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Thursday, April 4, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2024 Spring Sitting

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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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New Democratic Party

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, April 4, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, please help me welcome our green shirt crew here in the gallery today: Carmen Komish, Mark Robinson, Wendy Royle, Augusta Lang, Dianne Bruce, and Natalie Taylor.

Thank you very much for coming today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, for the Celebration of Swans tribute, I have the pleasure of welcoming in the gallery: Carrie McClelland, who is the lead education and outreach biologist with the Yukon Department of Environment; Karen McColl, who is the wildlife viewing specialist, also with the Yukon Department of Environment; and also Jamie Kenyon, who is the head of the Northwest Territories and Yukon operations for Ducks Unlimited.

Welcome to the House.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I will ask my colleagues to help welcome Natalie Taylor again. She is the executive director of the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle and someone I have known since she was a very little girl — welcome.

Applause

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Green Shirt Day

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, today I rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to mark the occasion that has deeply resonated across Canada and inspired a movement that continues to save lives. As we commemorate Green Shirt Day on Sunday, we honour the legacy of Logan Boulet and the profound impact of the Humboldt Broncos tragic bus accident on our nation's consciousness toward organ donation.

On April 7, we will wear green — not just as a symbol of hope and renewal but as a tribute to the selflessness that was witnessed in the aftermath of unimaginable tragedy and sorrow. Logan Boulet's decision to become an organ donor, a choice that ultimately saved six lives, has sparked what we know as the "Logan Boulet Effect", encouraging nearly 150,000 Canadians to register as organ donors in the wake of his family's decision.

Green Shirt Day has us remember the victims of the Humboldt Broncos tragedy, to honour their memories, and to recognize the families who, in their darkest hours, made decisions that brought light to so many others. Our government is deeply committed to fostering an environment where conversations about organ donation are encouraged and facilitated. In the Yukon, individuals interested in becoming organ donors can complete the organ donor registration form available from the Yukon health care insurance plan office or online at yukon.ca. Submitting this form will update your health care card to indicate a donor status, which can be modified at any point. It is important for individuals to discuss their decision with family members who must be informed and supportive, as they will be asked to confirm the donor's wishes after their passing.

The Boulet family and all who have been touched by the message of Green Shirt Day have shown strength and resilience in advocating for organ donation awareness that is truly inspiring. Their efforts have not only saved lives but have sparked a national dialogue that will continue to inspire generations to come and have benefited countless recipients of organs and saved lives.

As we don the colour green on Sunday and today, let us carry forward the spirit of compassion, awareness, and action that Logan Boulet's legacy has inspired. Together, we can continue to make a difference — one conversation, one green shirt, and one organ donor registration at a time.

I express my deepest gratitude to everyone who is involved in the organ donation community — from health care professionals to volunteers — for their tireless efforts, and thank you to every Yukoner who has registered as an organ donor. Your decision will make a difference.

Let Green Shirt Day for 2024 be a renewed call to action and an expanded dedication to organ donation here in Canada.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Green Shirt Day — the sixth annual celebration for organ donation commemorating the legacy of Humboldt Broncos defenceman Logan Boulet.

We speak each year of the story of Logan Boulet — how his organ donation helped save the lives of six and sparked an amazing movement across the country following the Humboldt Broncos accident in 2018.

Close to 150,000 registrations were submitted in the days and weeks that followed his death. His story has become a catalyst for organ donation in Canada and a reminder of its importance.

National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week is coming up later this month, and Green Shirt Day is a great starting point for conversations around the topic of organ donation. Have the conversation with your friends and family members. Let people know your wishes, and if you are ready, sign up to be a donor. If you would like to participate or be involved somehow with Green Shirt Day, share a photo on April 7 wearing green with the #LoganBouletEffect. We can all be inspired and inspire others.

I want to thank all those who have signed up to be an organ and tissue donor, those who have been living donors, and local organizations such as The Kidney Foundation of Canada, BC & Yukon Branch that work to highlight the importance of this act of giving. A special thanks to Carmen Komish, the Yukon chapter president of The Kidney Foundation of Canada, BC & Yukon Branch, for her continued work in support of organ donor awareness.

Salamat po.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the sixth annual Green Shirt Day and April as organ donation month.

Today we commemorate the profound impact of the decision taken by Bernadine and Toby Boulet to honour their son Logan's 21st birthday wish. Logan's heart, liver, lungs, kidneys, and corneas were donated to save and improve the lives of six individuals across Canada. They knew that this is what Logan would want because he told his parents that he was registering as an organ donor and that he was inspired by his coach and mentor, Ric Suggitt.

Logan's family knew of his wish to donate and they honoured that wish. This is a lesson for us all. We need to talk with our families and loved ones so that they know of our wish to donate our organs. Until Canadian provinces and territories follow Nova Scotia's lead to opt out of organ donation, we need to remember to register to be an organ donor. It's easy and quick and that action can change lives.

I know folks who have both donated and received a life-saving transplant. It is truly a remarkable gift for any person to make, so remember to register, tell your family, and be inspired.

Applause

In recognition of Celebration of Swans 30th anniversary

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the 30th anniversary of the Celebration of Swans, a festival organized by the Department of Environment's wildlife viewing program.

Each year during the month of April, the Yukon hosts its premier birding festival, Celebration of Swans, to bring Yukoners and visitors out to welcome spring and to witness the mass migration of swans and other water birds to their northern nesting grounds. The main goal of the celebration is to educate Yukoners and visitors about the importance of early spring open water as a place for migratory birds to feed, rest, and stay safe.

It offers a prime wildlife viewing opportunity that fosters stewardship and shares knowledge about the Yukon's biodiversity through swans, ducks, and other water birds and species. In April 1994, with the support of the Government of Yukon, the Girl Guides of Canada, and Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Swan Haven Interpretive Centre was opened. Each April since then, the Government of Yukon has hosted multiple family-friendly events. Every year, hundreds of Yukon kids

make school trips to Swan Haven to do hands-on activities, games, and outdoor learning.

