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HANSARD

Thursday, November 23, 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

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

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Yukon Party

Currie Dixon	Leader of the Official Opposition Copperbelt North	Scott Kent	Official Opposition House Leader Copperbelt South
Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
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

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the actions requested in the motions have been completed in whole or in part: Motion No. 829 and Motion for the Production of Papers No. 11, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to please help me in welcoming a number of guests here today for the tribute that we will be doing for the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League in a few moments.

First, we have Guin Lalena, Dana Hodgson, Kathleen Smith, Kim Stavert, Moira Lassen, Tash Watcham-Roy, Jeane Lassen, Coralie Ulyett, Alex Bouchard, Brianna Warner, Trish Pettitt, Alison Adams, Cheryl Rivest, Maralyn Rogers, and, from our Cabinet Office, Carla Gostick.

Please help me in welcoming them.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, we have a number of people here today on our last day of the session. We have some here for the Share the Spirit tribute that we will be giving in a few minutes.

I would like to introduce firefighters Barry Blisner, Yogi Ponsioen, Megan Coyne, Jeremy Beebe, Ocean Stimson, Wyatt Gale, Jack Blisner, and Nick O'Carroll. Those are the firefighters we have.

We also have, from Northwestel, Tammy April and Sara Thompson.

Please join me in welcoming them here this afternoon.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of welcoming to the House two classes from St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Secondary School: Ms. Sylvia Hamel's sciences humaines grade 10 class and Ms. Monica Sharma's social sciences grade 10 class. I have the names here and I apologize in advance for any completely unintended mispronunciations.

We are welcoming to the House Margaux Espinas, Jenna Henderson, Udo Jarviven, Levi Matao-Sotil, Christian Ocampo, Aquin Puliken, Souleymane Sangare, Gabriel

Thomson, Savy Cabuguason, Oslo Cunning — sounds familiar — Ithaniel Egipto, Lennox Huebenthal, Mason Klink, Maegan Morrison, Brody Nash, Caleb Power, Oliver Suitor, Sadie Warren, Quinn Wright, Magnolia Zhang, and Em Cachola. We also have adults accompanying this group: Rachel Benoit, Laurence Landry, and Becky Leslie.

Welcome to the House.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League. The league is marking 16 years of existence this year and celebrated with a jamboree in November featuring 112 players across eight teams — more than double from the previous year. Yukon women have been playing hockey for decades and the dedication of players and organizers through the years has truly laid the foundation for tremendous success and opportunities for women and girls in hockey.

The Whitehorse Women's Hockey League has eight teams and 15 players on each team, and it continues to grow in numbers. The league is developing more than just players. Through their referee clinics, the league now has 12 women officials across its three divisions, which is a remarkable achievement.

The Whitehorse Women's Hockey League is also leading in the ways that really matter. Their gender-inclusivity policy was groundbreaking and provides a safe and welcoming space for all players, regardless of their gender identity or expression. Inclusion is a strongly held and practised value in the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League.

I also want to congratulate the Yukon female hockey club for their leadership and a shout-out to the Yukon Wild team for their success in southern tournaments. I know that some players from the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League play with the Yukon Wild team to further enhance their skills. I am confident that the future of women's hockey is in great hands.

The next year sees the puck drop on the new Professional Women's Hockey League here in Canada and the United States. It is exciting to think of Yukon girls having the opportunity to turn pro. I am even more excited to think about those who will simply play for the joy of it and realize the opportunity to participate in sport for a lifetime — from Tyke or Timbit to Midget in minor hockey to adulthood in the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League.

This brings hope for players like my niece, Sofia Jan-Asp, and every other girl or gender-diverse player to continue to play and develop their skills well beyond minor hockey. That is a win for everyone who loves the game and ensures that hockey remains a relevant cultural touchstone for our country. It is also happening because of the dedication of organizations like the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League that are leading those

efforts, creating space for everyone, and setting the social and sporting example that we should all incorporate into our lives.

We are proud of our vibrant sport community and wish the league and players great success in the future.

Applause

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Whitehorse Women's Hockey Association. Now, we understand that the league is celebrating its 16th anniversary. This is indeed a significant accomplishment, but I think that I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the current league is just the latest iteration in a long and storied history of women's hockey in the Yukon. I won't go back to the 20th century versions of women's hockey, although I certainly recommend that interested readers check out the *Klondike Nugget's* early coverage of ladies' hockey games in 1902 and 1904 between the Dawson Maids and the Dawson Matrons hockey clubs and, of course, the chapter on women's hockey in Yukon from John Firth's book on Yukon sport.

From my perspective, the really good stuff began in the 1970s and 1980s. That is when people like Joanne Gallagher, Paulette Dufour, and my mother, Linda Dixon, began playing organized women's hockey. Time won't allow me to go through some of the fits and starts that they experienced in those days, but there has been an active women's league in Whitehorse for as long as I have been alive.

I grew up as a puck boy or a stick boy for several of those teams and had the pleasure of watching, learning from, and looking up to players like Ruby Ho, Susan Hamilton, and Cheryl Rivest, who I see is rocking the old Acorn Services jersey. I believe they won the Westerns at least once, possibly twice, back in Manitoba before I was born.

It is for that reason that Yukon women's hockey holds such a special place for me. It is with that history that I understand and appreciate how important and successful the current Whitehorse Women's Hockey Association has been. There are two observations that I would make about the current league. One is that they have done an incredible job of making the league and the sport so much more accessible and inclusive than ever before. This is absolutely critical to continuing the growth of the sport of hockey. I have lost count of the number of Yukon women who have told me that they started playing hockey because of how fun and welcoming that league is. For new Yukoners, old Yukoners, or anyone else in between, the women's hockey league has become not just a league but a community.

The second thing that I have noticed is that they do a wonderful job recognizing and appreciating the contributions of all those women who came before. As I said before, this may be the 16th anniversary of the league, but the roots of women's hockey in this territory go much deeper. From what I can tell, those in charge of the league today really appreciate how far things have come.

Let me close by giving huge kudos to all those in the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League today who have taken up the mantle of women's hockey in the Yukon. You're doing an

incredible job, not just of growing the sport of hockey but for making hockey such an important part of the lives of so many people, not just here in Whitehorse but across the Yukon.

Applause

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League.

I'll start with a story from when I moved back to the Yukon. I had been away for several years and I was worried that I wouldn't know anyone anymore here and that it would be hard to make new friends. When I saw that the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League was holding a skills clinic a few weeks after I moved back, I signed up right away. From the moment I walked into the changing room, my worries about not having a community disappeared.

By the end of the skills clinic, I had made friends, picked up some great tips, and had even been recruited to join the board. Over the next few years, I met so many people who had a story just like mine of being welcomed into this league known for being friendly, competitive, and incredibly fun.

I'm going to add just a couple things to the long and exciting history of women's hockey in the Yukon. I want to highlight the competitive women's hockey team that played in the 1980s and 1990s. They played all over the country and enjoyed some pretty impressive successes. I hear they won at the Arctic Winter Games, BC provincials, and the Western Canadian Shield. As mentioned, I think there is a jersey from that time up in the gallery today.

After that team wrapped up, there was a bit of a gap in formal women's hockey until Ruby Ho and Margo Millette started a new program called "learn to play hockey". They recruited, taught, and encouraged beginners.

Then, in the early 2000s, some people decided that the Arctic Winter Games girls team needed someone to practise against, so they pulled together an informal team of women to help the girls get ready for the games. I include this story because it illustrates so much of what this league is about: supporting women in sport and creating opportunities for this generation of players and the next.

The next few years were full of drop-in games, skill clinics, and jamborees, which grew into the thriving league we know today. That's a whirlwind history. I was talking to one of the founding members today and she said that someone should write a book. I absolutely agree and I can't wait to read the full unabridged history of the league.

Today, women's hockey is absolutely thriving in the Yukon. I know that the league at times has had to add more teams to try to keep with the demand, and their biggest limit is ice time, not interest. The league has even invested in training women as referees so that they can be involved in every part of the game.

I also want to give a special highlight to the league's gender-inclusion policy. It makes it possible for trans people to play the sport they love and be welcomed into the community and it's something that the whole league should be really proud of.

There are enough fun, heart-warming, and hilarious stories about this league to fill up this entire afternoon, but I do have to wrap up, so I want to finish by talking about the incredible volunteers who started this league and keep it going. It takes a lot of work, a lot of logistics, a lot of expertise, and mostly a lot of time to make this league thrive. All that work is done by volunteers and has been done by volunteers for decades. I think I speak for everyone when I say that the Yukon is a more fun, more vibrant, and more active place because of the hours you put in, so thank you to everyone, past and present, who makes the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League happen. We are so grateful, and here's to an amazing season.

Applause

In recognition of Share the Spirit Yukon campaign

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, as we enter the holiday season, I rise to invite Yukoners to share the spirit. Run by the Whitehorse Firefighters Charitable Society and Northwestel, the Share the Spirit Yukon campaign ensures that families have a magical holiday season by working closely with Santa and his partners to ensure that gifts and meals are delivered to children and families who need it most.

This year, 565 families in the Yukon in most every community will have a wonderful Christmas thanks to Northwestel and the firefighters who have committed to serving the community even after their shift ends. Everyone works year-round to raise funds for Share the Spirit, but they still rely on the generosity of Yukoners. Yukoners care about their neighbours and that care and generosity is especially present during the holiday season.

As we approach this festive season, I encourage Yukoners who can to consider giving back to their fellow community members. Share the Spirit Yukon offers several ways to help a family have a great holiday season. You can make a monetary donation, you can sponsor a family where you will be provided with a Christmas wish list of a Yukon child, or you can volunteer your time. You can do all of that and find more information at sharethespirit.ca.

Thank you to everyone who brightens the holidays for their neighbours and a huge thanks to the Whitehorse Firefighters Charitable Society and Northwestel. Firefighters demonstrate their care for others in so many ways. I thank them for giving us the opportunity to thank them for their efforts, making the festive season brighter for our neighbours and our friends.

Finally, I applaud Northwestel for donating \$5,000 to the campaign and for their continued support and service to all Yukon communities.

Have a safe and happy holiday, everyone. Thank you so much.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the project Share the Spirit. In 2019, we did a tribute to this worthy cause. It was 1997, and Ed and Donna Isaak were operating the Discovery Bar in the Taku Hotel. They started a campaign to help seven families. Donna called it Adopt-a-Family, and it morphed into Share the

Spirit. Eventually, the Whitehorse Kinsmen and the Kinettes kept the program moving.

Since 2016, we honour the Whitehorse Firefighters Charitable Society, who are dedicated to this amazing work year-round. With COVID in our world, the firefighters paid a visit to Ed and Donna at their home on Christmas Eve 2020. Doing the distance thing, a firefighter used cue cards and video-taped the visit, stating how much their idea to help seven families has grown to over 550 families and 1,000 children — a moving, emotional, very special thank you.

To this year's campaign, one can drop off a new, unwrapped gift for a child or teenager by December 10. Northwestel has not only donated \$5,000, but their 2nd Avenue retail store is there for collecting gifts. If you don't have time to shop for that gift, money is always acceptable. As a charity, they can issue tax receipts, and the money is then taken to buy and fill hampers.

Elf Central, this year, is in the Jacobs Industries building. Bob Jacobs, who left us last year, was not only a firefighter but a huge community supporter, and his family stepped up to help with much-needed space for this charity. Volunteers to wrap all those unwrapped gifts are needed as well, so many businesses stepped up — and I can only mention a few, due to time: On November 28, Winterlong Brewing Co. will donate 50 percent of their profits; G-P Distributing has donated for several decades, and this year, 300 turkeys will be given, and there are so many more. You know who you are. Thank you.

In the last six years, the need for help has increased, but the donations have decreased. So, please step up: a gift, a few dollars — because they do add up — or a few hours of time, Christmas gifts, Christmas turkey and fixings, Christmas lights — a “take for granted” for many but not there for some.

So, let's fill those hearts and homes with some happiness. Thank you, President Nick O'Carroll and his band of merry firefighters. Yukon is blessed to have you.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the efforts of the Whitehorse Firefighters Charitable Society all year-round, but today, we rejoice in the Share the Spirit campaign. This year, Share the Spirit elves anticipate bringing holiday cheer to more than 500 families and 1,000 children in 18 Yukon communities. This gift of love is monumental, and these actions change lives.

Even if you feel more like a grinch than a resident of Whoville, I believe that we can all play a role. There are many ways for those of us who don't have a direct line to the North Pole to help. You could register as a sponsor or Santa-in-training and get maps for the family where you will get to shop off a child's wish list, and trust me: A wish list is much easier than trying to guess what a stellar human may want for the holidays.

