what the Better Buildings program was designed to do, to help Yukoners make their homes more energy efficient.

The Better Buildings program, as the member opposite knows, offers low-cost funding to eligible property owners to complete energy-efficient retrofits. This means that more property owners will have the means to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprint. The funding is repayable by a local improvement charge attached to the property. It's based on the interest rates that are currently in effect, and we give a discount on that, so it's a very good deal for Yukoners and I encourage anyone who is thinking about improving their house to please apply.

Since the program launch on October 25, 2022, the Energy branch has received 55 applications from clients wishing to participate, so we are working on those applications. We hope we have more. As I said, interest rates have gone up, which is probably affecting the uptake of the program, but we are committed to making life affordable for Yukoners and are offering this program to do that.

Mr. Istchenko: The question that I asked was: Does the minister think that we are on pace to meet the goal of 2,000 buildings retrofitted under this program? I didn't get an answer.

It will be even harder for this program to be successful since the Liberal government has cut the budget by \$1 million, and the budget is only \$1.5 million to start with. Instead of cutting the budget, why doesn't the minister go back to the municipalities and ask for their feedback on making changes to this program that is so obviously not working as it was intended?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I can say that I began conversations with municipalities, it has to have been three or four years ago, around the Better Buildings program. We slowed it down in this House. The opposition voted to slow down passing this legislation. Okay, that's all right. And then, after consulting with municipalities — and now, all municipalities have signed on to the agreement. We opened it up, and the last information I have is that we have had 55 applications to the Energy branch.

There is starting to be those applications. Thank you to Yukoners. I think that this is a good policy, I think it's a good program, and I know the folks who are doing the work over at the Energy branch are very good at this, and I encourage Yukoners to go and talk to them about this opportunity to retrofit our homes. When we do this, we end up having to pay less for energy in the first place, and we save dollars for Yukoners over the long term, and that's why it's a good program.

The Yukon Party isn't interested in this program; I get it; that's fine, but I think it's good for Yukoners. I think it's good because it reduces our dependency on fossil fuels. That's why it's a good program.

Mr. Istchenko: Madam Deputy Speaker, he paused the program because he didn't consult — we forced you to go and consult. During the debate about the legislation, we heard from several municipalities that had concerns with the program. Even after the government agreed to make changes to the

program, several mayors and councils have expressed concern that this program is going to be very difficult for rural Yukoners to access, and according to the minister yesterday in this House, there has only been one successful applicant from rural Yukon so far.

So, will the minister agree to revise the program to make it more accessible to Yukoners living in rural communities?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: No, I don't think that is a good question, because what I hear is that the Yukon Party just wants us to stall the program again. What the Minister of Community Services offered to do is to have those conversations with municipalities while we got the program up and running, but no, the Yukon Party said: No, no, don't do that. Actually, I don't think that the Yukon Party is actually interested in this program at all. What I think is that they would like to see the program stall right out.

It's a great program. I encourage Yukoners to go to the Energy Solutions Centre to have conversations. I know that the Minister of Community Services is totally willing to have conversations with our municipalities, if they have any concerns; that's fine. I hope that they don't change their minds, because this is a great program for Yukoners, and I want to see it all across the territory.

Question re: Parent advisory committee

Mr. Kent: Madam Deputy Speaker, during a CBC interview on September 8 regarding the IPC's report on sexual abuse at Hidden Valley, the Minister of Education was asked about the parent advisory committee that was at the school. The minister told the host that she "... asked the department to make a permanent parent advisory committee...", later saying that it would be for all schools, not just Hidden Valley.

So, can the minister confirm that she means one committee for all schools or one committee per school, and when exactly did she direct the department to establish a permanent parent advisory committee for all schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I think I will start by just talking a little bit about the safer schools action plan, because that is really where the parent advisory committee came from. Of course, folks know that it started through an internal review of matters that happened at the Hidden Valley Elementary School. It resulted in seven recommendations and 23 action items that made up an action plan for safer schools.

One of those actions included establishing a parent advisory committee to work with us as the reports became available, and there are a few. I also, as I am on my feet, want to thank all of those who offered insights into what had happened at Hidden Valley Elementary School. That parent advisory committee has worked with us — me — throughout this process, and I will continue to build on that as we go forward.

Mr. Kent: I have the transcript here, and during that interview, the minister commented that — and I quote: "I've asked the department to make a permanent parent advisory committee." The interviewer said: "For all schools or just Hidden Valley?" The minister said: "Yeah, yes, for all

schools.” But the minister didn’t answer the question that I asked off the top.

So, can the minister confirm for us that she means one committee for all schools or one committee per school, and when exactly did she direct the department to establish a permanent parent advisory committee for all schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I did, in fact, say that I want to establish a parent advisory committee that would be able to advise me as we go forward, and, yes, I do confirm that I said that on CBC. I have had those discussions, as we were wrapping up some of the last discussions that we had with the current parent advisory committee that was specific to Hidden Valley Elementary School.

We talked about the need to have a parent advisory committee that could work with the minister’s office and Department of Education on matters that are — we have accomplished the safer schools action plan, and we know that there is more work to be done. My intention is to continue working with a parent advisory committee that would be able to have other members from other areas of the Yukon and be able to advise me and work with me as we go forward to further advance the work on safer schools in the Yukon.

Mr. Kent: The minister told the CBC on September 8 that she had asked the department to make a permanent parent advisory committee. So, the questions that I asked earlier today — neither of them was answered — but a number of school communities have been asking us about this new committee. There has been little or no consultation about it with school councils that we have heard from.

Has any consultation regarding this committee that the minister asked the department to establish been conducted so far? If not, when can education partners, including school councils and school boards, expect to be consulted on the establishment of the permanent parent advisory committee that the minister referenced on the local radio?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have just said in the House that I have asked for this to happen to ensure that we have a parent advisory committee that can continue doing the work. I am not sure if the member opposite is, you know — I get it that there is always kind of this “I got you” kind of politics thing that is going on. It is just not the way that I do my work, and I am always a little bit shocked at that kind of tactic that is used in here.

This is a great thing for Yukoners. It is a great thing to have more connection with the minister’s office, and it is completely within my authority to establish such a committee, and I have done that with the safer schools action plan. My intent is to continue to work with a parent advisory committee. It will not take away anything from our other partners, including school councils, so I can rest assured that you are not catching me on anything here. We are working with Yukoners, and that is my commitment going forward.

Deputy Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 774

Clerk: Motion No. 774, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Deputy Speaker: It is moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT the membership of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees, as established by Motion No. 12, be amended by:

- (1) rescinding the appointment of the Hon. Ranj Pillai; and
- (2) appointing the Hon. Jeanie McLean to the committee.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Deputy Speaker, this is just a straightforward motion replacing the membership of one of our standing committees.

Motion No. 774 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Deputy Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 33, entitled *Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 33: *Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)*

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 33, entitled *Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Deputy Chair, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill No. 33, entitled *Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)*. I have with me Jaime Mellott and Rebecca Veinott, who will be assisting us this afternoon.

This bill amends the *Registered Nurses Profession Act* by facilitating the creation of four new classes of licensing for

nurses in the Yukon and the *Registered Nurses Profession Act Regulation*.

This will support recruitment of registered nurses and nurse practitioners in the Yukon while protecting the health of Yukoners. This amendment supports the request by the Registered Nurses Association, which regulates the profession in the Yukon. These new classes will come into effect when the regulations are passed. These regulations will be consistent with the act and will be enforced by the Yukon Registered Nurses Association. They will allow the Yukon Registered Nurses Association to regulate the profession consistent with national trends and facilitate territorial access to health human resources while protecting the public.

The amendment supports the creation of four new classes of licensing. Those classes are — first is the interim class, which allows newly graduated nurses, nurse practitioners, and internationally educated nurses to register directly in the Yukon. Currently, nurses must be registered in another Canadian jurisdiction to be eligible. Further, applicants waiting for their entry-to-practice exam or other documents can apply under this class. The second class is the virtual class. It enables registered nurses and nurse practitioners from other jurisdictions to provide care for a specified purpose via virtual means such as telehealth. This will keep Yukoners in their homes and communities rather than having to travel for treatment. The third class, the courtesy class, allows specialists who come to practise in the Yukon for a certain time to bring their own specially trained nurses with them or someone who provides training or workshops. The fourth is the student nurse class, which allows student nurses to be registered to work here, for example, for a practicum under supervision.

The amendments also permit the Yukon Registered Nurses Association to enter into agreements with other jurisdictions to allow for portable and flexible nursing services by health care providers who are registered and hold a full licence in either the Yukon or any other participating jurisdiction. This is an important step to support labour mobility and remove red tape for health care providers. Updates will also allow greater flexibility in fees, which, in turn, will be attractive to nurses who wish to work in the Yukon.

We look forward to all the questions that may come this afternoon. We know that there is a lot of interest in this matter, so I will now turn it over to my good colleagues across the aisle.

Mr. Cathers: As the Official Opposition critic for Health and Social Services, I am pleased to rise in speaking to this legislation in Committee of the Whole.

We do have a number of questions and I want to note, as I did at second reading, that we do support the legislation moving forward and recognize that changes were asked for by the Yukon Registered Nurses Association. However, I do have to again state our concern that we were told that draft legislation was not shared with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association and the government does not intend to share the draft regulations with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association before Cabinet approves them.