I'm beyond excited about the special events that will be happening throughout the month to commemorate the 30th anniversary of this celebration, like the Tagish Nation Dancers, who remind us of the interconnections between the land, water, and animals around us. The mass migration of thousands of swans, ducks, and geese is truly astounding to witness, and I encourage Yukoners and visitors to attend these events.

In addition, each year, the Yukon government produces a collectible poster for the celebration that features spring-themed artwork from a local artist. This year's poster includes a beautiful and colourful image created by Ukrainian-born Yukon artist Stanislav Hermak. I want to use this opportunity to thank the Department of Environment, staff, and all those who help organize and make this celebration such a success every year, with a special mention to the wildlife viewing program staff for their dedication and professionalism to educate and encourage stewardship for Yukon's biodiversity. A quick shout-out to Jukka Jantunen, who I understand is in his 25th year as Swan Haven operator and contractor.

For 30 years, these interpreters have allowed Yukoners and visitors to connect with the natural environment and engage with biologists and experts who are passionate about sharing their knowledge. They have ensured our stewardship endeavours of water birds and other species and that our interactions with them are responsible, sustainable, and informed by scientific, local, and traditional knowledge. Their work does not go unnoticed. It expands perspectives, stimulates curiosity, and builds appreciation and respect for Yukon's biodiversity.

I encourage Yukoners and visitors to take this opportunity to respectfully view and learn about wildlife in the Yukon.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the 30th anniversary of the Celebration of Swans, a month-long birding festival held annually in April to coincide with the mass migration of swans, ducks, geese, and other birds. M'Clintock Bay is a favourable place for trumpeter and tundra swans to rest and take advantage of the shallow waters and the mud flats with the rich vegetation and shelter from the elements.

The arrival of the swans is one of the first true signs of spring in the Yukon. This milestone anniversary is going to be exciting for visitors of all ages. Over 20 events are planned throughout the month and into May.

Swan Haven Interpretive Centre once again has opened its doors to visitors and bird enthusiasts for walks and distance viewing, art and education workshops, talks, hikes, music, and performances — so much. On April 13, the Yukon Energy swan bus is offering a free return trip to Swan Haven with registration. This is a perfect opportunity for new Yukoners to experience Swan Haven and all that it has to offer.

I would also like to highlight an event that takes place in my neck of the woods out in Kluane country. On May 5, participants can join Diyet, Yukon's great singer, at the Kluane

Museum of History in Burwash Landing for a walk to learn about the swans and enjoy some tea and bannock. This is a lovely event and, of course, the view is absolutely worth the drive.

You can find a list of all of the events happening at Swan Haven and other locations on the government website.

Thank you, as always, to the Environment staff who had a hand in organizing this year and to all those who oversee Swan Haven this month and all those hosting different public events.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that the talented Martha Ritchie from Haines Junction will be the first artist in residence at Swan Haven this year. So, a huge thanks to her for being a huge part of this celebration as well.

Applause

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the 30th anniversary of Celebration of Swans. What always amazes me about swans is how big they are. There is something a bit surreal about seeing such an enormous and elegant bird swimming on Marsh Lake, but maybe it's the warm sunshine and open water that feels surreal after our winters. Spring is coming back and we know it because swans are returning — what a great reason to celebrate.

I am delighted to see another jam-packed event schedule this year with old favourites and new offerings. There are sunset viewings and stargazing. There are workshops on beading, relief printing, origami, and watercolours. There is dancing, there is music, there is tea, and there is even cake. There are bikes and hikes and walks all over the Yukon — truly, there is something for everyone.

Thank you to all the staff and volunteers who are making this festival a reality.

I would also like to highlight the swan bus, a free shuttle from downtown Whitehorse out to Swan Haven and back. It is a wonderful way to make the celebration more accessible and more environmentally friendly.

There is no way I could talk about the Celebration of Swans without talking their beautiful annual posters. They are a common sight in people's homes across the Yukon and a perfect celebration of spring and the returning swans.

So, happy spring and happy Celebration of Swans.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling an e-mail and attached report from the Dawson City Ambulance Association addressed to the minister of health, the MLA for Klondike, me, and others dated January 28, 2024.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today a letter from the Golden Horn Elementary School Council dated February 5, 2024, addressed to the Minister of Education and copied to a number of individuals, including the Leader of the Official Opposition and me.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling several letters that I have sent to Yukon First Nations and education partners regarding private member's Bill No. 307.

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 Gavin McKenna on his nomination for the Jim Piggott Memorial Trophy, presented annually to the Western Hockey League rookie of the year.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the following documents:

(1) the current cost estimate for operating the new mental wellness unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital for an entire year; and

(2) the current estimate of how many million dollars in additional funding the Yukon Hospital Corporation will need in the 2024-25 fiscal year to operate the new mental wellness unit at Whitehorse General Hospital.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make available a public phone for use in the warming centre in the Jim Smith Building.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Minto mine reclamation

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in response to questions about procurement and contracts for the remediation work at the Minto mine, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said — and I will quote: “So, when we looked at the contracts that we were issuing, there was consideration — certainly in the early parts of that work — to look at those companies that were creditors.”

So, this would seem to imply that the minister was suggesting that businesses who were owed money by Minto would be given special consideration for the remediation work on the site. Can the minister explain these comments?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. The first thing that I will emphasize is that we worked quickly to try to make sure the environment was protected. We wanted to not allow there to be contamination or problems with the very quick departure by Minto Metals. Second of all, it was advantageous in that effort to work with

companies that were already on-site, and those are typically the companies who are creditors. There were reasons that it was good, and I think we looked for ways in which to support those companies and individuals who were affected by the closure of the Minto mine. For example, very early on, I know we worked to try to make sure that if there were individual workers who had tools and their belongings — we worked hard to try to get them back so that they could continue to work on other jobs.