All of this is organized by elves who are experts in making lists and checking them twice. These gifts are then delivered to Elf Central by December 10 to ensure a Christmas delivery. Soon enough, when Elf Central is ready to open its doors, you could even be a volunteer gift-wrapper.

While the hard-working elves — who at times may be disguised as firefighters — fundraise all year-round, they need a little extra holiday cheer to help them make Christmas dreams come true. So, whether Santa or the Grinch, there is plenty of space for you to share the spirit. Any donation, either big or small, will be used to make these dreams come true. So, thank you to all of those who sponsor, volunteer, and share so freely during the holiday season.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling, pursuant to section 48(1) of the *Environment Act*, the 2023 Yukon state of the environment report.

As well, I have four legislative returns for tabling arising from Committee of the Whole debate with respect to Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling this afternoon a legislative return for the Member for Lake Laberge.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a legislative return in response to a question from Question Period for the Member for Copperbelt South.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling five legislative returns that are each in relation to a written question.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter dated today from the Yukon type 1 diabetes support network, addressed to the Minister of Health and Social Services in regard to her comments about the Yukon type 1 diabetes strategy.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House congratulates the Yukon building industry on continued investment in building construction with year-to-date value of investment in:

(1) residential building construction of \$195.1 million — an increase of \$25.7 million over the same period last year; and

(2) non-residential building construction of \$135 million — an increase of \$36.3 million over the same period last year, for a total value of \$330.1 million — an increase of \$62 million, or 23.1 percent, compared to the same period in 2022.

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

THAT this House congratulates Aparna Verma on her recent gold and silver medals at the World Karate and Kickboxing Union World 2023 Championship.

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

THAT this House congratulates Whitehorse City Councillor Dan Boyd as a recipient of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Municipal Trailblazer Award.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce legislation or regulation to:

(1) protect Yukon consumers who possess gift cards, gift certificates, or any other prepaid service or item that contains expiry dates or are unused at the closure of a business; and

(2) protect Yukon consumers by ensuring companies inform customers of contract renewals prior to these being automatically implemented without notice.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House congratulates Junior Canadian Ranger Eden Dulac on receiving the Cadets and Junior Canadian Rangers Group Commander's Commendation as a result of her efforts and achievements in personal skill development, shooting, and coaching.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to extend the airport trail snow-fencing pilot project along the entire airport trail.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to install accessible parking signs that are visible in the winter in all Yukon government parking lots.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to adopt Ontario's energy affordability program, which offers free cold climate air source heat pumps to eligible low-income households.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to eliminate charges for local or long-distance calls for people who are incarcerated at Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to meet the standards listed in the 2023 accreditation report of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to complete the required risk for sexual violence protocol assessments for every convicted and incarcerated sex offender.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Health care services

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are starting to become very concerned about the crumbling state of our health care system under this Liberal government — service cuts at our hospitals, reductions and closures at health care centres in rural communities, and more gaps in EMS coverage. Rebranding cuts at our hospitals as cost-containment measures doesn't change the fact that they cut services across the medical imaging department because of a lack of government funding.

On Tuesday, we learned that women will now have to wait 35 months for a routine mammography exam. Early detection of cancer is key to successfully treating it. In response, there has been indifference and inaction from the Health minister. When she doesn't like the facts, she dismisses them.

How bad does it need to get before we see real action from this Liberal government to fix our crumbling health care system?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I always am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise to speak to Yukoners about the importance of health care here in the territory and the committed work that we are doing every day with the Yukon Medical Association, with the nurses association here in the territory, and with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to make services for Yukoners better, to make responsible decisions with respect to them, and to implement the health transformation that has been contemplated by *Putting People First*, which was a study, of course, that was responded to by thousands of Yukoners.

It is our road map forward, it is the work that we are doing to transform Yukon's health care system, and it is the work, regardless of the narrative that is trying to be written by the members opposite, that is responding to the needs of Yukoners every day.

Mr. Cathers: One long-time Yukon doctor said — quote: "Health care in Yukon ... on the down slide and crashing..." There are thousands of Yukoners without a family doctor and not one single person is focused on recruiting more doctors to move to the Yukon. Surgical services are being cut by 30 percent; wait times are increasing; medical imaging, including CT scans, mammography, and X-rays, are being cut; and according to hospital documents as well as the chair and CEO, wait times will grow even longer. X-rays are capped at

35 exams per day and the CEO told the House that the wait time for a mammography will grow to 35 months.

Everyone but the Liberals recognizes that they are chronically underfunding Yukon hospitals, failing to recruit health professionals, and failing Yukoners. The minister continues to insist that there is nothing wrong with what she is doing, that the hospitals have all of the money that they need, and that none of this is their fault.

How bad does the health care crisis need to get before the Premier finally steps in to fix the problems that his minister is making worse?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the characterization that the member opposite is trying to make about what he heard from the Yukon Hospital Corporation CEO and president of the board of trustees the other day when they were here as witnesses for two hours to answer questions from the opposition.

What they indicated was that these were not cuts. This is not a characterization made by our government. This is from the witnesses who came and who are responsible for these services at Yukon Hospital Corporation. I am extremely disappointed to hear the characterization that is being made here of their testimony as being somehow inaccurate or somehow not what the member wanted to hear. I appreciate that it is not what that member or the Yukon Party wanted to hear about the services that are at the hospital, because what they heard was that there is a dedicated team of professionals at Yukon Hospital Corporation — at the three hospitals here in the territory — that we have the best working relationship ever between the Hospital Corporation, this government, and the Department of Health and Social Services, and that we are all working with the same goals in mind, which are to put people at the centre of the services that are provided here in the territory and to provide those every day to the health benefit of Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: Only the minister thinks that things are going well in health care. It is cold comfort to people who don't have a family doctor, women who won't be able to get a mammography screening for cancer for three years, people who are paying out of pocket to get an MRI down south, and the many others in need of health care services that they can't get under this out-of-touch Liberal government.

Thousands of people are without a doctor and, in response, the Liberals cut the funding for the only recruiter. This week, the minister picked a public fight with a doctor and angered health care professionals who were excluded from retention bonuses. She failed to open a walk-in clinic and now her plan is to poach doctors from existing clinics, making people who have a doctor wait longer to see them.

The health care system is crumbling while the minister makes things worse. We have seen the Premier step in before to take files off the desk of flailing ministers. Will the Premier finally step in and take real action to stop the Yukon's health care system from crashing?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am very mindful of the fact that we have fantastic young students from the territory here in the Legislative Assembly today, and I am very mindful

of the fact that I am speaking every time that I stand in this Legislative Assembly to Yukoners — and that I caution them about the information that is being provided in the preamble to this question, because much of it simply is not accurate.

What I can say, with respect to the importance of the issues that we are resolving here in the Yukon health care system, is that our transformation and our focus on providing better services for Yukoners in every aspect of our health system are also focused on health human resources. Health human resources here in the territory and in Canada and in the world is the greatest challenge facing Canada's and Yukon's health care system today. Domestically and globally, we are facing unprecedented challenges. We heard that in the opening statement from the witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation the other day. Unfortunately, the members opposite didn't listen carefully to that statement, and what they did hear, they didn't like.

Domestically and globally, we are facing unprecedented challenges. We are working every day to resolve that. We have a health human resources committee — unprecedented anywhere in the country — working on these issues going forward and we look forward to their results.

Question re: Rural communities funding and support

Mr. Hassard: Rural Yukon continues to be an afterthought for this Liberal government. Over the past year alone, we have seen a steady pattern of the Liberal government cutting back, reducing, or even closing services altogether.

Take EMS, for example. Many communities were shocked to learn that, at various times, they simply have no EMS coverage at all. In some communities, like Watson Lake, the municipal government has had to step in to fill gaps. In Dawson, a group of private citizens is trying to organize their own coverage. What is worse is that communities are not even informed when they have no coverage. It is clear that the Liberal government is not doing enough work to recruit and retain volunteers or address any of the growing gaps in EMS coverage.

When will this Liberal government stop ignoring rural Yukon and stop reducing services to our communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, again, I am very pleased to rise for the purposes of talking to Yukoners about the important service that is provided by our emergency medical services, both here in Whitehorse and in the communities. Yukon Emergency Medical Services staff and community responders are dedicated to providing Yukoners with timely and high-quality health care services across the country. In addition to their dedication, we are dedicated to supporting the services that they provide.

Increased pressures have resulted from the local, national, and global shortage of health care providers and do continue to be a challenge and are mitigated by those dedicated individuals through a variety of approaches to reduce patient and staff impacts and to prioritize critical care. As part of our work to implement the *Putting People First* report, we are taking steps to align health services across the territory. We have done so by

transitioning Yukon EMS from Community Services to Health and Social Services so that our streamlined service to Yukoners can be improved. This transfer is an organizational change, but it is intended to align health services across the territory in a way that enables care to be more person-centred and more effectively integrated to promote seamless care transitions.

Mr. Hassard: Throughout the summer, we have heard a steady stream of concerns about the reduction of services and gaps in rural health care. Here's a quote from the *Yukon News*: "Since May, Pelly Crossing, Destruction Bay, Mayo, Teslin, Beaver Creek and Ross River health centres have been closed or had services reduced — for weeks at a time in some cases."

First Nation leaders and municipal and community leaders have all spoken up and called for solutions. Here is what one municipal leader said in October — and I'll quote: "The government does not seem to understand that it's just not acceptable or right to have entire communities without immediate access to health-care for very extended periods of time..."

I will quote again: "We're getting no progress." And then: "We need to see actual action..."

Why should rural Yukon have any faith in this government when they refuse to act on something so important?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be able to note for the members opposite that there is money in this particular budget to assist Health and Social Services going forward with improved services at the Yukon Hospital Corporation and improved services through EMS, through our nursing stations, and through our opportunities to provide health care in communities, which I note that the member opposite is speaking about.

I encourage them to support this government — to support these community workers by supporting that budget this afternoon as we go forward. Like the rest of Canada and around the world, Yukon is impacted by the health human resource shortage. To mitigate the impact on Yukoners, the government continues to work to recruit and retain health care providers, including those who work with emergency medical services and with community health centres.

In March of this year, we launched a health human resource steering committee. It was led jointly by the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Hospital Corporation. It has representatives from the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, the Yukon Medical Council, the Yukon Employees' Union, Yukon University, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and the Council of Yukon First Nations. Mr. Speaker, this is unprecedented work.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I'll encourage the minister to actually stop ignoring rural Yukon. As important as health care is, the cuts to rural Yukon go even beyond that. The government continues to use the umbrella of regionalization to roll back the availability of solid-waste services to rural Yukon and is planning to close several transfer stations.

Affected communities continue to say that they are willing to work with the government to find solutions, but it has been made clear to them that the minister's mind is made up.

Yesterday, the only rural Cabinet minister said that these closures had budgetary advantages. Even smaller services like highway rest stops are being closed because the Liberals say that they are too costly to maintain. In a \$2-billion budget, the Liberals are choosing to save money by closing outhouses.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, in our Standing Orders, we say that members may ask questions and then supplementary questions. The first question that I heard and the second question were about our rural EMS. This question is about our rural transfer stations. These are completely different topics. If it's a new question, then I think it belongs to the Third Party.

Speaker: Official Opposition House Leader, on the point of order.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, these questions are all about cuts to rural services in the Yukon. If the members opposite choose to listen to them, they can respond accordingly, but these are clearly questions related to cuts to services for rural Yukoners.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There is no point of order. It is a dispute between members.

Please continue.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, in a \$2-billion budget, the Liberals are choosing to save money by closing outhouses. It's pretty clear to anyone paying attention that rural Yukon is not a priority to —

Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I have to start this response by saying that the member opposite is frankly wrong. We hear this again and again and again with the opposition trying to weave a narrative that is simply not true. There are no cuts to rural Yukon when it comes to transfer stations. As a matter of fact, the Yukon government is investing in our regional landfills to make sure that we serve rural Yukoners better. We are investing hundreds of thousands of dollars to improve landfills so that we have a better result and encourage people to reduce the amount of garbage that they are producing.

These are important investments for the entire territory. Municipalities across the territory are signing on to the regional landfill initiative. We look forward to helping our rural Yukon communities into the future with significant investments in infrastructure, in housing, in social services, in education, and in health care, and we are going to continue to do that, as we have for the last seven years.

Question re: Health care services

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, we started this Sitting after a summer of closures and service reductions at health centres across the territory. This government responded to the

substance use health emergency with a toothless strategy with no timelines and no budget.

Blood infusion services were dropped at the Dawson hospital; doctors said that the hospitalist program at Whitehorse General Hospital was headed for collapse in January, and the Health and Social Services minister can pretend everything is fine and that no one has the right facts when they tell her that her health care is in dire straits under her government, but here we are staring down critical failures in government services that Yukoners depend on. When this government fails, it is Yukoners who pay the price.