As I noted before, there is nothing preventing government from choosing to share the fine print of proposed legislation or

regulations with stakeholders who will be directly affected by it. As I noted, my caucus colleagues and I believe that it is actually good practice for developing better legislation and better regulations. Also, as I noted in this particular case, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association is a stakeholder, but in addition to being a stakeholder, they are also the regulator responsible for implementing legislation and regulations. When you have a self-regulating profession like nursing in the Yukon, in my view, it is incredibly problematic for government to choose not to share the details of draft legislation and draft regulations with that regulator before bringing it into effect. There just isn't a compelling reason why government can't choose to share that draft if Cabinet approves that sharing.

As I asked at second reading, we would ask the government to revisit their plan and commit to sharing the text of the draft regulations pursuant to bringing this act change into effect with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association before Cabinet approves them. Will the minister agree to do that? If not, why not?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am going to ask for clarification from the member opposite. He is asking that we share the draft regulations with the association. Am I correct in that assertion?

Mr. Cathers: That is correct. I am asking that the minister commit to sharing the draft regulations related to this legislation with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association and allowing them the opportunity for feedback on that prior to Cabinet receiving the recommended regulations in the Cabinet submission.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for that clarification in restating the question.

As is the long-standing practice when dealing with professional associations with this Yukon government, we will, of course, be drafting the regulations hand in glove with the association that is the regulatory body. The member opposite is the former Justice minister; I am sure he knows this. Nothing has changed since his time in office. We will, of course, work with the association on those regulations. The answer to his question is, of course, yes.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate the minister indicating that. It is a bit different from what we had been told earlier. I just want to ask again, because I actually didn't ask my last question as clearly as I could have phrased it.

Just to be clear, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association will see a copy of the draft regulations and have the opportunity for input on it before it reaches the stage where Cabinet is looking at approving regulations.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, as is common practice.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that answer from the minister, and I am pleased that they will share that with the YRNA. I think it is a very important thing to do.

I want to move on to the question of international nurses and the registration here. We have heard a few different things from here. In looking at the legislation itself and the explanatory note that is contained within the bill that the minister tabled, it doesn't refer to international nurses. Now, the minister, in his remarks here at the beginning of Committee of the Whole, referred to several classes of nurses under the act.

The question, I guess, is if the minister could explain the discrepancy between what we are seeing in the bill itself, which doesn't seem to deal with international nurses — and, in fact, from the nursing community, our understanding is that they were not expecting these changes to address issues related to internationally trained nurses.

Can the minister confirm what the government plans to do in the regulatory package associated with this bill and if it will contain matters related to internationally trained nurses? As I noted, the bill itself doesn't actually contain any references to internationally trained nurses.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, they will be addressed through the regulations. The act amendments allow the regulations that will set new classes of membership. One of those is an interim membership that will allow internationally educated RNs and nurse practitioners to work in the Yukon while they are undergoing their assessments. This interim class will also be available to graduate RNs and nurse practitioners as they undergo their assessments to be fully credentialed.

Mr. Cathers: While that is different from what we understood from looking at the legislation, I am pleased to hear that the minister is looking at it. As you will recall, Deputy Chair, we have previously urged the government to look at — as a number of Canadian provinces have done, including Alberta and Nova Scotia — considering the possibility of identifying a list of countries with similar high standards in the practice of nursing as well as doctors and perhaps other health professions and, subject to consultation with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, considering the possibility of that approach while seeking their thoughts on the pros and cons of such a model. I am pleased to hear that the minister indicated that they are looking at internationally trained nurses.

Following that preamble, my question for the minister is: Is the government looking at doing a short-list-of-countries approach similar to how Nova Scotia and Alberta have addressed this issue of internationally trained nurses?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Deputy Chair, I am just going to preface my remarks to this: I think — and I am not entirely sure — but I think that the Member for Lake Laberge was actually complimenting me and my crew here for the work that we have done on this, and I want to thank him. I really do take that as an endorsement of the work that we have done, and I am glad he is happy that we have done what we always thought we would do and it meets his approval. That's great. And, so, thank you for that. That's gratifying, and I hope you make that public at some point and you share with the world that you're happy with this.

I will say that, as far as the international groups go, yes, it is something we certainly will consider. The nurses are the ones who are the regulators, of course. We will have to work with them to make sure that we come up with a means of doing this that meets their approval. As we said earlier, we are going to work with them on the regs.

Mr. Cathers: I am somewhat amused by the minister's response. I would note that I was trying to be nice in the manner I was asking my questions. The minister — I would encourage him not to try to be too cute about it here today. I do note,

though, that the minister again indicated that they're consulting with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association — welcome news — but I think that he got distracted and missed answering my main question, which is: Are they looking at a model for recognizing internationally trained nurses similar to what provinces like Alberta and Nova Scotia have done, where they have identified a short list of countries with high standards of practice that they will deal with in an expedited manner? Is that the approach being looked at, or is it something different?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, of course, that is the approach that we are considering taking.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answer. Could the minister let us know: At this point, what countries are they considering putting on that short list, again recognizing that he has committed that they will consult with the YRNA on that concept?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: No.

Mr. Cathers: Okay, Deputy Chair, I was hoping to get that information from the minister, and it is unfortunate that he doesn't wish to share it today. However, the key request — I am pleased that the government has finally agreed to consult with the YRNA on that, so I will move on to other questions in the interest of expediting debate.

As was brought up here at second reading, the Third Party raised concerns that they had heard, and we have also heard, from nurses about potential changes to the model of regulating nursing here in the Yukon, including the indication that it is their understanding, based on an e-mail from an official, that the government has chosen a model that they actually didn't consult on with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association.

Can the minister tell us the government's view on what they are actually considering doing in terms of changing the structure of who the regulator is here in the Yukon? What consultations have they had with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association? What further consultations will he commit to that may occur with them on this topic?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This afternoon, I will say this: Really, what the member opposite is talking about is a matter for another day, to be quite frank. We are in the process of fixing and expanding the *Health Professions Act*. It's a very big piece of legislation. It's going to take some time. That work does not mean that registered nurses and nurse practitioners will lose their autonomy.

Community Services is in the early stages of the policy analysis to deal with our work on the *Health Professions Act*, another bill that will come before the House, and the member opposite, in his capacity, will be able to question us about it at that time. It is certainly well beyond the purview of the act we have before us today. I can say that we are in the early stages of policy analysis for the review and no doors are closed.

I want to state that just because health professions will come under the broad *Health Professions Act* does not mean that the nursing association will lose its autonomy. As I said, we are talking to the nursing association. We will continue to work with the nursing association into the future as we work on this new piece of legislation.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that indication from the minister that — to use his words — “no doors are closed” and the indication that they intend to consult further with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association on that matter.

We have heard concerns from nurses regarding what they had understood the government is planning to do related to changing the regulatory model, and we were also concerned by that. I gather that I am not going to get more information from the minister on that topic here this afternoon, but I do look forward to hearing more in the future. We want to ensure that, going forward, the regulatory structure is an appropriate one and that changes to it respect the input of the Yukon Registered Nurses Association and its members.

We are very concerned about priorities in the area of health care, including increasing access to nurses and other health professionals, strengthening our public health care system, reducing wait times, and also ensuring that high quality standards of patient care continue to be in place within our system for now and the foreseeable future. I do appreciate that indication from the minister.

At this point, Deputy Chair, I think that I will actually wrap up my questions at this stage in the interest of allowing us to use the House’s very limited time to address other business. I look forward to any other information that the minister can provide on this topic. I do, again, welcome the commitment that we have heard here today to consult with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association on draft regulations, as well as on the changes government is considering under the *Health Professions Act*, and with that, I will cede the floor to either the minister or the Third Party for additional debate at the Committee stage.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I want to thank the member opposite for raising his concerns this afternoon. I note in the last concern that was raised and voiced and another concern alleviated — at least for now. I also thank the member opposite for acknowledging the robust consultation that this government does with the stakeholders who are involved in the legislation and the work we do. I do appreciate that endorsement, and I look forward to hearing from the Leader of the Third Party.

Ms. White: In conversation with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, they said that most of their recommendations were adopted in this change to the legislation but not all. Can the minister share with us which ones were not included and why?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I want to welcome the Leader of the Third Party to the discussion in Committee of the Whole this afternoon. I can say that, in a letter from April 28, 2022, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association requested five amendments to the legislation. The first was to allow the Yukon Registered Nurses Association to compel the production of documents for the purpose of an investigation. Number 2, they asked that we remove the requirement that a finding of incompetence, misconduct, or incapacity be included in a complaint resolution agreement when a complaint is dismissed but does not get referred to a formal hearing. They asked that we remove the requirement that the personal information of

registrants be published on a public register. They asked us to move the power to create licence classes from the regulation to the bylaws and limit the liability of the Yukon Registered Nurses Association staff from carrying out their duties in good faith.

In our legislation, we have accommodated their ask to remove the requirement that personal information of registrants be published on the public registrar. We have done that. The other four requests we got from the letter are being worked into the larger — they are a little bit more involved and require a lot more work are being worked into our new *Medical Profession Act*.

That’s what it comes down to. We have been able to accommodate one of the asks, and the other ones have been moved to the larger piece of legislation. What we are dealing with in this legislation is to deal with the immediate need to recruit more nurses in the territory. That’s the layup that we have orchestrated with this piece of legislation, and we are working with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association very closely on fulfilling the other ones in the broader piece of legislation.