Of course, we have the lowest unemployment in Canada, so there were opportunities for people right away, but it was to try to support those who were affected by the quick closure of the mine.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear from businesses who have questions about contracts that were given as direct awards on the Minto site. I would like to put a direct question to the minister: Did the minister, the Premier, or anyone else in the Liberal government give direction that businesses that were owed money by Minto should be directly awarded contracts for work on that particular site?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, this was a question that was raised during Committee of the Whole. I said then and I will say again that, no, there was no direction that was given from us. Then the members opposite posed more questions and I said that I would check with the department to try to make sure whether or not there was something else that had happened within the department, but no, there was no direction given.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, if the government did not give direction with regard to the awarding of contracts on the site, then what did the minister mean yesterday when he said — and I quote again: “So, when we looked at the contracts that we were issuing, there was consideration — certainly in the early parts of that work — to look at those companies that were creditors?”

So, Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain what sort of consideration was given to those companies that were owed money by Minto?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Let me just go back to my first two responses, Mr. Speaker. In the first instance, we didn’t give any specific direction for any specific company.

We did note that there were creditors, and if there were opportunities for those creditors to get some of those early contracts, then that was a consideration. In particular, we can look at whether there was an opportunity for that — where they needed less mobilization so that we could move quickly or whether they were familiar with the site and thus would be able to get up to speed very quickly. Those were the types of considerations that were put in right away.

Question re: Literacy strategy

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, in the 2023 Yukon literacy strategy that was released last fall, one of the recommendations is around teachers on call or substitute teachers. It states — and I’ll quote: “Protect the integrity of learning assistance teachers (LATs) and literacy support teacher roles. LATs or literacy support teachers must not be pulled from their roles to carry out Teacher on Call (TOC) duties and/or other related school

duties.” However, we have heard from a number of Yukon schools that this happens on a regular basis.

Can the minister explain why the government is not following their own literacy strategy by ensuring that LATs are not pulled away from their regular roles?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I’m happy to rise today to talk about the important work that is happening in education. Of course, teachers, teachers on call, learning assistance teachers, and, of course, educational assistants are a major part of ensuring that children are supported in their learning. We have done a tremendous amount of work over several years, of course, during this really trying time of coming out of the pandemic to ensure that we have positions filled. I think I will start there.

To just talk about the current recruitment that we have been doing, we certainly do still have some vacancies throughout the territory. We have done a lot of work around beginning to post early for positions. As folks know, we are opening up a new school at Whistle Bend, and that recruitment is underway as well. So, we are working very hard, of course, to fill the vacancies that we have so that we have less reliance on teachers on call. I will continue to expand on TOCs as we move forward.

Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, so for the minister, my question was about LATs being reassigned to teacher-on-call roles.

In the letter that I tabled earlier today, Golden Horn school council wrote to the minister and said — quote: “... an average of 1 LAT per day being pulled from regular and essential duties to cover the ToC shortage.” So, this is in direct contravention of the minister’s very own literacy strategy.

So, I am going to ask again: Why are LATs being pulled away from their regular duties to carry out duties normally assigned to teachers on call?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, it is related to the teachers on call. As of March 15, there were 250 registered teachers on call in the Yukon — 208 of them being in Whitehorse and 42 rural. We have been working very diligently with each school community to ensure that we have enough teachers on call to fill positions.

When we talk about the literacy strategy in the Yukon, teaching literacy is complex and we certainly rely on our support staff to help with this work around literacy. Yukon Education is developing and improving literacy skills throughout life and it is essential to an individual’s right to an education and a top priority for Education. Teaching literacy is complex and there is no single approach that works for all students. Educators need to have well-developed toolboxes of strategies and approaches. Yukon Education authority’s culturally responsive literacy strategy was announced on September 8, 2023.

There is certainly a lot more to say about this important work that is underway in the Department of Education.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, so again, this question is about LATs being pulled away from their roles to carry out TOC duties, which the literacy strategy says must not happen.

In that same letter from Golden Horn school council, they said — and I quote: “The many children that have Student

Learning Plans and Independent Education Plans did not receive proper supports during these months given the ToC shortage.” They go on to say — and I will quote again: “GHES council is calling on this government to find immediate solutions to this issue.”

So, can the minister identify any immediate solutions that she has come up with since she received this letter, and has she communicated those solutions to the school council?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, so very much related to recruitment and teachers on call and the good work that we have been doing around the Yukon Education authority’s culturally responsive literacy strategy that I haven’t had a chance to talk about in the House. This strategy aims to increase tools and resources for literacy instruction and increase student success in becoming literate citizens.

There has been a tremendous amount of work on this new strategy. I certainly acknowledge that there are pressures in schools and that schools sometimes have to make decisions around temporary vacancies. Sometimes that does include moving teachers around and reassigning — temporary adjustments to teaching staff assignments, adjustments to student learning groups, and the use of teachers on call. As I have stated, we have made some headway on that and we are seeing higher recruitment levels for teachers on call to take off that pressure and ensure that LATs remain in the classroom with students as they are intended to be.

Question re: Residential tenancies office order enforcement

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, on the radio this morning, we heard a landlord openly bragging about breaking the law. He told the CBC reporter that he always doubles the rent if his tenant goes on social assistance. Besides being wildly offensive and immoral, that is illegal on two counts: (1) it is an illegal rent increase; and (2) it’s discrimination based on his tenant’s source of income.