What actions will the minister take to fix this broken system?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the opportunity to stand yet again to talk about the importance of health care here in the Yukon. I am puzzled by the approach to these questions, but nonetheless, I understand that the opposition thinks that it is their job to just tell everyone in the Yukon how terrible things are.

I do not support that. I am very proud of the work that is being done by Health and Social Services and of the relationships we have built with the Yukon Medical Association, the relationships that we have built with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, with the Yukon nurses association, with the nurses and doctors who work at the hospital and on the front lines, with the nurses at Community Services — and support their front-line services where sometimes they are the only person whom someone can reach out to in a community here in the territory for help.

What the others hear is my approach to being positive; I think it is an important aspect of leadership here in the territory. I think it is at no time improperly characterized as something where we do not understand the issues, where we do not understand the problems. We are recognizing each and every one of those problems, and we are responding in a way that Yukoners have asked us to do.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting, because the minister always loves to say that we don't have the facts about health care, but Yukon doctors are tweeting the facts for everyone to see. The former president of the Yukon Medical Association recently tweeted that health care in the territory is — and I'm quoting — on the “down slide and crashing.” Another tweeted that his only alternative to burnout was — and I'm quoting again — “... a longer delay to diagnosis and that leads to a worse or sometimes fatal outcome.” A survey of Yukon hospital workers said that staff don't feel safe at work and they don't see efforts to prevent workplace violence.

The minister can deny the facts, but her brand of health care is hurting the health professionals we need the most. How can this government deliver on health care if the minister can't give health care workers decent working conditions?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I know that what the members heard, if they were listening the other day when the Yukon Hospital Corporation was here, was reality about the challenges that are existing here in the Hospital Corporation with Yukon government's partnership in making sure that work is done in a way that is safe and supportive of Yukoners' health.

I know that they also are aware — presumably, if they have been listening — that we have supported the mental wellness, the health and support for Yukon nurses in Yukon nursing communities, in our health centres across the territory, for the purpose of making sure that they are provided with support, recognizing that burnout is real and that there are pressing issues in Yukon communities.

We have to support all of our health care providers who have sacrificed so much of their personal lives and their time to their jobs over the last few years, particularly in our community health centres. They work tirelessly on behalf of Yukoners. I see it every day through the work that I am honoured to do, through the work that I am doing with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, through the work that Health and Social Services does across the territory for the purposes of supporting Yukoners through what are unprecedented times here in the territory.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the minister continues to insist that no one else has the facts, but Yukoners see and feel them everywhere. Yukoners feel the impacts of the failures in the health care system every day. They get sicker when they can't see doctors on time or don't have a doctor at all. People spend hours in the emergency room waiting for simple prescription renewals or wasting their time and putting undue strain on an emergency service. Eighteen Yukoners have died of opioid-related overdoses so far this year and four of them in the month of October.

People who use drugs still can't get the supports that they need when and where they need them. The facts are that the Yukon is facing a critical health care crunch — Yukoners can't find doctors, they live in pain while waiting for surgeries, and sometimes whole communities go without health care at all.

Can the minister tell us what she will do between now and March to get health care under control?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that, yet again, if I challenge a particular fact in a question, all of a sudden, I am not listening to the questions or I don't understand what Yukoners are facing as a reality.

I truly understand what they are facing as a reality. Every single day, the team at Health and Social Services, the team at the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and the teams at community health centres are top of mind — are top of the priorities for this government — and we work diligently with each and every one of them, including the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, with new and improved relationships to let us work together, because those relationships were broken; those relationships didn't exist before in a positive way.

We heard from the witnesses who were here the other day — much to the chagrin of the Yukon Party, I think — that the very best relationship they have had as a hospital corporation with the Department of Health and Social Services exists right now. That will let us get work done — positive work — on behalf of Yukoners. We are putting Yukoners at the centre of each and every decision in the Yukon health care system, and that is not something that was done before. It is something that

we learned from Yukoners and from experts across the field in *Putting People First*, and that is our road map forward.

Question re: Affordable housing and land development

Ms. Clarke: The state of housing in the Yukon is widely recognized as being in crisis. There is a lack of available housing, and what is available is increasingly unaffordable. To begin with, the Yukon government is just not getting enough residential lots out to keep up with our growing population. Since the 2021 election, they have only been able to release 240 lots. During the same time, Yukon's population has grown by almost 2,000 people.

When will the Liberal government start releasing enough lots to keep up with our growing population?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, frankly, I am not going to take housing advice from the members opposite. This government came in with a deficit, and yes, we are well aware of the number of new people coming to the territory, because for many reasons, this is a great place for people to come. So, on the one hand, they are saying that life is terrible, and on the other hand, we have more people coming to the territory than we have ever seen. Why is that? Because we have the best economy with the best social services, and we are having to deal with the housing situation, and to do that, we are going to build 1,000 lots or more over the five years of our mandate.

I encourage the members opposite, if they really care about these issues — if they really care for Yukoners — I encourage the member opposite to vote for the budget this afternoon, because that will demonstrate that they actually care and they are not just giving crocodile tears.

Ms. Clarke: The fact that not enough houses are being built is directly due to the lack of available land. Owning a home has become unattainable for so many Yukoners. So many of them are looking at the rental market. Unfortunately, the Liberals' experiment with rent control has failed, and the rental market is suffering. Rents continue to skyrocket, and there are just not enough new rental units coming into the market to keep up with our population growth. We continue to hear from landlords that they would rather remove their rental units from the market than to try to deal with this government's failed rent control policies.

How bad does the rental market need to get before the Liberals will admit that their policies have failed?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, first off, we did hear from the Yukon Party earlier in the session that we were seeing a decrease in investment today. Of course, I had an opportunity to table a motion that showed direct contravention to their understanding of what is happening in our building sector. Both in commercial and residential, we are seeing a very significant increase, almost over 25 percent I believe, in total build spend.

When it does come to the rental market, what I heard yesterday from the members opposite — specifically I think from the member opposite — was that we were seeing that rents were too high. Today, the concern is that we are actually putting some mechanisms in place to control those rents.

What we are seeing is an increase year over year — really significant investment from the private sector, both in rental and strata and in new houses. We think that is the trend that we need to keep seeing.

We'll continue to put lots out. We will continue to have announcements throughout this year and next year around opportunities for partnership for new affordable housing. When we look back over the last five years, the facts are that this is the biggest investment in affordable housing and in affordable partnership that the Yukon has ever seen. We know that previously it just wasn't done for whatever reasons — either it was the set of values or the inability to get the money out the door.

Ms. Clarke: In the face of all this, the Liberals' budget decisions have been telling.

Earlier this year, many Yukon communities raised concerns about their cuts to rural land development. Now the supplementary budget includes a \$6-million cut to the Yukon Housing Corporation's capital budget. Even the NDP have correctly pointed out massive flaws with some of their current housing programs like the home ownership loan program.

Why is the Liberal government cutting funding for housing instead of trying to fix the flaws in their current housing policies?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, through our debate in Committee of the Whole, we clearly identified the fact that we were moving funds from this fiscal year into the next fiscal year. There are a number of partners who we have talked a lot about here in the House — whether it be Vimy, Safe at Home, or others — that are shifting the timeline of their projects. We think it's important to continue to work alongside their timelines. I think that all Yukoners would like to see some of these projects built quicker, but we also will continue to be good partners.

I think that it's good to see a change in the view from the Yukon Party. One of our most significant opportunities has been to partner with Kwanlin Dün First Nation Chu Níkwän. There seemed to be some resistance from the Yukon Party to support that land development, but we did see members from the Yukon Party there this year and we were happy to see Kwanlin Dün break ground.

Not only are we building lots, but for the first time ever in the City of Whitehorse, we are seeing very innovative work where now self-governing First Nations are building lots and we are helping to de-risk those projects.

Again, when it comes to the budget today, Yukoners are watching. We think it is very important. Many questions today about health and our support for health — we have \$17.1 million for health. We have money in place to support all of our construction. Please, Yukon Party, support that work and support Yukoners today.

Question re: Cost of living

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, this government is out of touch with Yukoners.

Despite all the problems facing Yukoners as a result of this Liberal government, the most pressing concern that we

continue to hear from Yukoners is the cost of living. We have offered many solutions. We said to cut the fuel tax; the Liberals said no. We said to double the pioneer utility grant for seniors; the Liberals said no. We said to cut the carbon tax for home heating fuel; even Justin Trudeau, of all people, said yes. But despite even the Prime Minister of Canada recognizing that Yukoners need a break on home heating this winter, the Liberals here still say no. In fact, they are pretty much the only government left in the country that still wants to see the carbon tax put back on home heating oil.

Governments across the country, including the federal Liberals, recognize that people are struggling and need a break. Why do the Yukon Liberals insist on putting the carbon tax back on home heating fuel?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, that was quite a scattershot of things there. I think the question started off being about inflation. What I can say is that we sat as a team, we looked at the information that was in front of us, we looked at where we saw the potential trend of inflation, and we sat with a budget in the spring and identified what we thought would be key times throughout the year to make sure that we were helping Yukoners. We thought that we would see inflation trend down. What we saw this week was 2.8 percent for the Yukon. We are below the national average. We believe that the mechanisms that we have put in place — ensuring that Yukoners have the funds in place to reduce their cost when it came to their heating bill — again, for the more vulnerable Yukoners, a chance to get a bit more in their pockets to get the things that they need.

All of those mechanisms were in place. They are working, and what we are seeing is a significant reduction in inflation, even though we are here in the Yukon and really at the end of a significant supply chain. We think that is good. We are not out of touch with Yukoners. I can tell you this: What we are doing is that we have listened to groups of Yukoners who haven't been listened to for decades by the previous government, and so we are making sure that all of those individuals who weren't part of one little clique of people all now have representation in this Yukon. We will continue to do the work that we have to do.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, if my position was indefensible, I would dodge the question too, which is what the Premier has just done.

Since the federal government announced the cut of the carbon tax on home heating fuels, the Liberals have been clinging to the idea that Yukoners actually benefit from the carbon tax. This is despite the fact that just about everyone, including the Parliamentary Budget Officer, has recognized that the carbon tax disproportionately affects rural and northern communities. Even the Prime Minister of Canada now recognizes it. Even Justin Trudeau seems like he's more in touch with Yukoners than this Premier.

Can the Premier explain to Yukoners why he is the only Premier left in the country who wants to see his citizens pay more to heat their home this winter?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, well, no, I think that first what we've done — I just touched on the fact that we have put

funds in our budget to ensure that individuals across the Yukon have cheaper electric bills. We did that in two different tranches. We did one in the spring and, as we go into the deeper part of the winter, we will see individuals get \$50 a month off of their electric bill, which most Yukoners pay.

We thought it was appropriate to make sure that our inflationary reduction tools had the biggest impact to the most Yukoners. We think that is good public policy.

When we look at the fires and we look at the floods, we listen to Yukoners across this territory. We hear youth come up and say: Please, make sure you are doing something; you cannot stand here and not do anything. These are real issues that are happening within our territory and within our country. Make the tough decisions. You will have to make some sacrifices, but please do this for us and the next generations.

We think that's the right thing to do. I haven't heard any plan whatsoever from the members opposite. Maybe we will when he gets back up.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the biggest challenge that Yukoners face today is the cost of living, but the Yukon Liberals think that they should pay more. Our health care system is, to borrow the president of the YMA's words, on a "down slide and crashing". The Yukon Liberals think that everything is fine.

Housing is unaffordable and unattainable, yet the Liberals refuse to adjust their housing programs and cut the budget. Services across rural Yukon have been cut, reduced, or ended altogether, and the Liberals say that communities should be thankful. It's clear that this government and this Premier are out of touch and out of steam, and not a single Yukoner cast a vote for him to be Premier, so why should Yukoners have confidence in this failing government and this failing Premier?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I was thinking we would finally get the true colours out today on the tone. I didn't hear a lot throughout the session from the Leader of the Yukon Party, but what I can say is this: We have seen unprecedented investment when it comes to housing. We heard a narrative from the Yukon Party which was absolutely obliterated when the CEO of the hospital came in and talked about the relationship in place and also about the supports that are here.

We have heard over and over again that there needs to be more financial resources put in place for the hospital at this particular time. We see \$17.1 million today — an opportunity to vote for it, the biggest opportunity right now for the Yukon Party to show that they are supporting the health system.

My question is: Will they stand up or will they play politics? Will they support Yukoners or will they play politics?

Do you know what? That vote today will be indicative of everything that we heard this afternoon in Question Period. It's all about politics and it's not about actually helping people who are on the ground who need the help. That's what we are going to see today from them.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, 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 15 minutes.