Ms. White: Just for clarification, the minister just said the “*Medical Profession Act*”. Did he mean the *Health Professions Act*?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Please let me correct the record; I did mean the *Health Professions Act*; I misspoke.

Ms. White: Out of the five changes that were requested by the YRNA, one is included in this information, and the minister just indicated that the others, just for clarification, will be included in the revised *Health Professions Act*, or will they be addressed at another point? In which act or regulations or where will they be addressed?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: They are being rolled into the broader *Health Professions Act* legislation.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Just on the basis that the minister has just mentioned — that act is something that is being worked on. When can this House expect to see that coming forward for debate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is a very large piece of legislation. We are at the beginning of policy work on that legislation. We are looking at about two years before it looks like we will be delivering that piece of legislation.

Chair (Ms. Blake): Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 33, entitled *Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed clause-by-clause.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 33, entitled *Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title of Bill No. 33 read and agreed to

Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the

title of Bill No. 33, entitled *Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 29 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 5 minutes.

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Bill No. 211: *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — continued

Department of Highways and Public Works — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I think I have very little time, but I will just introduce Deputy Minister Catherine Harwood and Assistant Deputy Minister Richard Gorczyca. I look forward to questions this afternoon.

Mr. Hassard: I think the minister had about two seconds left there if there was something else he wanted to add.

I, too, would like to thank the officials for being here today to assist the minister in going through a few questions that we have from the Official Opposition.

I will jump right in. The first question I have for the minister is — we know that the government has said that they have done a cost-benefit evaluation on the closing of some roadside rest stops throughout the territory. I am wondering if the minister could give us some insight into that evaluation.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. Our rest areas along Yukon highways are an important part of our transportation network and provide all travellers with safe and appropriate areas to rest. Some rest areas have outhouses, garbage disposal, and interpretive messaging on the Yukon's history and environment.

The Yukon government is developing a rest area strategy to provide a high, consistent level of service for rest areas with a standardized distance between them, allowing highway travellers to predict and be able to rely on the Yukon system of rest areas for outhouses and garbage services.

We know that there is a need for a rest area between Faro and Carmacks, which is why we are, in fact, planning to add a new rest area on the Robert Campbell Highway.

I think that, technically under the auspices of Tourism and Culture, although Highways and Public Works has taken the lead on this file in cooperation with Tourism and Culture, the Yukon government is permanently closing three rest areas on one road, the north Klondike Highway, this fall. This aligns with the Yukon government's rest area strategy. The three sites that are closed or will be closed and where outhouses will be removed are as follows: the Conglomerate Mountain point of interest at kilometre 297.8, as there are other outhouse facilities within 10 to 20 kilometres on either side of Conglomerate near Braeburn and Montague Roadhouse; Yukon Crossing at kilometre 395.2, as there are outhouse facilities within 13 kilometres of Yukon Crossing at Five Finger Rapids; and the Stewart River viewpoint at kilometre 551, as there are outhouse facilities at Stewart Crossing at kilometre 535, which is, by my calculation, 16 kilometres away.

As I indicated, the three outhouses will be removed by Highways and Public Works, and Highways and Public Works will evaluate the impacts of these closures on nearby rest areas to inform the rest area strategy. Implementing a long-term strategy envisioned for a more standardized and cost-efficient system of roadside amenities will involve some outhouse closures. Highways and Public Works is also planning to install fast-charging stations at certain rest areas where feasible. For example, in 2024, we are planning the installation of a charging station at the Canol Road rest area on the Alaska Highway.

As the department develops and implements the rest area strategy, the department will continue to meet the needs of Yukoners and travellers travelling on our highways. In summary, to follow up on questions from the member opposite, the plan is to have rest stops at reasonable intervals. Sometimes, just based on the planning between departments — in this case, the Department of Tourism and Culture and the Department of Highways and Public Works and I know the Department of Environment sometimes as well, although the Department of Environment is not generally involved with highway outhouses — it is important to maximize efficiencies.

I have also been advised that expenses related to, let's say — "evacuation" I believe is the word. The evacuation of materials has significantly increased as well. In that respect, it's prudent to do so.

That is the reason and the bottom line is that Conglomerate is within 10 to 20 kilometres of an approximate outhouse location, the Yukon Crossing is approximately within 13 kilometres of another location, and the Stewart River viewpoint is within 16 kilometres of another outhouse location.

Mr. Hassard: I thank the minister for that. I have a couple questions coming from that. Do I understand the minister correctly, then, that there is potential for other rest stops to be closed as well? He talked about the removal of outhouses and garbage cans from those rest stops, but will those actual pullouts be closed, or will those pullouts be kept open for people to still pull over when they need to have a rest?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I did ask this question of my officials yesterday on this topic with respect to the three sites where the outhouses and garbage cans will be removed. Yes, for now, there will still be pullouts. The plans are to put signs there indicating the proximity to a full-service pullout. Those signs, we hope, will be in place relatively soon. The signage will be in place quite soon. As I indicated in my prior response, the Yukon government is developing a rest area strategy to provide a high, consistent level of service for rest areas, plus standardized distance between them, allowing highway travellers to predict and rely on the Yukon's system of rest areas for outhouses and garbage services.

I am advised that the Yukon-wide strategy should be in place by early 2024. At this time, I am not aware of any additional outhouses that are planned to be decommissioned and removed, but it is certainly possible. I am unaware of any others that are planned to be decommissioned and removed, but as indicated, there will be an overarching, Yukon-wide rest area strategy.

Mr. Hassard: The minister spoke about a new rest stop between Faro and Carmacks. Of course, this is something that has been advocated for quite a while by several of my constituents in the Faro area.

Once Highways and Public Works agreed to move forward with adding this new rest stop, the citizens who have been promoting this, or pushing this, had an area chosen overlooking Little Salmon Lake. I know that, when Highways and Public Works went back to the community of Faro with their proposal on this new rest stop, it was actually down in a gravel pit by Drury Creek. The government was also proposing to put in an EV-charging station there.

I know there was a lot of pushback from the community and, I believe, from the municipality government of the Town of Faro. I am wondering if there is any update from the minister on this particular rest stop. Is the government going to move forward with the government's plans, or will they listen to the community members and put the roadside pullout where they have requested?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Personally, I would say that I do understand, in discussing this matter briefly with my colleague the Minister of Community Services, that the Mayor of Faro in a general sense was certainly — I will just speak of what I heard about from the Mayor of Faro, which was that the community of Faro was certainly pleased that there would be a rest stop. I'm not sure if it is roughly equidistant between Carmacks and Faro but somewhere in the middle.

I have heard the member opposite with respect to his question about it being on a site overlooking Little Salmon Lake versus being in Drury Creek. I will undertake to get back with a legislative return with respect to the considerations that are made with respect to implementing, actualizing, and deploying a rest stop and the considerations that Highways and Public Works are engaging in with respect to choosing a site.

I am certainly open to continuing the discussion, and I will get further updates from my officials on the topic of location and the active planning factors that are in play at HPW in

determining the placement of a new rest stop with outhouses and potentially also with an EV-charging station.

Mr. Hassard: I am happy to hear that the minister is still open to this, because I know that there has been a lot of work done by community members in Faro regarding this issue and very passionate work, too, I may add. So, I certainly hope that the minister and the department keep a very open mind and give serious consideration to the work and the thoughts that have been put into it by those community members.

Moving to bridges, Madam Chair, I have a few questions around the Big Creek bridge. Of course, we have discussed it here in the Legislature previously. I asked questions of the minister last year, and the department was going to get back to me with some more details — which I have not yet received, I will note — in regard to subcontractors being paid. When I asked the question in the Legislature during Question Period, the minister wasn't able to provide a full answer to that. So, I guess my question is: Have statutory declarations been signed by Julmac indicating that they have, in fact, paid all of the subcontractors on this project? How much has Julmac been paid in regard to the overall contract? I will stop there and see where we get to from that.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Just to follow up on the question of the additional rest stop and outhouse on the Robert Campbell Highway, my information is that the location is still under review and has not been confirmed. The final location will be determined based on power availability, and Highways and Public Works is now looking at the kilometres between kilometre 460 and kilometre 470. That is the most up-to-date information that I have on that topic.

With respect to Big Creek, I will provide some basic information that I have, and I have some additional details. I also believe that I have some information that may have been provided to the member opposite this summer.

Briefly, Big Creek bridge is located approximately 65 kilometres west of Watson Lake on the Alaska Highway and is an important part of Yukon's transportation network. In 2020, the tender was awarded to Julmac Contracting Ltd., and the original planned completion was in 2022; however, in 2022, defects within the concrete deck were discovered during inspections of the new bridge. As I think I have indicated previously, Julmac Contracting's contract was terminated in May of 2023 on the basis of delay and breach of contract milestones.

On August 11, 2023, Julmac Contracting Ltd. filed a statement of claim with the Yukon Supreme Court. The Yukon government has counterclaimed for the as-yet-undetermined cost to complete the project and repair the deficient work.