Unfortunately, despite openly admitting on public radio that he is breaking the law, there will be no consequences for him unless his tenants file a complaint with the residential tenancies office. Even then, his tenants will have to prove that he has unfairly raised the rent and discriminated against them. It says a lot that this landlord can openly admit to breaking the law and nothing will happen unless his tenants are willing to take on the burden of defending themselves. Even then, the landlord can turn around and do it again with the next tenants and the process repeats itself all over again.

What is this government doing to protect tenants and ensure that landlords follow the law?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to answer this question this afternoon here in the Legislature. Our government is working very hard to rewrite the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. That is the tack that I’ve wanted to take for years. I am glad that we are well underway on that rewrite to make sure that the rights of tenants and landlords are respected through law.

Currently, we have ad hoc decisions that we have made in the House. They are open to abuse. That’s something that I have

always wanted to avoid, and that’s how we are doing it — rewriting the legislation to better address the concerns of renters, landlords, and tenants in the territory to make sure that the rules are known, fair, and enforceable. That’s what we’re doing.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to know what the minister is doing right now to make sure that those laws are followed.

I wish this case was an outlier. We know from Yukon renters that this is anything but.

We recently heard from a tenant who rented a home with a wood-stove several years ago. The stovepipe was so rusted through that you could see flames through the holes, and carbon monoxide was pouring into the room, setting off the detector. After the tenants took the case to the residential tenancies office, the landlord was eventually prohibited from renting the home again until it was fixed.

The problem is that they rented it out anyway without making the repairs. The residential tenancies office ruled that the situation was unsafe and even acknowledged that they could fine the landlord but for some reason never actually followed through.

So, can the minister explain how the residential tenancies office follows up on and enforces its rulings?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I’m happy to deal with caseworks. If the member opposite would forward the information to me, I would be more than happy to look into it on my end and get the details specifically from the people involved.

I will say again, though, that we are — the member, in her second question, intimated that we’re not doing anything right now. That’s not entirely true, Mr. Speaker. What we are doing is rewriting the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. That is an action we’re taking right now that will protect Yukoners into the future.

It’s not an easy fix; it is a substantive fix. It is the foundational fix that will protect all Yukoners going forward, making sure that the rental market is understood by landlords and tenants, that it is protected, that the people are protected, and that the rules are stable and known, going forward. That’s my goal; that’s what the department is working on right now, at this very moment, to make sure that people in the territory are looked after when they go to rent to or to rent from people in the territory.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, again, I asked very specifically how the office follows up and enforces its current rulings.

The minister talks about the RLTA review, and I agree that it would have been a good time to address this. Unfortunately, follow-up and enforcement were not addressed in his public engagement process in any way. I wish that the examples were unusual, but they’re not, and while it’s true that there are many law-abiding and respectful landlords out there, that doesn’t help the renters who encounter the bad apples. It doesn’t help the renters who experience discrimination, unsafe living conditions, illegal evictions, and illegal rent increases.

We hear over and over again from tenants that, even if they try to enforce their rights by taking their landlord to the residential tenancies office, the orders have no teeth. As one person put it to me: No one is showing up to make sure the landlord does what they have been ordered to and no one is coming to help me.

So, Mr. Speaker, what is this government's plan to address the lack of enforcement of the residential tenancies act so that both tenants and landlords are protected?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The answer on number 3 is the same as it was for number 1. We are working right now to make sure that the laws are rewritten to be fairer for both and balanced between landlord and tenant. That's what we are doing, Mr. Speaker, and at the end of that process, we will have a modern piece of legislation that balances the needs of both parties so that they know the rules of engagement so that they know what they are entitled to and what they are entitled provide.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of that, we should have a much more stable, much better understood landlord and tenant act that is enforceable because the rules will be understood by both parties.

Currently, that is not the case. Because of the actions of the last little while, there is some tumult in the industry. The member opposite has said that there are good actors and bad actors. Of course, that is the case. I know that the residential tenancies office is working very, very hard to handle these situations. I have every confidence in them to do the very utmost they can, given the constraints of the law we are currently under. When that law is rewritten, I am sure the law will be better understood and much better represent the interests of both landlords and tenants in the territory.

Question re: Emergency medical services in Dawson City

Ms. Van Bibber: Yesterday, I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services about a report that was done by the Dawson City Ambulance Association, and the minister stated that she had not seen it yet. I would note that the association emailed a copy of the report to the minister and the MLA for Klondike directly on January 28.

So, I would like to follow up on the issues raised in this report. The report found that the EMS coverage was far lower than that which has been reported by the Yukon government in both 2022 and 2023.

Can the minister explain if this is correct, and if not, what explains the discrepancy noted by the association?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. Our government is aware of interest from community members in Dawson City to establish the Dawson City Ambulance Association. A representative from Emergency Medical Services at the Department of Health and Social Services has met with the group in good faith and encouraged their members to support the local Emergency Medical Services team.

The Dawson City Ambulance Association released a report entitled *Deployable Dawson City Based Ground Ambulance Coverage — 01 January 2022-31 October 2023*. The report

asserts a lower level of coverage in Dawson than is reported by the Yukon Emergency Medical Services, and this is due to a change in how Emergency Medical Services achieves full coverage. Due to recent organizational changes to Emergency Medical Services, personnel are now required to achieve full coverage and the assessment of full coverage in communities.

In previous years, including back in 2022 and 2023, the period that is addressed by the report, RCMP or fire department staff could contribute to coverage and the assistance there. That accounts for the numbers difference.

Ms. Van Bibber: According to the report, EMS coverage in Dawson in 2023 was much lower than reported, and here is what they said — quote: "Our analysis has determined that 85% of available hours were allocated to individuals on the schedule. However, based on the YEMS definition of 'coverage' an ambulance could have been dispatched only 58.8% of the time." I am hoping that the minister has more information about this today than she did yesterday.