Recess

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

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

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I'm just looking forward to further questions. I did manage to get one legislative return in. I know that the team was working to get the mineral development strategy list, and I have a list of numbers, but I don't have the mineral development strategy that has the numbers in them.

I would just like to welcome officials back to the Assembly. Today, we have two assistant deputy ministers: Stephen Mead and Patricia Randell. I look forward to questions from members opposite.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, I too would like to echo the minister's welcome to Ms. Randell and Mr. Mead for attending today to provide support.

I do have a number of questions with respect to forestry and lands, but I intend to write the minister, since today is the final day of the Fall Sitting and we have some other business that we would like to get on to. I have no questions at this point and we are ready to move on and clear Energy, Mines and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I thank the member opposite for that indication and I will look forward to those questions on forestry and lands.

I thank the opposition members for their questions over the time of our debate.

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

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

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

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

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

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$33,074,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$33,074,000 agreed to

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to extend the recess by 10 minutes to allow members to be here?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to extend the recess by 10 minutes to allow officials to arrive in the House?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for 10 minutes.

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Economic Development — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, I look forward to the opportunity to extend our discussion about the Department of Economic Development for a little bit. I would like to begin by thanking the officials who have joined us today.

I would like to turn to one aspect of the department that we haven't touched on recently, and that is, of course, the government's policy with regard to trade. I would like to ask about internal trade in particular. Are there any initiatives that the Yukon government has advanced through the RCT, which is the table in the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* which deals with regulatory collaboration and identification of areas where trade can be enhanced between provinces?

Can the minister tell us if any particular priorities have been identified by Yukon in advance of the RCT?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, I will just give a bit of background for Yukoners. I know that the member opposite has a deep understanding of this topic from previous work in the department. For folks who are not as up to date on trade issues, the Yukon is a party to the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*, ensuring that Yukon businesses have access to markets and procurement and investment opportunities across Canada. We are creating opportunities for Yukon businesses to expand beyond our territory while utilizing the Yukon's exceptions to increase local employment, support small businesses, and strengthen our regional economies.

In December 2022, the Yukon chaired the annual meeting of the Committee on Internal Trade and advanced key decisions related to the movement of goods, services, investments, and labour within Canada. We look forward to continuing to see this work and the progress that was made last year as the role of chair now transitions to Saskatchewan this year and then next year to Prince Edward Island.

To promote greater transparency on doing business in the Yukon and to demonstrate our support for the liberalizing of interprovincial trade within Canada, our government — I'm very proud of the work of the department or they should be very proud of their work, I should say — removed five of Yukon's

exceptions to the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* in 2022 based on a technical review that identified those exceptions as being items that had no effect. That was the biggest amount of red tape removal of any jurisdiction in one tranche — one particular year in the country. I do want to thank Bryce for his work, if he is listening today. He did a tremendous amount of work in our department and has been leading a lot of this work for us. I should make sure I don't forget Brian. I just want to make sure that I get all of our folks who worked so hard on that and helped us set up the work for the event.

The following five exceptions were removed. It's not only about making sure that we enact, but it's about reducing barriers. First, I will say that one government procurement exception with a transitional timeline that we removed — three exceptions for authorizations relating to agriculture, grazing, and forestry respectively. There was one exception for recycling services that was removed. To be fair, a lot of this was redone in policy and was stuff that was there but needed to be cleaned up and removed. The team there was happy to do it.

As well, during the 2022 Committee on Internal Trade meeting that the Yukon chaired, a number of key decisions were taken to drive the internal trade agenda moving forward.

Ministers declared that negotiations to cover trade in non-medical cannabis under the rules of the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* have been successfully completed. Ministers agreed on a path forward to complete negotiations toward a financial services chapter for inclusion in the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*. That was outstanding for quite a while and it was good to get that in place. Ministers recommended renewing initiatives to increase economic opportunities in the territories related to growing, harvesting, and processing healthy food.

We continue to work with our provincial, territorial, and federal colleagues at the Regulatory Reconciliation and Cooperation Table to answer questions — some of the key work that has been done to identify and address non-tariff barriers to trade within Canada. This table has completed 14 reconciliation agreements and two regulatory cooperation items to date, and the Yukon has signed on to all agreements for which it has relevant measures. I do want to say that — just so I don't miss anybody — Bryce Aubrey, of course, has done a lot of our trade work, but Brian Park too helped lead a tremendous amount of that work and Andy Gaule has been key for us as well.

In September, the department wrote to Global Affairs Canada to acknowledge Canada's agreement on the mutual recognition of architects with the European Union. When it came across — this was something that we certainly had a role to speak to and we wanted to ensure that our voice was at the table, but it was really that the recognition does not diminish Yukon's ability to regulate architects in the future. It's not something that we are doing right now, but it is something that was probably one of the newest pieces of conversation that has come across my desk over the fall of 2023.

Again, going back to the reconciliation agreements that I was touching on, those agreements help to streamline the interprovincial regulatory requirements in areas such as health and safety, transportation, and construction to the benefit of

Yukon businesses and consumers. The other thing that I would just mention is that we are trying to make sure that there are as many opportunities as possible for folks in the Yukon in the business sector to work in other jurisdictions.

So, some of that work — and we have gotten into some political back-and-forth on a few things that we have tried to work on. But putting sort of the political tone aside, I do think that some of the things — like the work that we have done with Ontario and some of the work that we are doing in British Columbia, which I can expand on in the future — are things that will give even more opportunities for interprovincial collaboration in our private sector.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that. I would like to move on to the nominee program. I am sure that we will discuss the recent press release eventually, but I would like to ask a specific question first.

We understand that the nominee program is prioritizing applications for people whose work permit is expiring, but I have a question about visitor visa permits. We have heard from an individual who has such a visa and we are wondering if we should encourage the potential applicant to apply for a visitor visa too so that their application might be prioritized by the YNP.

Can the Premier provide some advice about this situation and whether or not someone with a visitor visa should indeed apply to YNP? Will visitor visas be prioritized by the YNP?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, I think that it would probably be best — I wouldn't speak to the specifics — for the individual to work through our office to make sure that they get the right supports if the member opposite or one of the member opposite's colleagues wants to send that information through the office or directly to the department.

These applications come in from businesses for the Yukon nominee program. That is the key. If it is an individual driving it, I'm not sure, but I know that we could certainly help in that manner.

The Government of Yukon provides economic immigration programs to help businesses across the territory meet their labour needs. That is really the driving force. The Department of Economic Development administers the two immigration programs in partnership with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada — the Yukon business nominee program and the Yukon nominee program.

In 2020, the department launched a new stream, which was the Yukon community program, and that was really driven by an interest by our Yukon communities. Specifically, I know of some of the input and conversations that happened in Carmacks and I believe in Haines Junction. I know of a Carmacks rural driver who had multiple businesses that wanted to have nominees, but they couldn't provide a total of 40 hours for one business. It gave individuals an opportunity to work between a few different businesses in the same community.

As was alluded to, there was a press release put out. I'm very happy to see that we actually got an allocation for the Yukon nominee program within this fiscal year. It's something that we've requested over the years and there was a reallocation.

The ministers of immigration met last week. We had representatives there. I wasn't able to attend; we were here. They did reallocate 150 allocations to the Yukon, which is something that we haven't seen before.

Some of the other territories — for instance, I think Northwest Territories — were way under the numbers that they had projected. They did look across the country and reallocate. That's important because Yukon businesses applied for all of the allocations that we had at the start of the year. I think that — probably within the first three months but definitely four months of this year — all of the allocations that had been provided by IRCC were used.

It's something that we were looking — a lot of Yukon businesses — I have spoken to many Yukon business owners, some just in the last month and a half — many Yukon businesses that do great work in our communities, do a lot of corporate social responsibility, businesses that are well known to all of us and that were really waiting to get more support to have folks come. Those folks, of course, have been identified. They are ready to make that transition here to the Yukon.

As well, what we have tried to do in these cases is make sure that, where possible, either the employer is providing a housing solution or there are family members here and they are actually supporting their family members to come here so that there is a housing solution. We're very cognizant of the fact that we have tremendous housing pressures, specifically in the rental market.

We're trying to ensure that our business community can run at the pace that they want to, that they have the individuals they need to run their businesses, that they have the opportunity to provide the services that are required and needed by Yukoners, but at the same time, we are in a position where we are putting the least amount of pressure on other areas of our housing continuum.

At the end of the day, it is good news about the Yukon nominee program, and then we will have a sense to see, going into 2024-25, what the allotments will be for the Yukon.

Mr. Dixon: With the allocation for Yukon for the Yukon nominee program, my question is: How are those prioritized? The Premier seemed to indicate that one aspect of prioritization could be whether or not a business can offer housing or whether or not the individual has family here already.

Is it correct then that businesses with housing in place and family members in place are prioritized?

The second thing that I did ask earlier — people coming in who have a visitor visa, are they prioritized in the YNP as well?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Because of the high number of applications received this year, which was projected to exceed the Yukon's allotment, the Yukon nominee program introduced a temporary system to prioritize applications for visa-holders already within Canada and those with current work permits. This was communicated to employers via e-mail and posted on our website in July.

The officials here have just shared with me that we are now back to the standard process of "first come, first served" into the queue.

Look, I think that the member opposite brings up some interesting points. How do we contemplate moving forward? What are the housing solutions that are potentially tied to individuals and applications? I think that is a good point.

At the table two years ago, ministers across the country did have a discussion about how we ensure that data from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation could be integrated into allotments and allocations across the country so that we would know that we were not putting undue pressure in place.

What we have heard across the country has really been about student visas. There are hundreds of thousands of student visas being allotted across this country. We don't see that as much. The Yukon University does have a thriving international student population but nowhere near the numbers that we are seeing in British Columbia, Ontario, Québec, and other jurisdictions.

Some good points today I think that we can contemplate in those questions, and please let us know if we can put some information through that will help the individual who wants to see what the best route possible is, and if they, in some cases, need to be matched with an employer, I know that we do have employers from time to time reaching out to us.

Thank you for the questions, and I will grab a seat as we move to the NDP.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for carrying us through, and I did just let the media know that they wanted to scrum all three people who were going to talk about the same department, and it was very awkward. So, I apologize to the minister and his officials and, of course, welcome back to them. If I ask a question that has been asked, just let me know, and I will read it in Hansard later on.

One of the things that we were told initially, before the mechanisms of the program were announced, was about the temporary landlord assistance program. Can the minister let me know how many applications have been received and how much of that million dollars has made its way into the pockets of landlords?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There has been — I had even more up-to-date numbers here. I just did this in the scrum, but I think that we are at — as of November 15 — I will give you the November 15 numbers — there were 130 applications received, which included 1,271 units, representing \$429,598 currently being assessed by the department. Let me give you the numbers as of yesterday. Some of those weren't accepted. As of the end of day yesterday, there were 155 applications received.

What I want to touch on with that is — there has been a lot of criticism to the implementation of this program, for many different reasons. What I will say is that we committed to doing this — I committed to doing this — and I thought that it was important to follow through and deliver on the program, with the support of my colleagues, and I thank them for that. I would say that this program now has supported 1,311 units, representing \$440,076. That is what is being assessed. In Whitehorse, there are 1,287 units, in Dawson, there are 12 units, and there are 12 in other communities.

What it does show is, if you look at the housing ecosystem and the rental sector, what you will find is that there are some rental owners who have a small portfolio. We don't have — this isn't a jurisdiction like the other territories where we have seen significant investment from real estate investment groups — or REITs — coming in and doing larger acquisition investment. But what we've seen for the most part is — SME — small- and medium-sized enterprise corporations and businesses, and we are seeing predominantly Yukoners who in many cases have gone out and invested in a unit or two units. That was the goal: to ensure that those folks could offset their costs.

Even though we have kind of gotten into a back-and-forth about individuals who maybe have 10 or 20 units, when you take into consideration the costs that it takes to oversee your O&M for these buildings, the 338 was a number that we looked at as making up that delta between the consumer price index and the rent cap. That's how the program is to be used, so we're about a little under half so far, but it seems that the scope of the program has stretched to touch many Yukoners so far.

Ms. White: Just based on the 1,311 units and the 155 applicants — so, on average, that would be eight and a half units per owner would be my guess, and I know that isn't the case — can the minister let me know of the most units per application and, for example, the number of one-unit applicants?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I don't have exact — I can tell you that, in the one to 10 rental unit category, we have had 141 applications, so 91 percent of our applications are those individuals with one to 10 units. In the 11 to 100 units, we have had 11 applications, so that is seven percent. In those bigger 100-plus units, we have had three applications — so, two percent of the total program usage.