As the matter is now before the courts, I won't be in a position to comment much with respect to the active litigation; however, the Yukon government is exploring all options available to complete the project. We are working with the engineer for the project to perform a full assessment of the bridge. The assessment will provide details of what additional work is required to allow the bridge to be open for public use. Until the new bridge is ready, we will continue to perform the

regular maintenance and inspections of the existing bridge to verify that it remains safe for the travelling public.

I am advised that the payment of subcontractors is a private commercial matter between the general contractor and the subcontractor, as per their individual subcontracts. In the event of a subcontractor claim, the process is administered by the Department of Highways and Public Works Procurement Support Centre and the Department of Justice. This process and its requirements are laid out in the contract and procurement regulations.

I did send a letter to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. It had some of the information that I have just provided, but of note, I wrote to the member indicating that the contractor has not completed the work in accordance with the contract terms, and the Government of Yukon has now removed the contractor from the project. Our department has high standards for the safety of our transportation infrastructure, and all our projects must meet these standards. The Government of Yukon will perform further assessment of the new bridge in order to determine what the next steps are to complete the project.

As I indicated in my previous comments, until the new bridge is ready, the existing bridge is still operational. We are continuing to perform regular maintenance and inspections to ensure that it remains in safe condition. That was by way of correspondence in July of this summer.

I provided a legislative return that was tabled on April 27, 2023, which had the information about the payment of subcontractors being a private commercial matter between the general contractor and subcontractor, as per their individual subcontracts. Further, just to confirm, in the event of a subcontractor claim, the process is administered by the Department of Highways and Public Works Procurement Support Centre and the Department of Justice. This process, as I indicated, and its requirements are laid out in the contract and procurement regulation. So, that appears to have been tabled on April 27, 2023.

The member opposite will know that the territorial government enters into hundreds of contracts every year, and most of them proceed, work is performed, they are resolved, and payment is made uneventfully, which is what we would wish to have. Sometimes — this is — we, of course, would want the Big Creek bridge replacement to be complete and recognize that there is a delay. This, of course, occurs in the territory on contracts from time to time, but the Yukon government will be pursuing all of its remedies.

By way of an update, I can advise that Highways and Public Works engineers were on-site yesterday with consulting engineers to conduct assessments of the bridge in order to inform the next steps regarding repairs. Of course, we want to — I have driven down to Watson Lake a few times, and I have certainly seen that structure there. Yes, we obviously wish to have that bridge replacement project finished sooner rather than later.

Mr. Hassard: The minister didn't comment or didn't mention about how much money Julmac has actually been paid on the original contract, so I am wondering if the minister could provide that number to the Legislature today.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am advised that the Yukon government has paid slightly over \$6 million to Julmac for work performed — or perhaps not performed — satisfactorily so far.

Mr. Hassard: I guess I would like to ask if the government feels that they got \$6 million worth of work from that, but I am assuming that, since it is in front of the courts, I probably won't get an answer to that question, but if the minister decides that he would like to tell us, you know, I would be happy to hear that.

With that, Madam Chair, I will move on to the Nisutlin Bay bridge. I am curious if the minister can give us an update on timelines and budget for that project as well.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I do have a number of updates with respect to this project. It could be a bit more than eight minutes, but in any event, I am sure that there will be a bit of discussion about this project.

As the member opposite well knows, the existing bridge will be replaced by constructing a new bridge that will span 483 metres across Nisutlin Bay and have a scheduled service life of approximately 100 years. The 2023 construction season started on March 16. Work continued to ramp up this construction season with 30 to 50 rotating staff on-site at the construction camp throughout the summer. There is another anticipated winter shutdown planned, and the timing for the winter shutdown is seasonal and weather-dependent. The anticipated substantial completion date is September 30, 2025, and the total completion date is March 31, 2026.

The contractor is constructing a temporary trestle bridge, which will serve as a working platform for the construction of the new bridge. As of now, about a week ago or so, 21 of the total 30 spans have been completed and are facilitating the construction of the new bridge, starting with the piling. As well, the following work has been completed to date by the contractor: site mobilization and permanent pilings for the north and south abutments; permanent casings for pier 2 and pier 3; the piles for pier 2; concrete pours for the south approach embankment; clearing and grubbing for the new road on the south side; and the installation of two of six cofferdams is complete, and I am advised that the third is ongoing.

Granular bit development and rock production is at kilometre 1238 near Teslin, and environment measures such as hydroacoustic monitoring, fish salvage, and water sampling are ongoing. The \$159.96-million contract was awarded on May 3, 2022 to Graham Infrastructure Limited Partnership. Infrastructure Canada's Building Canada fund committed \$41.25 million to the project, and Transport Canada is also contributing \$52.5 million, through the national trade corridors fund, to the project.

The approximate budgets for the next three fiscal years are as follows: The capital plan indicates approximate spending in 2023 of \$40 million to \$45 million; for fiscal year 2024-25, \$45 million to \$50 million; and for fiscal year 2025-26, \$25 million to \$30 million. These numbers are subject to change as the work progresses.

Highways and Public Works continues to work collaboratively with the Teslin Tlingit Council and engage with

the Village of Teslin, the public, and specific stakeholders on this project as it moves forward. The Yukon government project team meets with the Teslin Tlingit Council on a bi-weekly basis in order to discuss the project and troubleshoot. As well, the Yukon government, the Teslin Tlingit Council, and the primary contractor, Graham Construction, meet on a monthly basis in order to review the project and to discuss potential community issues and solutions.

Graham Infrastructure Limited Partnership has staffed a community wellness team that includes a liaison for workers to contact and a separate liaison for community members to contact with any health and wellness issues pertaining to the project that they may have. The contract has developed and enforces policies for all staff regarding drugs and alcohol and a respectful workplace, including equity, inclusion, and diversity. Transfer payment agreements were signed with the Teslin Tlingit Council that address project planning, participation, implementation support, and environmental and socio-economic baseline studies.

I am happy to report, Madam Chair, that I was very recently able to sign off on a transfer payment agreement with the Teslin Tlingit Council for sonar enumeration. Environmental protection of the Nisutlin Bay area is a major component of the work on the bridge. Under the *Fisheries Act* authorization, we were required to establish a sonar enumeration project. This is to make sure that the construction work is not negatively impacting fish populations or migrations.

As indicated, we have now signed a transfer payment agreement with Teslin Tlingit Council that provides funding to support this sonar project. The sonar enumeration project will last until the Nisutlin Bay bridge project is completed. The project helps researchers with the Teslin Tlingit Council count chinook salmon passing through the Nisutlin River delta national wildlife area. This important natural area is also the migration route for chinook salmon returning to the Nisutlin and Wolf rivers and their tributaries.

The sonar covers a relatively narrow and shallow section of the river. Like a police officer measuring car speeds with a radar gun, the sonar pings various objects, in this case, salmon, as they go by the sonar. The result is translated into a daily count of salmon. This work is essential to protecting salmon and making sure that the fish reach their spawning grounds while a new bridge is being built in Nisutlin Bay.

There is more here, but I will sign off for now. What I will say is that I had the pleasure and honour to be in Teslin three times this summer for various reasons. I certainly was able to see the demonstrable progress that has been made on this major and important piece of Yukon infrastructure which will keep the supply route on the Alaska Highway intact for a long time. I am certainly impressed by the work that has been done so far, and I met, in a joint meeting, with the Teslin Tlingit Council and the Village of Teslin on this topic. I am certainly very alert to the issue — both the Village of Teslin and the Teslin Tlingit Council certainly do wish for this to be a strong project, a good legacy with demonstrable benefit to the community.

I believe that is largely occurring. As indicated, there are at least bi-weekly meetings, and we are continuing to be in contact with Graham, the Village of Teslin, and the Teslin Tlingit Council on a very regular basis.

Mr. Hassard: I am just curious. Can the minister, in fact, tell us that the \$159-million original contract price — are we still on target for that price?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. As I did indicate in my preliminary remarks, yes, the numbers are subject to change as the work progresses on this significant project. I do have some details that I can share with the House, and I will certainly share additional details as they become available and can be disclosed.

The Yukon government and Graham Construction have been negotiating about a change order that would reflect the impacts of the terms of the *Fisheries Act* authorization for the Nisutlin Bay bridge project. Negotiations such as these, of course, are ongoing and confidential because of their commercial nature and to maintain confidential positions. What I can tell you is that Yukon government has done its due diligence in handling this matter and in mitigating risks due to the original 2022 *Fisheries Act* authorization for the project.

When the Nisutlin Bay bridge project went to tender, there was no reason to expect any significant deviation from similar previous *Fisheries Act* authorizations that have been received from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. It had been a regular practice for Highways and Public Works to award contracts with similar sample *Fisheries Act* authorizations, and then the contractor would meet the terms of the actual *Fisheries Act* authorization as part of the contract.

As the member opposite is aware from previous debate that has occurred, the Yukon government received *Fisheries Act* authorization that had new restrictive limits, such as cumulative noise impacts to fish. The Yukon government did successfully work with the Teslin Tlingit Council, the Government of Canada, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on an amendment to the authorization. This did take some time.

The amendment was received in March 2023, at which point negotiations began between the Yukon government and Graham about a new schedule and workplan. There were costs that were alleged to have been incurred due to the need to rearrange work and procurements while the amendment to the *Fisheries Act* authorization was obtained from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, which is the regulator. Graham has submitted details about those costs.