Is this analysis correct? Did Dawson City only have an ambulance available 58.8 percent of the time last year? If so, does the minister think that this is acceptable?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud and very pleased to have the opportunity to speak about the importance of Emergency Medical Services to communities. Emergency Medical Services has seen an increase in new volunteer and community responders due to an increase in local media coverage and to an increase in honoraria for community responders. The on-call honoraria have increased to \$7.70 per hour from the previous \$3.71, so it has more than doubled for that kind of on-call honoraria, and as of March 15, 2024, Dawson City is supported by eight community responders, two primary care paramedics and four auxiliary-on-call employees and one who is currently on-boarding to support that amazing team in Dawson City.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, last year, the Dawson City fire chief publicly raised concerns about firefighters having to be called out to incidents that really should have been addressed by EMS. This is a concern that other communities, like Watson Lake, have previously expressed. Municipalities are already short on funding, so having the resources go toward calls that are the responsibility of EMS can be a burden on their resources.

Can the minister tell us if there is a system in place for municipalities to recover the cost of having their firefighting employees respond to medical incidents?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the specifics of the question, but I think it's important to note that, in small communities and large communities, certainly in the Yukon, our first responders work as teams. If it is necessary for one team to support the other, they do so quite happily. They all have amazing skills and they respond to community emergencies as necessary.

In January and February 2024, Dawson City had 99-percent coverage. In 2023, coverage in Dawson varied from between 72 percent in the summer and 99 percent in December.

Dawson had 98-percent coverage back in 2021 and 86-percent coverage over the year in 2022.

In Dawson City, EMS responded to 256 calls in 2023 and 295 calls in 2022. As I've noted in the answer to the first question, due to recent organizational changes, two Emergency Medical Services personnel are now required to achieve full coverage in the community of Dawson, and in previous years, there was support from the RCMP and fire department that was considered and calculated into full coverage. We have increased the staff. Dawson City is supported well by EMS.

Question re: Outfitter guidelines review

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, in 2022, the Minister of Environment announced a massive change to the Yukon's policy regarding outfitter quotas. The minister announced that he would be ending multi-year quotas because — and I quote: “My legal advice is that ... multi-year and overharvest quotas do not comply with the *Wildlife Act*...”

This came as a huge surprise to everyone because the multi-year quota system has been in place for over 25 years without any indication that it was inconsistent with the *Wildlife Act*. So, will the minister agree to release the legal advice that he has received that shows that the system that has been in place for 25-plus years does not comply with the *Wildlife Act*?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, we do recognize the certainty and flexibility that multi-year quotas provide to Yukon outfitters. However, as the member opposite did indicate, multi-year and over-quotas do not comply with the *Wildlife Act*. The Department of Environment has implemented an interim solution to provide outfitters with certainty, flexibility, and predictability, and I am certainly encouraged by the very positive interactions in conversations that have occurred between the Department of Environment and the outfitting community.

This interim process states that unless a legal, environmental, or socio-economic factor necessitates a change in the non-resident harvest allocation, quotas will remain unchanged until we have a new process in place to establish quotas.

The interim process also allows outfitters who had quota agreements before 2022 to access unused moose and caribou quotas from the previous four years up to a maximum value, as per their most recent agreement.

Mr. Speaker, we remain committed to working with the outfitting industry, renewable resources councils, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, licensed hunters, and Yukon First Nations to ensure that a fair, transparent, and sustainable approach to harvest is applied.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker — so, the minister has changed a policy that has been in place for decades across multiple governments of all stripes because of the legal advice that he has received. I think that it is only fair to the wildlife management community that he would release the legal advice so that others can understand why this decision has been made.

We have also heard that the Outfitter Quota Appeal Committee has received their own legal opinion about this issue.

Can the minister confirm that the legal opinion sought by the appeal committee has been received by the department, and if so, can the minister explain what that opinion found?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In 2021, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment was made aware that multi-year quotas and rollover provisions do not comply with the *Wildlife Act*. As a result, the department worked with outfitters to place them on annual quotas. Starting in 2022, quotas are established annually. Given the changes made to the quota process and the fact that some outfitters were assigned quotas for the first time, the Outfitter Quota Appeal Committee and the Concession and Compensation Review Board received an unprecedented number of appeals. We have responded to all timelines and information requests from the secretariat coordinating the appeal hearings, but the number of appeals did create delays in the appeal process.

As I indicated, we are working with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board to modernize Yukon outfitter quota guidelines. We agree that modernization of these guidelines is necessary for various reasons, including ensuring that they conform with the Yukon *Wildlife Act*, addressing the Yukon's legal obligations to consult First Nations, and ensuring better alignment with how wildlife management is conducted in the Yukon.

We will continue with these fruitful discussions with the impacted stakeholders.

Mr. Istchenko: So, my question was about the legal advice that the Outfitter Quota Appeal Committee had received and whether the minister has received it and explain what he had found, but I didn't get an answer.

Mr. Speaker, these decisions affect everyone in the wildlife management community. I think it's only fair, like I said earlier, that everyone has a chance to review the information and legal advice that the minister has received. Why won't the minister share that legal advice that he has received which has led to these sweeping changes?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Our government continues to work with the Yukon Outfitters Association in order to support the industry while ensuring the sustainability of Yukon wildlife. Despite the setbacks of the COVID years, Yukon's outfitting industry has performed strongly in recent years. The seven highest annual number of licences sold to non-residents occurred in the past 10 years. The Department of Environment reports annually in the Yukon hunting regulations summary the annual harvest of big game species by resident and non-resident hunters. Sheep, moose, and caribou remain the most popular non-resident harvested big game species.

When making decisions on the allocation of hunting opportunities, we prioritize the allocation of subsistence harvest as per the First Nation final agreements. The remainder of the harvest opportunities are then divided between resident hunters and outfitter clients.