Ms. White: Just for clarification purposes, there have been three applications that have had more than 100 units? If that is the case, can the minister give me a bit more of an idea of how many more than 100 — so, is it 101, 152, or 112?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: What we can confirm is that there are three applications for 100 units or more, but we don't have the breakdown to say that there is one for 200 units, there is one for 150, but we can come back with that information. I will make a commitment today that we will come back with the breakdown of those particular applications — any information that we can share.

Ms. White: Knowing that today is the last day of the legislative Sitting, I would prefer not to find out in the spring, so if the minister is happy to send me and I'm sure someone from the Yukon Party a letter, I would appreciate that.

It seems that knowing that it is 100-plus and not knowing if it's 200 or 150 — like, I'm curious about that, so I thank the minister for that.

I went to the downtown safety meeting on — maybe it was Tuesday night; I think it was Tuesday night — that was held at the MacBride Museum. During that meeting, I found out that it is the Department of Economic Development that is paying for the security services that are operating between — I believe it is Strickland and Black Street and 3rd and 6th Avenue.

Can the minister just either affirm or not if that is the case? Then can he let me know what the cost of that is?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, 405 Alexander Street — just a little bit of background for folks about this situation and the security that has been deployed. 405 Alexander Street provides essential life-saving services for members of our community. Why do I say that? There have been 40 individuals who have received life-saving procedures at 405 Alexander Street, and I think it is just important that we continue to remember that there is a tremendous number of vulnerable folks who are there and who continually need those supports.

Our government is taking action, again, to address immediate safety and security concerns of businesses and citizens in the area surrounding 405 Alexander Street.

For Yukoners, the member opposite is just discussing that IRP, a local organization in a multi-tiered consultation that's happening — did host a conversation at the MacBride Museum this week. It was really giving a chance for downtown residents, in a non-political environment, to come and just voice their concerns, their thoughts, and their challenges and if they thought of any good ideas they could bring to the table as well. I heard there was a bit of all of those things that occurred.

One of these actions that we are looking at is contracting a private security service to patrol the area immediately surrounding 405 Alexander by providing a visible deterrent to behaviours and incidents that have created insecurity and safety issues in the neighbourhood. It's — initially, it's a two-month pilot project, and it will also gather valuable information on behaviours and incidents that create insecurity and safety issues, helping government agencies and community partners continue to develop medium- and longer term solutions.

A local company, Sirius Security, will patrol the area of Black Street to Strickland Street, including alleys between 3rd Avenue and 5th Avenue. Patrols have been operating since November 1 until December 31 — so it's a two-month contract — Sunday to Thursday from 6:00 p.m. until 2:00 a.m. and Friday and Saturday from 7:00 p.m. until 3:00 a.m.

Patrol guards are encouraged to interact with individuals during their tours in a friendly manner but not in an enforcement capacity. Patrol guards will be actively observing for signs of trespassers, illegal drug use, and building emergency and security issues. In addressing any situations involving individuals, patrol guards will respond with non-violent interventions informed by the company's social safety mandate and Yukon-specific non-violent conflict resolution training.

The cost is \$50,000 for the contract, and it is being paid by Economic Development. We are working hand in hand with Health and Social Services in the coordination of this work and in deploying the contract.

Ms. White: Is that \$50,000 in the supplementary budget?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No, it is not part of the supplementary budget, but it is out of our contract line item for the Department of Economic Development.

Ms. White: My thanks to the minister for bringing back Economic Development, because he made the commitment

when we were having the conversation in Executive Council Office that he would bring it back so that we could talk about the ore dock. So, now that he has his officials here, I am glad to see that.

I have questions about the ore dock, and it was never going to work in Question Period because there has to be a back-and-forth. We know that the timeline for Yukon to access the existing dock in Skagway is not new. We knew that there was an impending closure. What I want to know is: When did work begin on the government side to find alternatives or a solution to secure long-term access to tidewater — when did that process start?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to come back and take a look — I want to give a very accurate number to this conversation, but you know, I will say this: I think that retired Assistant Deputy Minister Steve Rose is in the gallery today, and I think that he was probably working on it when I got to Economic Development. This has been going on for a long time. Good to see you, Mr. Rose. This has been going on for a long time. Through most of the tenure that I have had at Economic Development, this has been a discussion. I think that when it really became significant was at a time when EDA — which is really an economic crown corporation in Alaska — knew that their relationship with the ore terminal was coming to an end. The community of the borough of Skagway was showing interest in taking over that infrastructure, and I think that the Yukon Chamber of Mines, the private sector, the Yukon Producers Group, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Economic Development — everyone was trying to ensure that there was an appropriate solution moving forward.

EDA was there as well as the owners of White Pass, which is Carrix, which is a holding company — they have since been acquired, but at that time, it was a stand-alone with I think Carnival Cruise Line, which were owners of White Pass. Everybody was in the room together trying to figure out what the pathway forward is.

The reason I'm sharing this is because I think that the root of the question is: Is this a decision that has been made in a brisk way? Is this a decision that has been made without looking at all the options?

If there was a solution that was a US solution, a made-in-Alaska solution, we would be very happy to see that. This is not an area or a field that we feel that we want to occupy, but after looking at absolutely all of the potential options that were in front of us and the lack of interest from other entities at the time, we feel that we did have a role to play and we are really concerned. I have shared with opposition members. We went out and had conversations with the ambassador of the US to Canada, Ambassador Cohen. We met with the consul general in Vancouver — multiple consul generals. My predecessor — the Minister of Finance but in the role of Premier — started this conversation and did a lot of this really important work — and as well from a bilateral conversation between the Yukon and Alaska governments. We also went and met directly with the crown corporation — with EDA — from the Yukon Economic Development department to see if we could partner or have

them come in to do the work that we are looking at doing now, and really, down every avenue, there was no interest. What we did see in front of us was the potential for a real bottleneck for Yukon goods and Yukon commodities. We also saw — which is a real challenge, and I'm not shy to say it in the House — an increase in activity in the tourism sector in Skagway.

I sat on Monday night next to the head of the Skagway port authority and got an update on where they are when it comes to their tourism season. There were 1.19 million visitors in Skagway. When it comes to tourism, it's great, because it did help revitalize our Southern Lakes tourism industry and drove traffic into Whitehorse and Dawson and, in some cases because of fire, into Kluane and other regions this summer.

But it also makes it difficult, because there is a long-lasting legacy from activity that happened in that community from Faro. Why is that important? It's important because what I'm trying to illustrate today to Yukoners and those listening is that it's extremely critical — it's imperative — that we as Yukoners have access in partnership or on our own to tidewater.

We just came through a Yukon geoscience conference and we're seeing a number of companies going out to raise dollars. We heard of some today that went out and went to raise funds and got full subscription to the money that they're trying to raise. We have seen major companies from around the world looking to partner. We're seeing potential First Nation partnerships with mining entities like we've never seen before. But it all comes down to: Do you have the ability to move that commodity?

So, it has been years. I hope this extensive response to that question illustrates that we have talked to everybody, but we do find ourselves at this time in a position where we have had to take a leadership role. I will say to Yukoners that we have hired legal representation, both from a firm in the US and in Canada, to guide us. That doesn't mean that we're not going to continue to look for partnership, whether it be at the State of Alaska, the borough, or from the private sector.

Ms. White: In the eight-minute response, I got what I needed at the beginning, which was a long time ago. I was just trying to get a sense of when this conversation started, partially because trying to understand why this wasn't in the main spring budget and why there wasn't an anticipation of — why didn't we put money in the spring budget? The minister just gave me a lot of answers about all the consultation, but he didn't talk about the conversations with the Government of Canada. He didn't talk about the conversations with the government of Alaska or the United States about paying for it or about whether or not he has approached First Nation development corporations.

I just want to know: When he talks about going on our own, what other levels of government has he spoken to and what have they said? I am looking to find out if everything has been explored. He often says that proper due diligence is required. That has been used a lot around Vimy, but we've been told that this is an approximately \$44million project which we will build but we won't operate.

Can the minister tell me more about the other levels of government that he has spoken to, about other funding streams, and just where that has gone as far as cost-sharing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, good question — and I'm happy to share some of the undertakings that we had when it comes to due diligence and our seeking of partnership on the project.

I will start with Canada. The view of the Yukon government is that we would love to see the Canadian government playing a substantial role in the development of this piece of infrastructure. I look at how the US has partnered with the Yukon on things like Shakwak and I look at how the Canadian government deploys funds for humanitarian military supports across the world.

It has been a real challenge, I think, on this project. We have a bilateral agreement between Canada and the US when it comes to critical minerals, yet we have this great opportunity — what a shining example of partnership that could happen between the US and Canada by having this infrastructure paid for by the US or by the federal government in Canada doing a partnership with the US.

We had asked the Alaska state government, through their crown corporation, if they would build this. Once they said they wouldn't and they weren't looking to cost-share, they weren't looking to partner, and they weren't looking to build it, we started looking inward in Canada. This is something that my predecessor and I have brought to a number of ministerial-level discussions.

I started with Minister Ng, head of Export Development Canada, who leads a lot of the trade files — all of the trade files, really — for Canada and had a number of discussions, reaching out to their officials and directly to Minister Mary Ng and requesting support and help more than once.

We also collaborated through our Cabinet Office to speak with Minister LeBlanc — in the role of not just as head of intergovernmental affairs for Canada but also as minister responsible for infrastructure at the time — and had those discussions. Previous to that — and I want to make sure that I am giving accurate information — there may have been earlier discussions with previous — there were two previous ministers responsible for infrastructure, but the conversations definitely would have happened with Minister LeBlanc.

We had discussions with Minister Champagne because of the work that he was leading, really sort of the economic development files in the country. This need was flagged, I believe, to the PMO — to staffers. The official is just reminding me that NRCan — Minister Wilkinson — on a number of occasions and as well Minister Vandal at CanNor — truly, any minister who we felt was a stakeholder in this discussion across the federal government, we went to and said: We need you to help support this financially and we feel you have a role.

What we continued to hear from Canada was: We don't pay for infrastructure outside of Canada. I would challenge that.

The other thing that happened was that we went to the Canada Infrastructure Bank and sat with the chief executive officer, and what we did get in that conversation was: Pending on the solution that is decided upon to move concentrate from the marine services platform onto a ship — and the discussion

is: Is it a conveyor system? That is what is there now and there are folks in the community who feel that is not going to be environmentally sound. We're trying to share information with the borough that there is a very modern system that can do that work.

Either way, the infrastructure bank has been open to helping offset the costs for that. At that point, we felt there could be an opportunity to work with development corporations or the local private sector businesses in the Yukon to help run that. That's still work and conversations that are happening, as we move forward.

Yes, we have talked to the federal government. We have talked to the State of Alaska. We have talked to entities that represent economic infrastructure investment in Canada to the point where we have even had some discussions at a high level with organizations — organizations that deal with port development. We have tried to look at all areas. You are right. That is something that I would think is appropriate, and that is the work that our teams have undertaken.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

We can go back to when I first started asking questions, and the minister had indicated — and I do appreciate it, because I went back and had a conversation with the previous NDP ministers at the time — where he said: Well, the NDP government supported the ore dock back in the day. Again, I don't disagree. I disagree with the supplementary budget.

So, I went back and I had a conversation with Trevor Harding about how that conversation went and what was done. It was interesting, because what the NDP before did is they had an option to actually own the land. It was down the Dyea Road, and it got them access, but they would have owned the land. So, they had this option, and what it did is it actually forced the hand, which is why the dock that was there at the time stayed open.

It was really interesting, because Trevor also pointed out to me that it was actually under the previous Liberal government that the land option was — probably quite possibly from the Member for Copperbelt South now actually that we're having this conversation.

The land option was purchased by the Yukon NDP; then it was dropped by the Yukon Liberals previously. So, I did; I went back and had conversations, and there were a lot of things to learn from there. So, what other options did the minister look at? What other opportunities? Is it only — did we only look at the current situation? Were there options to buy land so that we would actually own the land that the dock was on? What other options did the minister look at?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that it was pretty visionary — the acquisition or the down payment on the land originally. You will have to talk to the Member for Copperbelt South. I don't know that —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It wasn't in Cabinet. I don't know the story of what happened, but what I will say is that it was smart; it was pretty innovative to do that, and it did give a bit of leverage on the conversation. We did speak with officials to see if there was any land that we could acquire that would have

been appropriate. Officials are letting me know that, in that due diligence, there wasn't an option.

We also looked at Haines, Alaska, and looked if there was an opportunity there. There is an area in Haines, Alaska, where there needs to be, I believe, some remediation and rebuild, but there did not seem to be a viable option in Haines. As well, you are looking at a more substantial length of time that you are going to have to drive and some challenges there, as well, but there was a Haines option.