As part of the negotiation process, the Yukon government has hired independent, expert consultants with deep experience in bridge construction. These experts advised the Yukon government about the claims and the supporting documents from Graham Construction. Using expert and legal advisors, the Yukon government has taken an evidence-based, reasonable approach to the negotiations.

Once the outcome is agreed to, the Yukon government can share the information about that outcome. Until then, negotiations are not complete and details cannot be shared. Discussions are ongoing, and the work continues, but it is

anticipated that the cost will exceed the original \$159-million-plus contract for this significant infrastructure project.

Mr. Hassard: We certainly look forward to an update from the minister when he can provide us with the rest of that information, because I am sure that taxpayers will be more than wanting to know.

I know that I have asked the minister questions in the Legislature before about the gravel pit that was intended to be built by Ten Mile Creek, which was supposed to supply the project with granular material. That project has not been finished. The contractor, in fact, went and found somewhere else to get that material for building the approaches to the bridge.

I guess I am curious: Will that gravel pit continue to be developed and when will that work take place? What will be the purpose of that source of gravel? Will it be just for the Teslin Tlingit Council as part of the agreement with the government on building the bridge? I guess maybe the minister can fill in some of those blanks for us.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I do have some answers with respect to the granular material. With respect to your last question, we will see if I can get some additional details with respect to future plans for the pit.

The Nisutlin Bay bridge will use over 100,000 cubic metres of aggregate for the various components. This does not include asphalt. All the granular material for roadwork is locally sourced. However, the Nisutlin Bay bridge project will require approximately 2,400 cubic metres of coarse aggregate for the cast-in-place concrete being used. This small amount of coarse aggregate for concrete work is coming from Whitehorse. The aggregate being used in this concrete has specific requirements to ensure the structural integrity of the bridge. I am advised that there are very limited sources of aggregate in Yukon that meet this requirement, which is why aggregate from the Whitehorse area will be used for this specific portion of the bridge, which equates to less than 2.5 percent of the aggregate estimated to be needed.

The other specific question was with respect to what the future — I believe the member opposite can correct me and clarify the question — plan is for Ten Mile and whether the general plan is for that to be shared between Teslin Tlingit Council and HPW, and I believe the current plan is that, yes, that is the plan going forward.

Mr. Hassard: The minister had talked about getting some more information regarding the construction and the use of that pit. Am I to understand that we will get a legislative return with that answer, or is the minister hoping to get that information here before the end of the day?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: If I could just get a clarification on the question from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin so that we can confirm specifically what the nature of the legislative return will be.

Mr. Hassard: I am curious as to when that pit development will continue, when the expected completion of that pit development will be, and, as the minister said, who will be using the material from that pit?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I can advise that the department will be in a position, and I will be in a position, to provide a legislative return to answer the questions posed by the member opposite.

Mr. Hassard: I look forward to that information from the minister's office.

Another question with regard to that is if the minister could provide us with whether that pit development was, in fact, part of the contract for the Nisutlin Bay bridge or if it was a separate entity.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I can advise at a high level that it was identified as a source for the Nisutlin Bay bridge contract, but with respect to the follow-up question as to the development, I can also provide that information as well in the legislative return that I have committed to.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that from the minister and look forward to that as well.

I have a couple of questions around brushing. I know that there are many questions around brushing, but one in particular — I had asked this question of the minister, maybe the previous minister, and a few department officials. A brushing job started between Johnsons Crossing and Lone Tree Creek. Some guys came in from Fort Nelson, did one pass up one side and down the other, and left the country and never came back. I have asked — there never appeared to be a contract for it. It was an add-on to a contract that was done the previous year from Marsh Lake to Johnsons Crossing.

I am curious if there is any update at all as to when brushing may occur between Johnsons Crossing and Lone Tree Creek.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We are endeavouring to get the fairly specific answer to the question raised about brushing around Johnsons Crossing. We will certainly endeavour to get that while we are in Committee of the Whole today. I just wanted to advise Yukoners that, since the beginning of the modified brushing program, or vegetation control program, in 2019, the Yukon government has brushed 2,387 kilometres and mowed 1,014 kilometres of vegetation. This totals approximately 3,401 kilometres cleared by the department.

As I am told frequently in my notes and also by my officials, the Yukon has approximately 4,800 kilometres of roads that Highways and Public Works is responsible for. That's a significant percentage.

We issued 57 contracts for vegetation control in 2022, 17 of which were awarded to First Nation businesses. We issued 23 contracts for vegetation control for 2023-24 for approximately 985 kilometres, and HPW completed approximately 620 kilometres of clover mowing in 2023-24.

I did have the opportunity this summer to do a number of community visits. As I indicated, I drove out to Teslin a number of times and Burwash Landing and past Burwash Landing about three times. I was up the north Klondike Highway to Carmacks, Pelly, Dawson, and up the Dempster. I would say that although, of course, we can always do better, in my view, we are making significant progress on brushing. Generally speaking, the sightlines are good along the majority of the

Yukon highways that I had the honour of driving on this summer.

The Government of Yukon awarded \$3.6 million in vegetation control contracts this season. This represents approximately 1,000 kilometres of clearing. The majority of the work is scheduled to be completed by the end of October, with one winter project this fiscal year. Depending on size, projects will be offered by direct award, invitational, or open tenders to the full list of qualified companies.

I will see if I can get an answer to the specific question.

With respect to next year, as Highways and Public Works has done since 2019, HPW is conducting site visits this fall in anticipation of setting kilometres and issuing tenders. We will look into the work that was mentioned by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. My officials do not have specific information with respect to the concerns that have been raised in the House today but certainly understand the concerns.

It was around Johnsons Crossing. I didn't quite get where the end point was, but I am sure that when the member rises again, he can provide me with whether it was to Johnsons Crossing. I can confirm that work is planned in that area next year. Of course, as the member opposite well knows, if you have a logical, sequenced program of vegetation control —, in the vernacular, “brushing” — then, of course, the vegetation does not grow as much and trees do not have a certain diameter. I have been advised that, of course, if they have a certain critical diameter, then it is more labour-intensive and machine-intensive. So, if you stay on top of it across the territory, which I am led to believe is occurring with this vegetation control program, then you will get returns on your scheduled investments because the diameter of trees will be less, and you can mow more of the rights-of-way and use equipment that is less costly. I believe that we are in the position where Highways and Public Works is beginning to reap the rewards of that prudent planning.

We will get back to the member opposite with respect to the specific question about perhaps deficient brushing work that may have occurred in the Johnsons Crossing area, but as I indicated, Madam Chair, there does appear to be planned work in that area for next late spring and summer.

Mr. Hassard: I agree wholeheartedly with the minister on the fact that once we can get that scheduling done — and I believe that is work that was originally started by Mr. Gorczyca, who is with us today. I appreciate that and agree completely, but if I could just put a plug in for the folks from Johnsons Crossing and south of there.

You know, that section of highway was rebuilt in the early 1980s. I have been there that entire time, and I am quite sure that it has never actually been brushed, so some of the trees in that area are getting quite large and it's going to be a bit of a major undertaking. I am certainly happy to hear that there is work planned for that area this coming year and look forward to seeing that work done.

I had a couple of questions for the minister regarding the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. Of course, there is a large project going on up there, so maybe the minister could

just provide us with some timelines, dollar amounts, and a little bit of insight on how things are going and progressing there.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: This is certainly a good news story for transportation infrastructure for our territory. As the member opposite knows, this is a contract that has a similar dollar value to the Nisutlin Bay bridge, so it is an unprecedented time for vital infrastructure upgrades for the territory, and I have some good news to report on this project.

The member opposite has heard me respond, both in Question Period and in previous Committee of the Whole debate, that a lot of the aggregate and material underneath the main runway dates from approximately 1942 or 1943, so certainly, it's time to upgrade. I will just provide some information here, and then I can continue, if there is insufficient time.

Madam Chair, the Government of Yukon is making crucial investments to the Yukon's infrastructure to provide Yukoners with safe and reliable aviation infrastructure for years to come. A number of improvements to the airside of the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport are needed to replace infrastructure and to keep the airport up to current standards. This work will support current and future airport operations. Improvements completed to date include upgrades to the parallel runway, the taxiways, apron panels, and developing airport land for institutional and commercial uses.

The \$160.7-million contract to reconstruct the main runway was awarded to Flatiron Constructors Canada Ltd. on May 19, 2023. The proposed work is scheduled for 2023, 2024, and 2025 for those construction seasons and for it to be substantially complete by early 2026. While this is a large project, we expect there to be minimal disruptions overall for the travelling public. We will be working closely with aviation stakeholders in order to minimize impacts on their operations during the construction period.

This year's work involved preparation for the main runway reconstruction, including airfield drainage improvements, water and sanitary line extensions, fencing to secure the work site, and construction of two access roads to the parallel runway in preparation for next year's construction season. In the following years, major construction work will begin on the main runway. This will include fully replacing the main runway and adding additional features, such as increased lighting. On August 3, we held an information session for aviation stakeholders about the project, and the members in the House will know that, on September 28, an information session was held for tourism stakeholders about the project. It's probably not a bad time to provide some clarity about that.