The principles of sustainability and conservation guide the department's management of all wildlife species. We recognize that there continues to be outstanding issues, and we are committed to resolving them collaboratively with the outfitting industry.

The outfitter liaison officer and wildlife harvest biologists meet frequently with Yukon outfitters and the Yukon Outfitters Association to answer questions, address specific issues of concern, and identify potential solutions.

Speaker: The time for the 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

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 213: *First Appropriation Act 2024-25* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

French Language Services Directorate

Deputy Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Merci honorable vice-président. Je vous présente et souhaite la bienvenue à la sous-ministre de la DSF, Sierra van der Meer, et à la gestionnaire des Communications bilingues, Nancy Power.

J'ai le plaisir de vous présenter le budget de la Direction des services en français pour 2024-25.

Nous entamons la cinquième et dernière année de notre entente quinquennale avec le gouvernement du Canada sur les services en français. Cette entente de 28 millions de dollars nous permet d'honorer notre engagement à élargir notre offre de services et de communications en français. Je tiens à remercier le gouvernement du Canada pour son soutien

financier continu. Je suis impatient de négocier la prochaine entente quinquennale avec lui cette année.

Les estimations qui suivent comprennent la contribution du gouvernement fédéral de 6,106 millions de dollars pour 2024-25 et notre propre contribution d'un peu plus de 1,6 million de dollars.

La DSF prévoit des dépenses de fonctionnement et d'entretien de 7,755 millions de dollars, soit 950 000 \$ de plus que l'an dernier. Cette augmentation est due à: une hausse des salaires découlant de la ratification de la convention collective et de la réorganisation de la DSF en 2023; une hausse de 356 000 \$ pour élargir les services de santé en français dans le territoire grâce au soutien de Santé Canada et de Patrimoine canadien. Nous travaillerons avec le ministère de la Santé et des Affaires sociales à la réalisation de ce projet pendant les quatre prochaines années.

Ce budget reflète la structure de la DSF et son mandat. Il témoigne de l'aide que celle-ci offre aux ministères et aux autres organismes publics, sous forme de services centraux et de soutien financier, pour qu'ils puissent fournir des services et des communications en français.

Des dépenses de fonctionnement et d'entretien de 7,755 millions de dollars: 58 pour cent serviront à financer les activités de la DSF; 42 pour cent serviront à aider les ministères et les organismes publics à accroître leur offre de services bilingues et à appuyer des initiatives favorisant l'épanouissement de la communauté francophone yukonnaise.

Sur les 4,461 millions de dollars consacrés au fonctionnement de la DSF, 3,382 millions sont affectés à son personnel. La DSF est constituée d'une équipe de 25 professionnels qui collaborent avec les ministères et les organismes publics et leur donnent les moyens de servir et d'informer le public en français.

Nous avons récemment restructuré nos programmes et nos services centraux pour mieux soutenir les ministères. La nouvelle équipe de l'aménagement linguistique aide les ministères à fournir leurs services en français et donne des conseils fondés sur une approche d'aménagement linguistique. Elle offre aussi un soutien linguistique personnalisé et veille ainsi à ce que le personnel puisse donner les services en français avec assurance. L'équipe des communications bilingues remaniée traduit des documents qui touchent le quotidien de la population yukonnaise. Elle aide les ministères à promouvoir l'offre des programmes et services gouvernementaux en français. Elle gère aussi @LeYukonFr, le compte de médias sociaux en français du gouvernement du Yukon, et la présence de ce dernier sur le Web.

Dans la catégorie « Autre », nous avons prévu une somme de 1,069 pour les dépenses de fonctionnement et d'entretien de la DSF, entre autres pour les contrats de traduction nécessaires pour répondre à la demande croissante.

Par ailleurs, la DSF a prévu 2,309 millions de dollars pour les postes bilingues et les points de service désignés dans d'autres ministères. On parle de 73 postes désignés bilingues dans toute la fonction publique. Parmi ces postes, 32 sont au ministère de la Santé et des Affaires sociales et 13 au ministère de la Justice, suivant les priorités de la communauté

francophone. La DSF a aussi prévu 455 000 \$ pour financer les projets bilingues des ministères, comme la publicité et la conception de matériel de communication.

Nous investirons aussi 530 000 \$ pour soutenir des organismes publics et des organismes communautaires francophones au moyen de transferts gouvernementaux. Nous allons transférer 350 000 \$ à la Régie des hôpitaux du Yukon pour l'aider à accroître l'offre de services en français. Plus de 20 fournisseurs de services bilingues sont affectés à l'Hôpital général de Whitehorse et à l'Hôpital communautaire de Dawson.

Nous allons injecter 180 000 \$ en soutien direct à la communauté francophone du Yukon, qui est en pleine croissance. De ce montant, 50 000 \$ seront investis dans le programme de coopération intergouvernementale Québec-Yukon au profit de projets communautaires locaux.

Honorable vice-président, voilà les grandes lignes du budget de la Direction des services en français et de ses activités prévues pour l'année à venir.

Je suis prêt à répondre aux questions des députés sur le budget de 2024-25 de la DSF. Merci, honorable vice-président.

Ms. Clarke: Deputy Chair, I would like to thank the officials for joining us here today. I know that staff have been busy with the enhancement of the French Language Services Directorate and the French services capacity throughout the government. I'm happy to have the opportunity to ask a few questions of the minister here today.

I can see a fairly significant increase to personnel costs in the directorate over the last couple of years. Can the minister tell me how many FTEs are currently working for FLSD, and has staffing increased with the enhanced internal capacity of the directorate that the minister has mentioned? Are there plans for further increases?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Deputy Chair, there are currently 25 full-time-equivalent employees at the French Language Services Directorate. So, I am going to start saying "FLSD", or if I say "DSF", it's the same thing, but it is the French version of it. That's not an increase. We did do a reorganization of the department in last fiscal — we did a reorganization of the department, but we didn't increase the number of staff at all.