So, people were looking at a multitude of options. I will open it up this way. Our officials have been looking at what we believe is a strong scope of due diligence. If there are things that the member opposite thinks that we may have missed or, in my response, I might have missed, we are open to other concepts and ideas. We feel that there is necessary involvement and leadership from the Yukon government on this file. We think that it is imperative, and I spent — I'm sure that the member opposite spent time speaking with mining leaders this week. I am sure that everybody in the Legislative Assembly — many of us did — and what you are going to hear — from many of the organizations that are looking to build, the ongoing conversation is power, ports, and people — power, ports, and people.

We think that the early work on a grid connection is really important — structuring the model is important. Making sure that we see our ability to engage with Yukoners who are not in — they maybe are looking for different opportunities or to be fully employed — are going to be important.

Of course, there is a subset to this, which is housing and infrastructure — roads and other things — but the big pieces are: Can you move the commodity? Do you have the right power source? Are there people to do it? So, we think that this is really key to the future of an industry that is the biggest contributor from the private sector to our economy.

Ms. White: The minister again just referenced speaking to law firms. I am going to quote — this is from previous in the Sitting, coming from Hansard: “In our due diligence on this project, we hired a law firm both in Canada and in the US because we were working internationally. In the advice that we received, if we were receiving ... any revenue from the asset in Skagway, it also was going to expose us to any potential liability that was occurring on that project, so part of our decision has been to ensure that we safeguard the Yukon government in the activities that are happening there and that we're not operating a project Outside. That has been the advice that we have received.”

Can the minister tell me more about the “potential liability” in that quote?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will give a little bit of a response to this. I want to make sure that we can give a more thorough answer from our policy team.

What we are speaking about is that, under Alaska law, the operation — anything that can happen within the operation — there would then be the potential of ensuring that the Yukon government had a connection to liability, because the Yukon government would be the operator. That is the tough part. We are in a position where we are helping to finance this piece of

infrastructure, which we know is what unlocks the ability for ore to get to tidewater, but that's why we're stepping back to say that the ownership model would be, of course, in partnership — or not in partnership but with the borough, and the operations would be done through the borough as well.

That's the advice that we have received, so for the Yukon government to operate an industrial undertaking in another country would open us to serious liabilities. Again, yes, we are looking at it. We are trying to future-proof liability, but it's also a set of hypotheticals that we're talking about here with the member opposite.

I am not going to put together a series of things that may or may not happen. I am just taking the advice from the law firm that we have received and then, of course, the department has received, and that is the advice that I shared with the House. We can get a more thorough description of that from the information that we have received from the law firm and then, of course, the analysis that we have had in our policy shop at the department.

Ms. White: Can the minister help me understand then — is there a plan to recoup the \$44 million-plus to build it? Part of the reason why the questions I was asking before around if we were going to be able to collect fees or if there was going to be a cost-sharing or a profit-sharing was the idea that if you were going to invest \$44 million, would something come back?

Can the minister help me understand if there is a way that the \$44 million will be offset? I am not looking for “mining in the Yukon”. I am looking for a direct — will there be money specifically coming in to offset that \$44 million — specifically, not in general terms — specifically for that \$44 million?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There is not a fee that will be derived from the operation in the borough that will come into the Government of Yukon. I understand the comment: Don't give me what is going to happen in the Yukon. But that is the crux of this — the \$150 million or \$160 million being spent on exploration or the hundreds of millions of dollars that are being created through an industry and going into our neighbour's salaries, the sponsorships.

Tonight, we are going to walk out of here and we are going to go up and we are going to hear that Newmont is sponsoring and donating money to the Yukon Hospital Foundation. These things are all connected to our ability to have the right infrastructure in place. That is why we believe that this is an important investment. It is complex. I think that there are lots of areas that we would like to see our officials spending time on. I would love to see an Alaskan solution — again, I will say that — but it is about all the things that are happening on this side of the border and in this territory.

So, to close, I want to be respectful of the question — no, there is not a direct — we are not seeing a direct fee coming from the use of that marine services platform that will be provided to us. The legal analysis was that if we are receiving funds through a fee directly from there, then any liability that would potentially occur during that operation could be connected to the Government of Yukon. Therefore, we are not undertaking operation, and because we are not undertaking

operation, we are not part of the revenue stream that would come from that activity or from the operator.

Ms. White: I think then what I will do is I will tell the minister that I wasn't looking quite so narrowly. So, he is talking about necessarily fees from the ore dock itself in Skagway. The Yukon government is the one that permits large mines, and in their plan, they'll say that they are going to ship ore concentrate or they are going to ship whatever they are going to ship via a dock in Skagway. Are we looking at putting a cost on that? Are we going to say: Great, we're glad that this is your future plan; this is the cost; this is part of it; this is how we're going to recoup some of that cost? Are we looking at any other way? Or is it just that we are going to put in a \$44million asset in a community outside of Canada without looking at recouping any of that money?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: What I can say is that we are deep into the modernization of the quartz and placer mining legislation. There are working groups that are representing both the Yukon government and First Nations. We heard loudly from industry as well over the last week about their interest in providing views and advice into the work that is being created. I don't want to predetermine the outcome of that work; I want to leave that work to be identified by the working group. When it comes to royalties and fees, there are deep discussions that are ongoing on those topics. I will say that discussions around having a fee connected to the granting of a QML — it's not something that I have been briefed on. We can certainly make known to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources that, in the Legislative Assembly, the Leader of the NDP has identified this as a potential option, and I'll see if this is something that could be looked at.

Then, of course, that would be based — is it a volume? Is it a one-time fee? How do you do that?

Certainly, we will bring that forward. It's not something that has been contemplated in my discussions, but if it is something that has not been contemplated, we will bring that forward on behalf of the member opposite.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that from the minister. The truth of the matter is we are talking about building an ore dock or a dock that has access to tidewater for future mining projects. This should be a conversation around — from the government side anyway — on the discussions around the new mineral legislation, in my mind, if we are looking at making this investment for those future mines, similar to how each of us here pay taxes that pay for the assets that we use. That's just part of it. I hope that it does go.

So, now knowing that this has been in the works for a long time, there has been lots of discussion, there has been lots of investigation, why was this budgeted in the supplementary budget? I ask this because we have a budget where \$21 million has come from other departments where projects have been deferred to future dates; right? We have seen it all sorts of times. We have seen projects — large money projects — be budgeted for, and we have come back at later dates to be told that something didn't line up and we are not going forward with this. We are not spending this \$50 million; we're not spending

this \$20 million. We are going to wait because it was the wrong time, so we are just going to hold off on that.

Here's an example of \$21 million in a supplementary budget to build something that wasn't planned for in the spring, but it doesn't sound like this was a last-minute thing. We knew that work was being done at Skagway. The minister said at different times that the work was being done. We knew that they were going to come forward with an idea, with a project. It's not the full price, so it's not like we are paying for the entire thing, so why wasn't money budgeted in the spring budget? Why wasn't this money in the spring budget? Why is it in the supplementary budget?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Having an opportunity to confer with officials — there are a couple of points that were made. One is that we were still in the middle of a negotiation process at that time, and we weren't in a position to completely understand what the responsibility was going to look like for the Yukon government. We were also looking to try to get a sense, at that time, of what the costs were from the market. It is a complex project. We are working, again, across an international line. We are working with a municipal government and with the borough of Skagway.

So, those are the reasons that we didn't have it in the spring main budget. That is why we brought it forward in our supplementary budget.

I do just want to take a step back and touch on a few other points. It's important, as the member opposite said, when you look at justification and some of those pieces. When you look at mining in the Yukon, it remains an extremely important part of this economy. In 2021, it constituted 13.9 percent of the gross domestic product and provided significant indirect benefits to other sectors. In 2021, for example, 5.1 percent of gross revenue of Yukon's retail sector was attributed to mining.

Reliable access to the Skagway port will, again, help to attract investment, support mine development, and encourage mineral exploration in the Yukon. It will give you a sense of what that looks like. Of course, many of the other projects that are happening or looking to happen in the territory still feel that it's a worthy investment, based on the fact that we are looking to invest in this way. We feel that there could be significant benefits lost if we did not take on this responsibility. The department estimates that the nominal economic impact from the work that we see is extremely impactful.

I will say again that, from officials who have done great work on a complex file — it's not something that we would normally task our officials with. In these discussions, they weren't in a position in the spring or in the first quarter of last year to have the appropriate information to put it in the budget. I think that goes for everything that we do. If there's a change or we're not ready to do that work but we do know that this is something that has some time restraints, we will continue. I will say this to the House: We will continue — if there is room for us to tweak components of a project, look at a different price, if there are ways for us to stretch this out, the build out of it, we will, but right now, with the information that we have, with the obligations that are being contemplated from the borough, with

all of the factors that we have in front of us, this is the best set of decisions that we can look at.

I have sat down with our lead officials; I have requested them to look for maximum opportunity to fine-tune our pricing and numbers — you know, is there a way for us to — could we go out and — again, we don't want to lose the access to tidewater, but can we refine the numbers in some way? All of these things are discussions that we have every day to make sure that we get the best value for the dollars that are being deployed.

Again, I get the point about not being in the mains, but, you know, I am forwarding the information that our officials — who have done incredible work, by the way — incredible work. This is a group of people who I have had the honour to work next to since 2016. We have spent a lot of time together through some very difficult scenarios. This group of individuals who are giving me advice on this decision is the same group of individuals who have put together groundbreaking programs, like our sick leave program. This is the same group of individuals who led the country from development of public policy in response to COVID. This is an agile group of individuals who are extremely innovative. They come up with strong decision-making matrixes, and they are doing great work.

Look, when you have gone through this many different decisions together and they continue to make the right — put the right advice in front of you — in this case again, that is the advice you are going to look to take.

Ms. White: So, this is not a criticism to the officials within the department; this is solely on the shoulders of the minister whose budget it is and who has brought it forward. Again, I question — we had a tens —of millions of dollars emergency contingency fund in this spring budget, as an example. There could easily have been an infrastructure contingency budget for \$20 million. If you didn't want to signal to the contractors in the United States that you had this money set aside for them — it could have been named something different. It is not in the five-year capital plan — it started in 2022 — unless someone can me point toward where it is.

Again, my point is that, if this has been such a long time coming, it shouldn't be the surprise of a supplementary budget. So, that's my criticism. It's not about access to tidewater. It's about how the funding is coming and how it's in a supplementary budget, because it's a significant investment, and from everything the minister has said and all the due diligence of the department and in all the conversations, we knew it was coming, but it came in a supplementary budget. That is the criticism that I have. I would have preferred to see it in the spring. I would have preferred to see a number that was there that said it was a placeholder that we were expecting and that announcements were going to come later. Instead, it showed up in a supplementary budget, and it had not been spoken about; it hadn't been indicated that it was coming. It's not in the five-year capital plan. That is the problem that I have.

I look forward to learning more. I look forward to the minister getting back the information that we discussed. At one point in time, I'm probably going to reach out and ask for a

briefing on it, because I would love to hear all of those things. I would love to understand “how come” and the timing. I wouldn't ask “how come” or about the timing with the officials, because that's not them; that's the minister — but I'm interested. I want to know, and I want to know what options we looked at. Again, I understand, but what I don't understand is the timing.

With that, I'm going to share the floor back to my colleague.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to thank the officials. It's the first time for our director of finance coming in. Mr. McAllister, thank you. Great preparation and great job today. Thank you for having all that key information at your fingertips. As well, I want to thank our deputy minister, Mr. Prochazka, for all the work over 2023; I asked a lot of him. As well, the rest of the officials, the 52, 53, or 54 folks who keep that organization moving and continuing — I guess probably even more now — 63 with our labour unit and labour market folks. Again, thank you to all of those individuals for all of the work that they are doing and all the preparation for the supplementary budget.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development?

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line. Please turn to page 7-4 in the estimates booklet.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Corporate Services

Corporate Services in the amount of \$181,000 agreed to On Operations

Mr. Dixon: Earlier this Sitting, the minister told us that this is the line where we would see the landlord program. I am just wondering if the Premier could confirm that. Earlier, he also told us that the amount for that program is \$1,014,000. Can he just confirm those amounts, please?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, that is correct. In our Operations line item where it states the number \$1,629,000, the temporary landlord assistance program is budgeted at \$1,014,000 within that number.

Mr. Dixon: I hope it goes without saying that we disagree with this expenditure and this program which provides funding to landlords. We have indicated that we don't think that's the right approach. We think that something more along the lines of what the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce housing committee has proposed, such as deregulating the housing rental market, would be more appropriate.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Dixon: With that in mind, Madam Chair, I move:

THAT the estimates pertaining to Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be amended in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, by reducing the line item Operations on page 7-4 in the Operation and Maintenance estimates by \$1,014,000; and

THAT the clauses and schedules of the bill be amended accordingly.