In the long term, the Government of Yukon will be evaluating how the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport could support larger aircraft. These aircraft fall under the category of aircraft group number 5, or AGN V. To increase the service level at the Whitehorse airport from AGN IV to AGN V, there are a number of program and infrastructure investments that would need to be made. These additional investments would include aircraft rescue firefighting resources, increased aircraft maneuvering services, increased space and processing capacity for Canada Border Services, and

increased passenger processing and screening facilities. While additional investments are required to support this category change, the length and width of the existing and new main runway will not limit the Whitehorse airport from supporting the larger AGN V aircraft.

Just to be clear to Yukoners who may be listening today and to the members opposite, when the main runway is complete, that is not — the size and width of that runway is not an impediment to receiving, for instance, the new Condor planes, which will be relatively new Airbus A330s. It is not the length or size of those airplanes; it is an assessment of what the economic model is to improve the various services, which I have outlined here, for the airport to come under the aircraft group number AGN V classification.

Perhaps also of interest to Yukoners who may be listening or reading Hansard, at some point, if they are having difficulty sleeping — but no, this is good stuff. There are nine airports in Canada that support AGN V aircraft for scheduled service, and they are all the predictable airports, but it is Pearson, YVR, Trudeau, Calgary, Edmonton, Macdonald-Cartier in Ottawa, James Armstrong Richardson in Winnipeg, Stanfield International Airport in Halifax, and the smallest airport is St. John's International.

Pearson — trivia question — how many passengers a year? In 2022, 34.7 million passengers, down to the St. John's International Airport, which has average annual passengers at 1.09 million passengers, and I believe that Whitehorse receives somewhere around — we have approximately 400,000 passengers. So, 2.5 — rough math — fewer than the smallest Canadian airport that receives AGN V classification.

It's still certainly an open conversation, and Whitehorse may very well be in a unique situation, but it's good to have context on the question of how many Canadian airports have the AGN V classification.

I have more on this exciting project, but for now, those are my preliminary answers. I am excited about this project. It's going well so far.

Mr. Hassard: I am not sure if that information is really relevant to what we're talking about today, but I guess I will ask the minister this: Of those five airports that he talked about, how many of them actually have a restaurant? Because we have heard, on more than one occasion here in the Legislature, the fact that the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport restaurant was going to reopen in 2019; then there was COVID. At any rate, here we are today, and there is still no restaurant. I am wondering if the minister could provide us a little bit of insight as to when we might see a restaurant in the Whitehorse International Airport.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I don't disagree with the member opposite that we would have liked to have seen food service sooner than now, but I do have news on this topic. I do agree that the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport ought to have food service and that it was reasonably interrupted by COVID; however, we are, of course, out of COVID, and we are excited for the next phase at our international airport.

Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport is the aviation gateway to the Yukon, welcoming passengers from

across the country and around the world. As I said in my previous response, the airport hosts approximately 400,000 passengers a year, and food service is an important part of the services offered at the airport.

We are excited to share that the Yukon government has signed an agreement with Air North to offer food services at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. The agreement is in place to permit Air North to undertake final renovations and outfitting, with a targeted opening in late 2023 or early 2024. Our goal is to provide quality food services for Yukoners and the thousands of passengers who pass through the airport every year. Soon, travellers will be able to not only enjoy Air North's delicious warm cookies and meals at 30,000 feet but also what they have in store for travellers at the Whitehorse terminal.

Until then, food and beverage options will continue to be available within the airport gift shop vending machines and at nearby hotel restaurants.

We are close. I don't disagree that it would have been good to have had this in place sooner, but certainly I do have fruitful, useful, and productive conversations with Air North and other air service providers in the Yukon. I certainly thank them for the valuable service that they have provided.

Going into COVID and during COVID and coming out of COVID, I am excited for this additional service, as it certainly is a feature of an airport which ours has been lacking. We do hope to be in a position to provide additional details shortly on this topic.

While I am on my feet, once again, with respect to the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport airside improvements, just briefly before I sit down, we have also entered into two community development agreements for work on the main runway with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and one with the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Both agreements are tailored to maximize socio-economic benefits that are important to each community, such as employment contracts, subcontracting, training, and workforce and business development. An example of implementation of these agreements is subcontracting work performed by First Nation businesses. Additionally, the contractor held a job fair this past August targeted at employment for First Nation citizens.

Another job fair will be held prior to next season's start-up. The framework for these agreements was developed as part of the Yukon First Nation procurement policy. We are working closely with both First Nation governments to implement these agreements.

Just generally with respect to the parallel runway, which is now substantially complete — time flies, but last September, I had the opportunity to do an airside tour of the parallel runway, the apron, and other work that was being done on the Whitehorse airfield. I can advise that the construction tender to upgrade the parallel runway was awarded to Terus Construction Ltd. and Skookum Asphalt Ltd. for approximately \$21 million.

Construction began last year. To meet Transport Canada regulations, this summer we extended the runway safety area of the parallel runway. This required infilling some — not a great deal but some — of Puckett's Gulch, which involved relocating

the airport fence line, clearing trees, and removing some vegetation to build a stable slope. I would shout out to the City of Whitehorse for working cooperatively with Highways and Public Works on this file. We also had an information session with respect to that, as the active transportation enthusiasts in Whitehorse were certainly very interested in maintaining all access to the Black Street stairs and the gulch there. It was a strong presentation which indicated that it wasn't a great deal of the Puckett's Gulch that was actually required to be infilled.

The parallel runway was closed in September 2023 in order to allow the contractor for the main runway replacement to complete site preparation work for the main runway project in the vicinity. The final parallel runway work includes grooving, painting, and some electrical work, which we expect will be finished in October.

I think I said in my preliminary comments on the airport that when the main runway is being worked on next summer and in the subsequent summer, the parallel runway will be the primary runway, so it will absolutely be operational for next spring, summer, and fall while the main runway project proceeds.

Mr. Hassard: This will probably be my last question, since it will be time to let the Third Party have their opportunity to ask the minister questions, so I will just thank the officials for being here.

My last question is with regard to the third-party rental agreement. I have heard from contractors that the engineering branch of Highways and Public Works has not been very happy with the third-party rentals, whereas Transportation Maintenance has been using it more. I am curious if there has been any update on how things are working with the third-party rental agreements. Will Highways and Public Works continue to use the third-party rental? If so, when will the third-party agreements come out again for tender?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As the member opposite very likely knows, this is a tool that has been in the toolbox of Highways and Public Works for many years, I am advised. Of course, it's important. My officials have your specific question and I will certainly undertake to table a legislative return on this topic.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any further general debate?

MLA Tredger: Thank you very much to the officials for being here today and for the great briefing we had. I am pleased to be asking questions about this department.

I want to start with a question that I got from a number of Yukoners this summer. I was out in Pelly Crossing, and I talked

to a number of different people, and they all brought up the walkway that goes across the Pelly River in between the two sides of Pelly Crossing. They talked about how unsafe and kind of scary they found that walkway. They didn't feel good walking on it. I went out after the barbecue to check it out. I have to admit that it was a pretty terrifying thing to try to walk on. There were actually holes in places where the rebar was bent where someone's foot could very easily slip through. It felt very uneasy.

As I was walking back from this, I stopped a couple of people who were walking toward the bridge and said: Hey, how do you feel about the bridge? It was like: We don't take the walkway; we walk on the road across — which is also very unsafe because there is no pedestrian space on that bridge on the road. So, people are making the choice between walking on this often-icy walkway that has damage to it or walking on the highway with the traffic across the bridge.

So, I am wondering if the minister can speak to that — if they are planning to address that and make it safer for people in Pelly Crossing.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: My team and I, both from Environment and Highways and Public Works, met with Selkirk First Nation Chief and Council in August. We had a productive meeting, and there were various priorities that were flagged and we have that worklist. But, yes, the bridge was flagged. My deputy minister, after the meeting, walked on the side path that is beside the bridge. My assistant and I had a look at it as well, and I don't disagree with the member opposite that there can be improvements. I am advised that HPW is planning a safety review for Pelly Crossing, which includes the bridge. Officials from HPW have been in contact with the Selkirk First Nation community safety officer to talk about those concerns. It is a curious design because the walkway is slightly below the level of the road. I am a little unclear about why that design ever happened, but that was some time ago. At the very least, I certainly will be pushing for, in the short term, improved lighting and, given that the cost of LED lighting is now — whatever. Lighting is a priority as well. I have heard loud and clear from the Selkirk First Nation Chief and Council — from Chief Nelson and her council — that this is one of their priorities and we will make our best efforts to finish the safety audit, and I will push for there to be improved lighting in the near future.

MLA Tredger: I will pass that on to the people who shared their concerns. I hope that, by the next time we have this debate, we won't need to discuss it anymore.

The other concern that I heard from folks in Pelly — what they told me is that the runway doesn't have lights, so medevac planes can't land at night. I wonder if the minister can confirm that and talk about what work is being done to address that.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: This was also a topic of discussion with the Selkirk First Nation Chief and Council. I can certainly provide additional information to the Member for Whitehorse Centre about the criteria that are employed with respect to the number of flights in a given year. My understanding is that Carmacks and Mayo are both medevac-equipped airfields, but I can provide additional information as to why there are

perceived to be limitations in the community of Pelly Crossing. What I can say about Pelly Crossing is that in both the summer of 2022 and the summer of 2023, there was service and upgrade work that was done to the Pelly airfield, and I actually received positive feedback on that — that the work done with respect to the actual airstrip was of high quality and that it was appreciated.