We are not anticipating increased staff at this moment, but what we are doing is working on that new agreement with Canada. If, through that agreement, we are able to secure more funding to augment the service of French Language Services, then it's possible that we increase.

When we have had these big jumps in the past, there was some increase that came to FLSD, but I think it's fairer to say that most of that increase went across to departments to support bilingual positions across the Yukon. It wasn't necessarily new; it was people who were in those positions. We weren't always increasing the number of full-time equivalents in the departments, but we were increasing the support for designated bilingual positions within those departments.

Ms. Clarke: Deputy Chair, I thank the minister for that answer. There had been advances to the delivery of services in French across many government departments since the active offer program was implemented in 2013-14. Are there areas or

departments that the minister feels could use more proactive offering of French services or more resources for helping to strengthen the French services?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Active offer was a good first step. What it really did was start to initiate: Hello Bonjour. That is great, but what has happened over the past couple of these agreements with the federal government is that we have really been able to start to get much more service in French across the government. Where are we trying to focus?

Well, we have turned to the francophone community to ask them where their priorities are. That's often with the lead of Association franco-yukonnaise — so, AFY — but there are quite a few groups. The place where we have heard them emphasizing in recent years is really about those areas where you are in difficult situations, so that might be health care and the justice system. Those are the places where we are trying to concentrate, and if you look at our designated bilingual positions — which I mentioned in my opening remarks — almost half of them are within Health and Social Services. We have worked, of course, with the hospital.

There are ways where we have been making that emphasis, but I think that, in our recent engagement as we came up with the new strategy or the update to our strategy, we were still hearing from the francophone community that those times are essential for them, so we will continue to put our emphasis on those areas of public service where people are at their most vulnerable.

Ms. Clarke: The Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre was opened in November of 2022. Does FLSD have any role in the operation of or support for this clinic and its bilingual operations?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The role of FLSD with respect to Constellation is a support role. We are very happy to see Constellation. We know that it is providing a needed service, and there is more work to do, of course, but our typical role is to participate in meetings with Health and Social Services and stakeholders to discuss the French community's needs, their concerns, what their priorities are — so, we are there assisting Health and Social Services as to where to put focus on certain services and to ensure continuity of care. Of course, we also support — if there are any requests for information or translation, we are always there doing that work. There is general work that FLSD always does, and that is also work that supports Constellation.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I thank the minister for that answer. Upon reading through the French Language Services Directorate's annual report, I noticed, on page 10, a drop from 2021-22 to last year in the number of learners taking French courses from 346 to 254. Is there any data available to explain the decrease in people taking courses?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There is always a little bit of up and down year over year, and I remember early on when sometimes it would sort of come in waves, but this change really is a switch in our delivery model, and there are two things that I will note for the member opposite.

The first one was that we had the Association franco-yukonnaise, AFY, start to do more of the public courses —

classes — around French language — sort of the more general level stuff — and so we refocused to support them to do that work. Then, internally to FLSD, what we did was to focus more on public servants and in particular on improving the levels of French. So, it was more one-on-one type of work that we were doing rather than the general classes. We split off the general classes and gave some funding support to AFY to do that work. The numbers that we are seeing in the annual report are reflective of the more direct course provision for government employees to improve their level.

Ms. Clarke: Deputy Chair, I would like to thank the officials once again for taking the time to join us here today. We have no additional questions, and I will pass things over to my colleague.

Ms. White: Merci vice-président. C'est toujours un plaisir de prendre la parole pendant le débat de ce ministère.

It is always a pleasure to be here. Every time that the minister speaks, I think: Wow, he has really been working hard, and kudos to him because learning a second language or relearning a second language later in life is not easy.

I always say — and it goes back for years — that there are not a lot of questions or criticisms now for the French Language Services Directorate because things are moving. Early on, after being elected, I had a lot of questions, a lot of concerns, and a lot of criticisms, and it was because it was a stagnant department. It was buried under Highways and Public Works, it had never been debated, and there was no growth. What we have seen consistently in the last number of years is not just growth in FTEs or things like that but growth in action.

I think about the Hello Bonjour campaign as kind of the kick-start. But the fact that, looking at the strategic framework for French Language Services where we're talking about investing in bilingual employees and getting them into positions — where we see, for example, with the Constellation Clinic that there are seven French language speakers — and it's across the board. It is a department where there aren't criticisms at this point — there might be at some point, but there aren't — and it's challenging because it's one where we get some of the best information and we get easily the best handouts, to be honest, and I appreciate that they are working on that.

I think there is one — I believe the money was in the supplementary, but I think the action will be in the mains. I think the one question that I want to ask about is: Is the \$356,000 for leveraging technology to increase access to health care services in French in the Yukon — which is a big, lengthy title — I really do want to make sure that I mention here that it is because of the work of the French Language Services Directorate and the francophone community that 56 languages I think can be accessed when you go to Whitehorse General Hospital through the Translation services, which did not exist before.

That is something that we should all be fiercely proud of. It means that new Canadians, new Yukoners, and folks who are not English first language speakers have the ability to access health information in their first language, which is incredible. It is all because of the spearheading of the francophone

community — which is massive — and the good work done by the French Language Services Directorate.

I will give the minister an opportunity to talk about the excitement and what this program hopes to achieve. I will try to find him other questions, but again, it is high praise for the French Language Services Directorate and the work that they do.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There are a few things I would be happy to sort of talk about, but first of all, I concur with everything that the member opposite has said. As a start to that — just a shout-out to FLSD and the incredible work that they have been doing over the past several years.

I'm going to come back to the specific example of the Translation services on — sort of — iPads, but with the dollars that we have identified — the funding from Canada — we're going to continue to work with Health and Social Services to increase access to services and to try to enhance that continuity of care.