Chair: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt North:

THAT the estimates pertaining to Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be amended in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, by reducing the line item Operations on page 7-4 in the Operation and Maintenance estimates by \$1,014,000; and

THAT the clauses and schedules of the bill be amended accordingly.

Is there any debate on the amendment?

Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Count.

Count

Chair: A count has been called.

The Chair will ring the bells and conduct a count.

Bells

Chair: All those in favour, please rise.

Members rise

Chair: All members opposed, please rise.

Members rise

Chair: The results are eight yea, nine nay.

I declare the amendment defeated.

Amendment to line item Operations negated

Chair: Is there any further debate on Operations in the amount of \$1,629,000?

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all remaining lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Copperbelt North has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all remaining lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,810,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$20,461,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$22,271,000 agreed to

Department of Economic Development agreed to

Chair: The matter now before 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 five minutes.

Recess

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

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

Department of Highways and Public Works — *continued*

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I think the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin had some time, but I am just wondering whether he or the Member for Whitehorse Centre have any questions.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Sorry; thank you. I didn't have the floor, but thank you.

Madam Chair, it's good to be back in Committee of the Whole for Department of Highways and Public Works' supplementary budget, fall 2023. To my right, I have Deputy Minister Harwood and to her right is Assistant Deputy Minister Richard Gorczyca assisting me today.

Mr. Hassard: I, too, would like to thank these officials for being here today to once again help us weave our way through this world of Highways and Public Works.

My first question today for the minister is regarding advertising in the local newspapers. We have recently heard from both of the local newspapers — the *Whitehorse Star* and the *Yukon News* — that Highways and Public Works has moved away from advertising projects in the local newspapers. I'm wondering if the minister could explain to the Legislature why Highways and Public Works has chosen to make that move. Hopefully, we can get some understanding on that.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I do have some information here. If it requires some follow-up, I can certainly provide that.

In any event, the Government of Yukon is focused on responsibly using taxpayer funds to communicate with Yukoners on platforms they read, listen to, and seek out. The Yukon government advertises bids and tenders using the Yukon Bids and Tenders platform. The Yukon government does not pay to advertise tenders on Google or Meta. I think that might have been a question early in the session — that there may have been a concern that the government was paying. My information is that the government does not pay to advertise tenders on Google or Meta. Potential bidders who are registered with the Bids and Tenders platform receive an automatic e-mail about upcoming tender opportunities. The Yukon government does primarily use newspaper and radio advertisements to communicate issues directly to members of the general public.

In fact, in the Friday, November 3 edition — I guess we did a bit of a snapshot at the time because that was further to

questions that were asked in Question Period, I believe, or perhaps in Committee of the Whole — it's all a blur. In any event, in the *Yukon News*, the Government of Yukon had advertisements on nine of 31 pages. The ads were on a variety of topics, including the Reverse Trade Show, the Yukon Transportation Hall of Fame awards, hiring school wellness specialists, COVID-19 and flu vaccines, a call for donations for the traditional foods program, opportunities to serve on government boards, upcoming information sessions on the importance of making a will, and even some procurement opportunities.

We can also use local newspapers for other types of advertising and communication for a variety of purposes such as road safety campaigns, public engagements, public health updates, and job postings. I have met with at least some members of the media on this topic and I am open to meeting further. There is a bit of a transition happening. Just to say once again that the Government of Yukon is focused on responsibly using taxpayer funds to communicate with Yukoners on platforms that they do read, listen to, and seek out. But when I asked officials to go away and do a bit of a snapshot, it is evident that there is a reasonable amount of newspaper use.

The estimate that I have here — and I can confirm this — is that Highways and Public Works alone — not all of government, just Highways and Public Works — spends approximately \$60,000 per year advertising through local newspaper companies. I am open to continuing to have meetings with the two newspaper outlets, but it must be said, of course, that we are in a bit of a disruptive phase right now. I know, for instance, that Facebook is not necessarily the medium for communication in some of the bigger metropolitan centres, I'm told — like Vancouver, Toronto, Edmonton, or Calgary — but in the mid-size cities and curiously the Yukon in general, Facebook is very popular and it is actually a pretty effective medium to announce public community events.

I know that, for instance, going back to Riverdale North, the Riverdale Community Association has a very active page and I know that the MLAs for the various areas of Whitehorse have various pages as well on Facebook.

It is a balancing act, but it cannot be characterized that Highways and Public Works and the Government of Yukon in general have completely walked away from newsprint at all. There actually is still a fair bit of usage.

I will just speak to one of my officials as to whether there is any other update.

I'm done for now.

Mr. Hassard: I'm not afraid to admit that I'm one of the few people left on the planet probably who doesn't have Facebook, but I do know that in rural Yukon, the *Yukon News* is still delivered every week and a lot of people in the communities use it as a very valuable source of information. I think it is something that is valued by rural Yukon.

I'm wondering if the minister could provide us with an idea of how much he anticipates that Highways and Public Works will save in a year by not advertising with the newspapers for those projects.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I've been advised that those calculations have been made in the past and that officials are in a position to generate them. Certainly, my officials have heard this request and we will add this to the response that we have undertaken to provide to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin by December 20.

Mr. Hassard: Another Christmas present — I appreciate that.

I have a few questions that are just kind of general questions. I am wondering if the government would consider providing additional dust suppression to Old Crow to allow the sprayer to be used to treat the roads as well as the runway just to help with the excessive dust in the community. I know that when we were there last September, it was certainly brought to our attention. I will just throw that out there to the minister and see if he has any comments on that as well.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite relating to dust suppression in Old Crow. First, I wanted to confirm that it is the responsibility of Highways and Public Works and my officials believe that it is.

I am advised that Highways and Public Works is happy to work with the community to understand their additional needs. I am also advised that Highways and Public Works meets with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government on a regular basis and they will add this agenda item to the meeting that is scheduled for next month.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate the minister's commitment to that. I have a couple of questions in regard to the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* with the exemptions. We know that we have 10 projects valued up to \$1 million a year that can stay local. I am wondering if the minister can provide us with an update on where we are with those 10 projects and what they are.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Yukon government is helping to boost economic development across the territory through trade agreement exceptions. The exceptions allow us to restrict procurement competitions exclusively to invited, qualified Yukon businesses for up to 10 projects per year in order to keep government dollars in the territory and support local businesses.

Over the past six years, manufacturing, construction, and consulting contracts have been awarded for work in communities across the Yukon. Since 2018, Yukon businesses have competed for and secured 55 Yukon-exclusive government contracts worth \$28 million.

Thus far, for the fiscal year 2023-24, we have awarded two projects to Yukon businesses, totalling \$1.2 million. Two more contracts will be tendered in November. The Yukon government does strive to maximize its allocation of 10 projects every year. I will certainly encourage Highways and Public Works to try to meet that allocation by the end of the fiscal year, but it might be a challenge. We post details of awarded contracts on yukon.ca.

When selecting regional economic development exceptions, we consider many factors, including the dollar value of economic opportunities created in the Yukon and whether the project supports the territory's industries and suppliers.

At the end of a project, suppliers are now required to report on the total dollar value spent on Yukon labour and Yukon materials to quantify the direct, positive impact that these projects have on Yukoners. Since the new reporting requirements came into effect, suppliers have reported on 14 completed contracts. Eight of these projects used 100-percent Yukon labour and Yukon materials. I would say that's a good news story.

These reports also confirm that over \$1.1 million was spent on employing Yukoners through those 14 projects.

The following two contracts —

Chair: Order.

Mr. Hassard: I think it's a little bit disturbing that the minister talks about this being a good news story. It's great that we can do these 10 projects a year. I agree that it's great. That's why it was fought for with the federal government so that we could do this.

The minister stands here now today and says that we should encourage the department to get the other six projects out. I would hope that, as he is the minister, he wouldn't be encouraging the Department of Highways and Public Works but that he would be directing Highways and Public Works to ensure that we got maximum benefit for this, rather than just say: Well, that doesn't look very good; we might only get four this year.

The minister went on to say that it's a challenge to get 10 projects out this year. I guess I would hope that the minister could provide some clarification as to why this year it's a challenge. I don't believe that we have missed the deadline any other year. I could be corrected, but I'm pretty certain that we've managed to do more than four every other year. I'll just give the minister an opportunity to give some clarification and maybe tell us what the challenge is.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Just for the record and to confirm, since 2018, Yukon businesses have competed for and secured 55 exclusive Yukon government contracts worth \$28 million, so certainly, this exemption has been used extensively — I believe in contradistinction to the prior Yukon Party government.

The following contracts were awarded for the 2023-24 fiscal year: the Village of Carmacks-Rowlinson/Prospector lot development, and the northern digital message sign realignment along the north Klondike Highway and Dempster Highway. In total, that contract is \$1.2 million. Two contracts will be tendered in November 2023, including the Ghùch Tlâ Community School asbestos containment material abatement.

To answer the member opposite's question, it can be challenging to find tenders to maximize the use of these exemptions. Issues such as inflation, supply chain shortages, and a tight labour market can impact the use of the exemptions.

It should be noted that over this six-year period, there have been significant changes to the project landscape and fewer projects fall under the \$1-million threshold. Highways and Public Works continues to work alongside departments to find projects that are suitable for the exemption.

As an example of how significant the capital budget delivery has been, just between April 1 and October 1, 2023,

the Yukon government spent \$522.1 million on procurement contracts. In 2022-23, 752 tenders were published, 569 were requests for bids that were price-driven, 122 were requests for proposals that were value-driven, and 61 were market research or pre-qualification processes. Currently, 8,196 suppliers are currently registered in Yukon Bids and Tenders, and over 120 Yukon First Nation businesses are verified and listed on the Yukon First Nation business registry.

There are a lot of big projects that exceed the \$1million threshold, and they are all over the Yukon. As I have indicated a few times in answering questions in Question Period — and I believe it is now confirmed in Public Accounts, but the bottom line is that on an all-of-government basis for 2022-23, we got out \$504 million of capital expenditures. The all-of-government budget was \$546 million, resulting in approximately a 92percent expenditure.

On an all-of-government basis — and just with respect to Highways and Public Works on our capital expenditure, we spent 99 percent of our budget. We are getting lots of projects out the door and there are a lot of opportunities for many Yukoners in many communities — for many large contractors, intermediate contractors, and small contractors.

Just briefly, while we are getting to the end of the Fall Sitting here — just to confirm — in Old Crow, we are finishing the 10-unit mixed-use housing, the health and wellness centre replacement, and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation elders complex.

In Carmacks, we are in the process of finishing the Carmacks bypass.

In Burwash Landing, the Kêts'ádañ Kù School had a land clearing and we are pushing forward with significant capital investment for this upcoming year for a modern, environmentally friendly facility, which the Kluane First Nation has been requesting for more than 100 years. We are certainly very happy to be in ongoing discussions with the Kluane First Nation and proceeding with that infrastructure project.

What else have we done? Lots of things — the member opposite obviously knows that there is the Nisutlin Bay bridge project and the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, and both are \$160-million contracts. The parallel runway is close to completion and will be the primary runway for Whitehorse in the spring and summer of next year when Flatiron and its subcontractors get on with the work of replacing the main runway, which has aggregate underneath it and which, in some cases, dates back to 1942. I think it's difficult to argue that it wasn't time for that infrastructure to be replaced. There is lighting there. There is drainage improvement at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. The list goes on.

The mental health unit at the hospital will be completed shortly. We are building a gymnastics and climbing facility for the Polarettes and the very active climbing community in Whitehorse and the Yukon — and not even to mention the fact that Whistle Bend Elementary School is well on its way and looks forward to welcoming its first cohort of elementary school students in the fall of 2024.

There is lots of capital investment. We are moving the Yukon forward.

Mr. Hassard: The minister has on a few occasions now talked about the aggregate at the Whitehorse airport being from 1942 and has even gone so far as to criticize the Yukon Party for having that old gravel there. I am wondering: Is there a best-before date on aggregate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to that question. 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 aero side of the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport are needed to replace aging 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 previous apron project, completed in 2014, has been the subject of legal proceedings between the Yukon government and a constructor, Norcope Enterprises, since 2017. As members in the House will know, it is now before the court of appeal.

On November 14, 2022, the Supreme Court of Yukon released its decision that Norcope has been ordered to pay the Yukon government \$2.3 million in damages. Norcope Enterprises appealed the November 14, 2022 decision. The appeal was argued on November 20 and 21, 2023 — just recently — and the court of appeal has reserved its decision.