But I also did hear that Pelly Crossing — Selkirk First Nation — would like to have medevac service in their community, but right now, based on criteria, which I can provide to the Member for Whitehorse Centre, the current medevac airfields or airstrips are in Carmacks and Mayo.

MLA Tredger: I would actually be interested in knowing more about why Pelly Crossing isn't a medevac site.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will provide that information to the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

MLA Tredger: I guess that is coming in a legislative return or something like that, but it isn't available right now. I just really feel for the people living in a town that doesn't have medevac services, where they have to drive around two hours to get to a place with medevac services — maybe a little less — especially given how urgent that it might be. I think that is leaving a community behind. I think that if the only barrier to them having medevac services is lighting, then that is something that should be looked at and should be considered and I really hope that it will be.

Another concern that I have heard about a little closer to Whitehorse is the Kusawa Lake Road and, of course, I hear about this from people who are camping at Kusawa Lake but also the people who live and have cabins on Kusawa Lake Road. They tell me that it is often quite dangerous to drive and quite risky for their vehicles. I am wondering if the minister is looking into that.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Just to clarify about the prior question from the Member for Whitehorse Centre about the medevacs, you can medevac in and out of Pelly Crossing during daylight hours. It's the night issue and having the appropriate night lighting at that airfield or airstrip. To clarify the record, medevac flights are conducted or can occur in Pelly Crossing.

With respect generally to secondary roads, I can advise briefly for Yukoners listening, of course, that HPW has a lot of work to do on the primary roads, but in the last season, the Highways and Public Works team completed the following work: Venus Place in Golden Horn, there was subgrade repairs, BST, and sweeping of approximately one kilometre; Arctic Drive, which is also in Golden Horn, had subgrade repairs, BST, and sweeping of 1.1 kilometres; on the Old Alaska Highway, there were three to five metres of shoulder-brushing on the entire road; on the Cowley Lake subdivision road, there were upgrades to the last 400 metres, ditching, grading, razing, and culvert installs; on the Cookies Road — I do not know where that is, but in any event — there was a grade raze on the Cookies Road; on the Nolan Road, a soft spot repair and grade raze; and on the Takhini River Road, work was done there as well.

As I have found out in my role in this position for the last two and a half years, there are a lot of secondary roads, and

there are also a lot of public roads that are maintained by HPW to a point, and then they are not. I am interested to hear about the Kusawa Lake Road, but I do have a casework file with respect to the Kusawa Lake Road. Highways and Public Works ensures that the road surface is graded twice a year and receives one calcium application, which is completed after the first grading. This first grading can only be completed once the road surface has dried and the ground has fully thawed, typically in June. Maintenance crews began grading the road on June 28 to improve the condition of the road surface. An application of calcium to the surface to control the dust would follow the completion of the grading. Highways and Public Works is also working with the Department of Environment to coordinate funding to complete repairs in a couple of areas on the Kusawa Lake Road.

I certainly look forward to any specific concerns that a constituent or someone has raised to the Member for Whitehorse Centre, but this is a pretty similar type of grading and surface repair that occurs on these secondary roads. Apparently — the most up-to-date information, we have two graders on the Kusawa Lake Road right now.

I recognize that when there is late spring precipitation and early fall/early winter precipitation, some of these secondary roads can degrade fairly quickly. What was really quite acceptable — there were no concerns whatsoever — could degrade fairly quickly.

I certainly received concerns raised by many of the members opposite and my colleagues on this side of the House as well with respect to the condition of secondary roads. I think that, generally speaking, I just want to give a shout-out to the Transportation branch at Highways and Public Works. They are on it, but certainly, it's a vast territory with not very many people outside of Whitehorse.

Just to be clear for the member opposite, I am advised that there are graders on the Kusawa Lake Road as we speak.

MLA Tredger: I am very glad to hear it. That's great.

I want to ask about government Central Stores. Since that has been cut, has the department been tracking the savings made from that decision to not have a central government store? What have those savings been?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Yukon government is improving the service delivery and providing better value for taxpayers by modernizing the way in which government does business. The Central Stores warehouse closed on January 31, 2020, and the Queen's Printer Agency officially closed on March 31, 2020. By closing these units, we eliminated the long-term warehousing of a wide variety of centrally distributed supplies. For example, Yukon government no longer has supplies that could expire on the shelf or become outdated. Also, supplies such as high-visibility vests can become outdated when safety regulations change.

We have contracted out printing that used to be done in the Queen's Printer Agency, including confidential printing like budget documents.

The department is pleased to report that we have also modernized many processes through these changes. For example, many paper forms have been digitized and now lie

with e-Services for Citizens, which is progressing quite well in my view. We no longer have staff doing actual printing, but instead they are facilitating printer contracts with local printing companies. The Queen's Printer, I guess, is now the King's Printer. The King's Printer agency had a previous budget that ranged between \$530,000 and \$600,000 each year. This budget is now zero, as the agency does not exist.

The Central Stores budget was embedded within a larger departmental budget, and Central Stores had a previous budget that ranged between \$550,000 and \$570,000 per year. The Central Stores budget is now zero.

The King's Printer is referenced in Yukon's legislation and the position is held by the director of the Supply Services branch. That position is the sole position and there is no King's Printer agency. The King's Printer position is responsible for ensuring that official versions of legislation are accessible to those who request them.

Not a single employee lost their job because of this change. All staff affected at the Queen's — now King's — Printer and Central Stores were reassigned to other areas in Highways and Public Works or to other departments filling vacant positions. Some staff have now also retired.

There were 16 employees were affected by this change. The central purchasing unit in the Supply Services branch remains a key department function and continues to serve the Yukon government by facilitating procurement pricing and order management for supplies and printing as it has always done.

Wherever possible, Highways and Public Works sources office, paper, and cleaning supplies through standing offer arrangements and local vendors.

My officials can assist and I can likely provide additional information, but obviously there is a budget. There is a cost, but it's a different cost.

That is the information I have with respect to the King's Printer and Central Stores.

MLA Tredger: How much is spent now on external printing contracts that have replaced the Queen's — or King's Printer?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We can provide a legislative return for that specific question.

MLA Tredger: I would appreciate that, because I would argue that the budget has not actually gone to zero; it has just turned into contracts rather than being in-house services.

I am also curious whether they have tracked how well that is working. Have they tracked wait times, for example, for external printing contracts compared to the wait times when it was a central agency?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I can certainly attempt to get some of the requested data to the Member for Whitehorse Centre, as well, in a legislative return. In a general sense, this was likely the focus of the debate some three or four years ago, but in hearing from my officials, I am advised that there is a robust, local, private market that has been able to provide cost-effective, efficient, high-quality services where there is a reasonable amount of competition and that the services that have been provided after this reorganization, or this

reconfiguration, have been more than satisfactory to Highways and Public Works and that it is working well. I know that the tagline a number of years ago was "getting out of the business of doing business", but in this case, it is supporting local business, and so far, the experience is that local business has been able, as I indicated, to provide cost-effective, efficient, robust, high-quality service.

MLA Tredger: I look forward to that legislative return. What would be really helpful is if it had the amount that was spent on external contracts for printing across the government, not just for Highways and Public Works, because that is really the comparable that we are looking at, and I am really interested in the information on how well it's working. I know our office has waited over a month for printing at different times, and I'm curious if that's an isolated example or whether that's happening elsewhere and whether this is a system that is improving efficiency, as well as improving costs.

I will leave that for now. I wanted to ask about the planned roundabout at the top of the south access on the Alaska Highway. When is that planned to be installed?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will just take this opportunity to provide a bit of an update as to some of the upgrades through the Whitehorse corridor, and I will answer the Member for Whitehorse Centre's question, as well.

The Yukon government is making several safety improvements along the Alaska Highway through Whitehorse. These improvements include removing uncontrolled highway accesses and installing pedestrian-controlled traffic lights at crossings. This will help increase public safety and reduce the risk of collisions. We have already completed several projects along the Alaska Highway, including: installing a left-turn light at the Robert Service Way intersection; geometric design improvements at both south and north Klondike Highway intersections; improvements to the Range Road intersection, including traffic lights with pedestrian-controlled lights and a paved multi-use trail; improvements at the Hillcrest intersection, including acceleration and deceleration lanes and traffic lights; and improvements between Hillcrest Drive and Burns Road, including the addition of street lights through crossings with pedestrian-controlled traffic lights, a paved multi-use trail connecting to trails going to downtown, and upgrades to the multi-use trail adjacent to the highway.

Public engagement for these projects happened at various times over the last few years and included open houses, pop-up information booths, an interactive website, expert panel discussions, and meetings and presentations. In addition, the project team has engaged with a variety of stakeholder groups, the City of Whitehorse, local businesses, and First Nation groups.

Members opposite will know that there were safety upgrades between Lodestar Lane and the Whitehorse weigh station that started in 2022 and were completed in July 2023. Upgrades included: upgrading the street lights; creating two lanes on each side, with acceleration and deceleration lanes; adding durable, high-visibility road paint markings; building a new multi-use paved trail; and improving access to the Whitehorse weigh station.

With respect to the Robert Service Way intersection, we are continuing to plan for the upgrades between Robert Service Way intersection and Philmar RV. This work will include the consolidation of uncontrolled highway accesses and the construction of new frontage roads. Two design options for this portion of the project are being considered to determine which option will allow for the safest and most efficient intersection operation, including an option for an improved four-way traffic light intersection or a roundabout.

While standardized intersections are familiar to most road users, roundabouts are important to consider because they can allow for better traffic flow by operating continuously. Roundabouts can also improve safety by reducing the number and severity of collisions by requiring drivers to slow down and by changing the angle of impact if it occurs. Roundabouts can be designed to make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists across the highway.

Those two options are still being considered. I remember there was a — I'm not sure if it was an April Fools' note, maybe about a year ago, but it showed some massive roundabout being conjectured up there. I don't think that is what is going to happen, but if a roundabout is the way that we will go, then it will be a fairly significant-sized roundabout, but that decision has not been made yet.

Just briefly while I am on my feet and because there was a question about the Two Mile Hill intersection, as well, today, the City of Whitehorse and Government of Yukon are partnering on the Hamilton Boulevard-Alaska Highway and the Range Road-Two Mile Hill intersections, also known as "HART", the combined intersection upgrade project. This joint initiative will focus on developing designs to improve the Hamilton Boulevard and Alaska Highway, and Two Mile Hill Road and Range Road intersections, with an emphasis on making travel safer and more efficient for all transportation modes.

In June 2023, the City of Whitehorse started the first round of public engagement for the project, which included an online survey that received 455 responses. The next round of public engagement is planned for the fall of 2023.

With respect to the Robert Service Way intersection, the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board has completed its review and issued their recommendations. The Yukon government issued the decision document. The water licence and the DFO letter of advice has been issued for this project. The initial desktop heritage assessment has been completed and a detailed heritage assessment is in progress.

Based on the comments received, the department is reviewing the design options that would best address public concerns while still upholding highway safety priorities and limiting environmental impacts to McLean Lake.

I am advised that there is a possible delay of the Robert Service Way intersection project due to the fact that there is going to be a heavy haul of material from the airport during the period of time that I set out, which is the summer of 2024 and the summer of 2025. Just to be clear, the final design plans for that intersection will be communicated to the public once they are complete.

MLA Tredger: Thank you for the update.

I have a few more questions about safety along the Alaska Highway corridor as it moves through Whitehorse. One is about the speed limit between Two Mile Hill and then through Porter Creek. Particularly after Kopper King, I believe it goes back up to 90 through Rabbit's Foot Canyon. That may have made sense at one time, but we now have a lot of people — we have Raven's Ridge, for example, along there. There was actually a petition about this in the Legislature, I think it was last year, by a lot of very concerned people who felt very worried about, every day, having to turn out onto that highway with people going 90.

That's a really quick and easy change. That's not something that needs years of work to make happen. It's a matter of putting up different signs. I am wondering if the department is considering doing that as an interim measure while they work on some of the other longer term projects.

I am also really concerned about lighting at the pedestrian crosswalks on the Alaska Highway at Porter Creek. Particularly, there have been some changes in that area, and those crosswalks, frankly, are hard to see. A lot of people are going quite quickly through there. Pedestrians have to be really, really proactive when they are crossing there to make sure that they are going to be safe.

Is there a look at doing lighting at those pedestrian crosswalks in Porter Creek on the Alaska Highway?

My last question about that corridor is regarding sound barriers between Takhini and the highway and whether there is a look at putting sound barriers there.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: If I could just perhaps get clarification. There are three questions, and I will make best efforts to get the information for you as soon as possible. I think the one is a question about the speed limit between the KK and Rabbit's Foot Canyon; is that correct? The second is lighting at crosswalks in Porter Creek. The third is — I am unfamiliar with this issue — sound barriers in — is that Takhini North? — up against the Alaska Highway. If I could just get clarification, then I will make best efforts to get the information.

MLA Tredger: To clarify the last question, I was talking about in between the Alaska Highway and Takhini North, as the highway is being developed, if there is an opportunity to provide sound barriers for the residents in that area.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I think, in sequential order, with respect to the speed limit, I am advised that there is a consultant who is doing a safety audit with respect to the Whitehorse corridor, generally, on speed. We will certainly have a report or feedback on an analysis of the Whitehorse corridor and speed limits, hopefully in the near future.

With respect to Porter Creek crosswalk lighting, I am advised that there is an invitational tender that has been issued. The tender is under review. We hope to have that work completed in the spring of 2024.

And to the best of my knowledge, there is no plan for sound barriers to divide Takhini North with the Alaska Highway, but I can certainly look into that further. I think what the member opposite is suggesting is something like what you would see — my experience would be something that you see in Toronto on

major highways where there are significant walls. In any event, I can look into that, but I think those are the answers to your questions with respect to speed, lighting, crosswalks, and sound barriers.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. We just have a little bit of time left, so I want to talk a bit about *Our Clean Future* and Highways and Public Works' role in that. I want to start by asking about what — I think what we have been talking about before is the sustainable procurement policy. This is I2, and I see that there is a change of course in the last report around that, so I am wondering what is happening with work on the sustainable procurement policy. Are we going to see something like that soon? Just what are the intentions?

Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

Chair: At this time, I will ask if any private member wishes to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Member for Takhini-Kopper King rises

Acting Chair (Ms. White): Order, please.

Is there any further general debate on the Department of Highways and Public Works?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Acting Chair, I am just checking the *Our Clean Future* report card under I2, and it is showing as the categories to develop procurement guidance, operational requirements, and a collection of evaluation criteria to better support sustainable and local procurement by 2024, shown as being “ongoing”. We are developing a sustainable procurement strategy and implementation plan to support procurement authorities across YG and making more sustainable and environmentally friendly decisions while procuring goods and services. For example, procurement authorities will be encouraged to buy goods with certified eco labels that signify that the item is environmentally friendly. Moving forward with sustainable procurement is one more example of how we are modernizing our procurement system, and I know that work is currently underway with respect to this initiative.

With respect to a fairly significant initiative on sustainable procurement, the Yukon government is committed to electrifying its vehicle fleet to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Department of Highways and Public Works is leading by example by adding zero-emission vehicles to the fleet and promoting sustainable and suitable vehicle options that meet requirements while embracing new vehicle technology. The department will continue tendering for electric trucks, vans, and SUVs to replace gasoline vehicles as appropriate. This goes well beyond the target for cars that was originally set in *Our Clean Future*. These tenders show climate leadership by signalling the government's intended direction for emissions reductions and clean transportation options.

In late 2021, 12 plug-in hybrid SUVs were ordered and were delivered in 2022. In 2023, the Yukon government received 13 gas hybrid pickup trucks that are now in use in the fleet and two battery electric cargo vans that are being used by the mailroom. They are outside of this building. They are full-sized Ford Transit Cargo Vans. I was quite excited when I saw

those. I know that the mailroom is quite excited to be using them. I was pleasantly surprised that they could be procured.

In 2024, we will add two more cargo vans and three pickup trucks, all battery electric, which will be deployed to program areas based on the best use for these vehicles. Fleet Vehicle Agency is building relationships with Ford Canada, and the local dealer helped in the procurement of the gas hybrid pickup trucks. In addition, we anticipate that 30 more battery electric cars will be delivered in the spring of 2024 in order to replace older gas models.

Highways and Public Works continues to meet with the local dealerships to build relationships and understand market conditions so that we can maximize the number of electric vehicles in the government fleet. Market stabilization and transition to EV production for battery electric trucks and SUVs is evident with recent bids from suppliers of EVs. Effort is still required to align procurement with production schedules. Once the 30 vehicles are in the fleet, approximately eight percent of the Yukon government's light-duty fleet will be either plug-in hybrid or battery electric. We're leading by example and I'm certainly excited that this is occurring. As I have always said, I think that those transit vans in communities make a great deal of sense because they drive around in a fairly tight radius, but they drive around consistently, and they can be recharged at night and they are ready to go the next day. This is obviously a sustainable procurement of sorts. In any event, I just wanted to highlight the good work that Fleet Vehicle Agency and the Department of Highways and Public Works are doing. We are beginning to see the untying of the knot, which was supply chain and procurement problems, and that the large North American manufacturers actually do have product available, and we are taking advantage of those opportunities.

MLA Tredger: Is the sustainable procurement policy going to apply to services that are procured by the government? Are we looking at bid value reductions for companies? Is that going to be part of the plan?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am advised that there is a national committee that is working on policies and best practices in this regard. We are certainly prepared to piggyback on that to have the most robust and dynamic sustainable procurement policy, but as indicated in the *Our Clean Future* key Highways and Public Works action, we are developing a sustainable procurement strategy and implementation plan to support procurement activities across YG in making more sustainable and environmentally friendly decisions when procuring goods and services. We hope to have that in place with a deliverable next year.

I certainly look forward to receiving guidance, advice, and education from Highways and Public Works as to what that will look like. That is where it is at as far as the sustainable procurement strategy right now.

MLA Tredger: I do have more questions and I am hopeful that we will get this department back so we can dig in to them, but for now, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Acting Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Acting Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 33, entitled *Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)*, without amendment.

Acting Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse West that the Chair report Bill No. 33, entitled *Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Deputy Speaker resumes the Chair

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

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

Chair's report

Ms. White: Madam Deputy Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 33, entitled *Act to amend the Registered Nurses Profession Act (2023)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

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Teacher on call shortage, letter re (dated October 18, 2023) from Selkirk Elementary School Council (White)