With respect to the main runway construction, the \$160.7-million contract to reconstruct the main runway was awarded to Flatiron Constructors Canada on May 19, 2023. The proposed work schedule is for 2023, 2024, and 2025, for those construction seasons, and we anticipate that it will be completed by 2026. While this is a large project, we do expect there to be minimal disruptions overall for the travelling public. We will be working closely with aviation stakeholders 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 reconstruction 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. Also, on September 28, HPW held an information session for tourism stakeholders about the project. As well, in the long term, the Government of Yukon will be evaluating how Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport could support larger aircraft.

In order to increase the service level at the Whitehorse airport from an AGN IV to an AGN V, there are a number of program and infrastructure investments that would need to be made. These additional investments would include increasing

aircraft rescue and firefighting resources, aircraft maneuvering surfaces, space and processing capacity for Canada Border Services, and 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 and anybody else who may be listening this afternoon, the main runway is sufficient to accommodate the larger aircraft, which is somewhat supported by the fact that we've had three diversions from Anchorage over the course of the last month or so of 747 freighter aircraft.

With respect to community development agreements, we have entered into two community development agreements for work on the main runway, one with 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, 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.

Community development agreements are government-to-government agreements, and the content is confidential. However, the framework for these agreements was developed as part of the Yukon First Nation procurement policy, and we are working closely with both First Nation governments to implement these two agreements.

With respect to the parallel runway upgrades, the construction tender to upgrade the parallel runway was awarded to Terus Construction Limited and Skookum Asphalt, for approximately \$21 million. Construction began in the spring of 2022. To meet Transport Canada regulations, this summer, we extended the runway safety area of the parallel runway. This required an infill of some of the Puckett's Gulch area, which involved relocating the airport fence line, clearing trees, and removing some vegetation to build a stable slope. We had fruitful discussions with the City of Whitehorse in that regard over the course of the last year. A shout-out to the City of Whitehorse mayor and council with respect to their welcome cooperation in order to ensure safe and secure and predictable air transport to Whitehorse for the foreseeable future.

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 runway work includes grooving, painting — that is now complete — and some electrical work, which we expect will be finished at the end of November.

Condor — during reconstruction of the main runway, the parallel runway will be used as the primary runway. The parallel runway will be limited to Boeing 737 aircraft or smaller. In the meantime, as well, Condor has announced that it is changing aircraft in 2024 to the larger A330 models. For the two construction years, Air North, Yukon's airline, has secured interline agreements with Condor that allows travellers

to connect to the Yukon through Edmonton, Calgary, or Vancouver.

With respect to taxiway and tenant lease area upgrades, the construction tender for the realignment, paving, and lighting of taxiway G and associated improvements to lease parcel servicing was awarded, and the work started in the spring. These improvements are ongoing and expected to be substantially complete this fall. During this construction, Highways and Public Works continue to communicate with airport stakeholders.

Mr. Hassard: I guess the minister didn't have a note on that aggregate, so we will move on.

I would like to ask a few questions about the Contractors Association and their funding. I know that they used to get \$50,000 a year; they have requested more. So, I am curious as to where we are these days with the funding for the Contractors Association.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am advised by my officials that conversations are ongoing and that Highways and Public Works is currently finalizing the transfer payment agreement with the Yukon contractors agreement for this year, and we should be in a position to provide details on that in the near future. I would just like to take the opportunity to thank all Yukon contractors. As I have indicated in my prior answers with respect to the territory over the course of the last two or three years, it has been an unprecedentedly busy time in the territory, based on the capital spends that have occurred.

In the final minutes, I would just provide a bit of a shout-out to contractors, to Yukoners in general, and to Highways and Public Works for the great work that they have done while I have had the honour of being in this position. At Highways and Public Works, our core mission is to make a meaningful and positive impact on the lives of Yukoners. Over the past few years, we have made significant progress on projects that will not only improve the well-being of residents but will set up our territory for success in the future.

Highways and Public Works is responsible for 29 commitments in *Our Clean Future*. Since May 2021, we have completed many *Our Clean Future* initiatives, including reducing work travel by installing new teleconferencing systems in 48 boardrooms and implementing a new remote work policy; investing \$38 million toward building energy retrofits and renewable energy projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Government of Yukon buildings — and in prior Committee of the Whole answers, I provided the entire list of those buildings in the last two fiscal years, and it is quite impressive; and completed energy assessments for 81 Government of Yukon buildings in Whitehorse and in Yukon communities. The tender to conduct the energy assessments for the remaining 35 sites with high-emitting Yukon government buildings opened on November 15, 2023 and will close on December 13, 2023.

HPW has completed a total of 23 energy retrofits to Government of Yukon buildings, which reduce greenhouse gas emissions from these buildings by approximately 150 tonnes per year. We have completed renewable energy feasibility studies for 35 buildings. We have constructed one biomass

energy system at Elijah Smith Elementary School to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 180 tonnes per year.

I had the privilege and honour of attending the community of Teslin and met with Deputy Chief Oakley. We entered into a purchase agreement with the Teslin Tlingit Council to begin heating the Khàtinásh Community School with biomass heat, which will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 106 tonnes per year. We have completed five climate risk assessments for major construction projects across the Yukon, and we have invested \$1.5 million in electrifying Government of Yukon's fleet, including two battery electric cars, 12 plug-in hybrid electric SUVs, two battery electric vans — which are in use by the hard-working HPW staff at the mailroom — and 13 gas hybrid electric pickup trucks. There is an order for an additional 30 battery electric vehicles in this fiscal year.

Our department recognizes the importance of investing in infrastructure that supports and connects Yukoners, including our buildings, roads, and airports. We are working with the Department of Education to build new schools in the territory. We are making sure that they reflect a modern learning environment and meet the needs of their communities. In Whistle Bend, the new elementary school is well underway and it is expected to welcome students next fall. As well, in Burwash Landing, we are beginning substantial work on the Kêts'ádań Kù —

Termination of Sitting as per Standing Order 76(1)

Deputy Chair (MLA Tedger): Order, please.

The time has reached 5:00 p.m. on this, the 28th sitting day of the 2023 Fall Sitting.

Standing Order 76(1) states, “On the sitting day that the Assembly has reached the maximum number of sitting days allocated for that Sitting pursuant to Standing Order 75, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole, if the Assembly is in Committee of the Whole at the time, shall interrupt proceedings at 5:00 p.m. and, with respect to each appropriation bill that the Government House Leader directs to be called, shall:

“(a) put the question on any amendment then before the Committee;

“(b) put the question, without debate or amendment, on a motion moved by a Minister that the bill, including all clauses, schedules, title and preamble, be deemed to be read and carried;

“(c) put the question on a motion moved by a Minister that the bill be reported to the Assembly; and

“(d) when all bills have been dealt with, recall the Speaker to the Chair to report on the proceedings of the Committee.”

Pursuant to Standing Order 76, it is the duty of the Chair to now conduct the business of Committee of the Whole in the manner directed by Standing Order 76(1). The Chair will now ask the Government House Leader to indicate whether the appropriation bill now before Committee of the Whole should be called.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Deputy Chair, the government directs that Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be called at this time.

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

Deputy Chair: The Committee will now deal with Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*. The Chair will now recognize the Member for Klondike for the purpose of moving a motion, pursuant to Standing Order 76(1)(b).

Hon. Mr. Silver: Deputy Chair, I move that all clauses, schedules, the preamble, and the title of Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be deemed to be read and carried.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that all clauses, schedules, the preamble, and the title of Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be deemed to be read and carried.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$132,709,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$132,709,000 agreed to

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to

Schedules A and B agreed to

Preamble agreed to

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that the Chair report Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, without amendment.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: As the government bill identified by the Government House Leader has now been decided upon, it is my duty to rise and report to the House.

Speaker resumes the Chair

Termination of Sitting as per Standing Order 76(2)

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Standing Order 76(2)(d) states, "On the sitting day that the Assembly has reached the maximum number of sitting days allocated for that Sitting, pursuant to Standing Order 75, the Speaker of the Assembly, when recalled to the Chair after the House has been in the Committee of the Whole, shall:

"(d) with respect to each appropriation bill standing on the Order Paper for Third Reading and designated to be called by the Government House Leader,

"(i) receive a motion for Third Reading and passage of the bill, and

"(ii) put the question, without debate or amendment, on that motion."

I shall therefore ask the Government House Leader to indicate whether the appropriation bill now standing on the Order Paper for third reading should be called.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the government directs that Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be called at this time.

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

Clerk: Third Reading, Bill No. 211, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by Minister of Finance that Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be now read a third time and do pass.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question to the House.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yeas, eight nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 211 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 211 has passed this House.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of the Yukon, in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to the bill which has passed this House.

Commissioner Webber enters the Chamber accompanied by her Aide-de-Camp

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Please be seated.

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

Clerk: *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24.*

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

Good afternoon, everyone. It is good to be here again. I just wanted to take a few minutes to say a few words. I thank you for your work during this Fall Sitting. I hope that you will be able to now spend some time with your family and friends to relax a little bit during the holiday season.

I am coming up to my six-month anniversary in this position as Commissioner, and I would like to thank you for your support since the start of my term. I look forward to working with you in the coming years.

My office is currently preparing for the return of the in-person Commissioner's Levee. It will be held next year on January 13, 2024. After a very busy holiday season, this will be something to chase away the January blahs. At this event, we will present the 2023 Order of Yukon inductees, the Bravery Award, the Public Volunteer Service Award, and the Governor General's academic awards and introduce the new Story Laureate.

We are also working on bringing back the Commissioner's Ball in Dawson City and we are planning it for June 1, 2024. We're trying something new in 2024. Instead of the Commissioner's Tea, we will be planning a Commissioner's Community Barbecue with games for the whole family. I feel that it is important to involve family in these events. I think it's really important.

I look forward to welcoming all of you to these events that I have noted and look forward to many more interesting things

that will be happening. I just wanted to say Günilschish; thank you.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

Before I adjourn the Fall Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, I have a few brief comments. I would like to extend my thanks on behalf of myself, as Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole, and on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to Clerk Dan Cable, Deputy Clerk Linda Kolody, Clerk of Committees Allison Lloyd, director of administration, finance, and systems Justin Gorczyca, operations manager Warren Pearson, finance and operations clerk Lyndsey Amundson, as well as Sergeant-at-Arms Karina Watson and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms Joe Mewett, who have all provided invaluable support to all MLAs and their staff in order for us all to continue to do the important work that we are sent here to do on behalf of all Yukoners.

As well, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the skilled team at Hansard for their timely and accurate service and all of the background staff and contractors who keep this Legislative Assembly operating. I would also like to thank Chris Rodgers and his team who are camera operators for the Assembly. I would also commend the hard-working civil servants who deliver service to Yukoners and support to all of us as members in our work.

I wish Members of the Legislative Assembly all the best for the coming holidays. I hope that all of us can look forward to the holidays with family and friends in the great Yukon outdoors.

Thank you very much.

As the House has, pursuant to Standing Order 75(4), reached the maximum numbers of sitting days permitted for this Fall Sitting and that the House has completed consideration of the designated legislation, it is the duty of the Chair to declare that this House now stands adjourned.

The House adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled November 23, 2023:

35-1-141

Yukon state of the environment report 2023 (Clarke, N.)

The following legislative returns were tabled November 23, 2023:

35-1-118

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with MLA Tredger related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — Pelly Crossing runway lights (Clarke, N.)

35-1-119

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with MLA Tredger related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — printing contracts (Clarke, N.)

35-1-120

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with MLA Tredger related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — Government of Yukon CO2 emissions (Clarke, N.)

35-1-21

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — Ten Mile Creek gravel pit (Clarke, N.)

35-1-122

Response to Written Question No. 35 re: Emergency Medical Services coverage (Mostyn)

35-1-123

Response to oral question from Mr. Kent re: mineral exploration industry (Strecker)

35-1-124

Response to Written Question No. 14 re: Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee (McPhee)

35-1-125

Response to Written Question No. 25 re: health care in rural Yukon communities (McPhee)

35-1-126

Response to Written Question No. 26 re: mental health services (McPhee)

35-1-127

Response to Written Question No. 27 re: home care in communities (McPhee)

35-1-128

Response to Written Question No. 31 re: Whitehorse Correctional Centre substance use issues and supports (McPhee)

The following document was filed November 23, 2023:

35-1-169

Yukon Type 1 Diabetes Strategy, letter re (dated November 23, 2023) from Marney Paradis, Yukon T1D Support Network, to the Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services (Dixon)

The following written questions were tabled November 23, 2023:

Written Question No. 41

Re: micro-generation program (MLA Tredger)

Written Question No. 42

Re: power generation (MLA Tredger)

Written Question No. 43

Re: *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* (Blake)

Written Question No. 44

Re: safe supply program (Blake)

Written Question No. 45

Re: *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* (Blake)

Written Question No. 46

Re: health transformation advisory committee (Blake)

Written Question No. 47

Re: managed alcohol program (Blake)