Part of that work is to sort of map the health care journey of French-speaking patients; it's to explore how we can best leverage technology and test strategies out there around telehealth, around interpretation, and around health care navigators. It's also to make sure that we are part of a national network of this improvement to services in French language because we want to exchange what we're finding and which things have been successful here or the best bang for the buck, and we want to hear from other jurisdictions what they have discovered around health care. We're also doing work around justice where we've proposed the Yukon as sort of a casework site again, and so we go after these types of programs.

I just want to talk for a minute about those translation services. Part of what happens is — it's like on an iPad, but you have it up at face level and it's like you are talking with someone and they are there with you when you are talking with health care providers so you can talk in your native language, your mother tongue, and then the translation can come and you can go back and forth.

So, two magical things happened. First of all, it wasn't just for French. As the member opposite noted, it's going to be for Tagalog or it's going to be for Urdu — there is this whole range of languages. My dream is that we can get, some day, to Indigenous language here, because wouldn't that be an amazing way of supporting Yukon First Nations?

The other thing that happened — and it was completely unexpected or I didn't hear of us knowing that it was going to come. But when we started providing this service in French, we suddenly had the health care providers here shifting to French. It turns out that they had been nervous to use their French because, when they're dealing with someone around the issue of health care, they were really concerned that their French was maybe not good enough.

They had a fear of making mistakes in French, but when they had that safety net of having that translation service right there, suddenly their French was coming out more and we had more people stepping forward to use their language. Maybe they had only reached some high school or university level with

it and it had been tucked away for a long time, and they just didn't feel good about it. So, it was a real eye-opener for us.

When we presented to the last federal-provincial-territorial meeting, this was one of the messages that we gave — that not only was this program good, but watch how it will enhance the existing levels of competence of your professional health service, in this case — but I think it would be across many professions. It was really great news and we are looking forward to this investment from Canada.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer and agree that it is about making sure that the information can follow, and I do appreciate the other things.

Maybe he can share a bit in the House about the split now that has happened now within the department between Central Services and Partnerships and Strategic Support.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The restructuring was to sort of focus on our internal work or our core work — those things that we had been doing previously and then how we can focus outwardly. So, the internal work is bilingual communications — that would be like translating webpages or reports and all sorts of documents — that would be language policy and planning. So, it is the internal stuff.

The Partnerships and Strategic Support are — and I have already mentioned that it is the work with departments to make sure that we are supporting them as they do this work — and that funding that we got from Canada, it falls right underneath that. Like, for example, that is us working with Health and Social Services, but it is also our work with community organizations. I have already mentioned AFY several times, but I think that I could mention a few other groups as examples: les Essentielles, communauté scolaire franco yukonnaise, CSFY, with la Garderie du petit cheval blanc, and the Société d'histoire francophone du Yukon. These are all examples. There is a range of groups here in the Yukon that do good work for the francophone community and the francophile community as well, and that part of our organization is how we can support them to do as well as possible.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for the conversation today and will thank the officials who are here in the Chamber, all of those policy folks listening to the radio, and those who work so hard to make sure that the French Language Services Directorate continues to do the good work that they do.

I would love to give the minister the opportunity to talk about anything in the department that he would like to highlight and thank him for the time this afternoon.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will just highlight a few things; a couple of them, we have already touched on. We have our new strategic plan in front of us, so I think that we are excited to be implementing that now. I think it's worth noting, as I said in my opening remarks, that I am keen to work with Canada around a new agreement going forward. We will look for that maybe in the Fall Sitting. I hope it will be in place.

The other one I want to give a bit of a shout-out for is around translation, but it's around emergencies. We are coming into the season now where we could have forest fires, floods, road closures, and 501 Yukon. It always happens that those sorts of things hit in the wee hours or on the long weekends or

whenever it is, and I just would like to give a big shout-out — un grand remerciement à l'équipe — for the team who has been doing all of this translation work to try to keep the Yukon as informed as quickly as possible when there is an emergency situation arising. I know that the heavy season is coming upon us, so I want to thank them for the work that they have done and thank them for the work that is coming up to keep us all safe.

With that, I will just once again thank our colleagues from FLSD who have come here to answer questions for the members of the Assembly.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate?

Ms. White: Deputy Chair, just before we move into line-by-line, I do have one additional question. I brought it up during debate on the supplementary budget, and that was about whether members of this Chamber — elected officials who do not have the privilege of being the Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate — would have access to translation services, because that would be fantastic for folks like me.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Annually, we work on memorandums of understanding with each of the departments, and that includes the Legislative Assembly Office. That is coming up this April, so we flagged it for ourselves to have that conversation with the Legislative Assembly Office, so it is up and coming.

Again, I thank the member for the suggestion. We will see if we are able to accommodate that. I am sure that the Clerk heard that same suggestion, so I guess I will just flag for them that we are coming for a conversation.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate?

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

Ms. Clarke: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: The Member for Porter Creek Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures
Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$7,755,000 agreed to
On Capital Expenditures
Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to
Total Expenditures in the amount of \$7,755,000 agreed to
 to
French Language Services Directorate agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Department of Justice

Deputy Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would first like to take the opportunity to welcome the officials from the Department of Justice who are here to support this debate today. We have Deputy Minister Mark Radke and the director of finance, Luda Ayzenberg, for support. The work that she does with respect to bringing forward these budgets is just tremendous.

I am happy to rise today to speak to the Department of Justice main operation and maintenance and capital budgets for 2024-25. The estimates outlined in the 2024-25 budget consist of capital investments of just over \$5.3 million and operation and maintenance expenditures of \$101.4 million.

Specifically, I would like to take the opportunity to detail some of the expenditures that are here in this main budget for this budget year, including: the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*; the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*; funding for community safety officer programs; ensuring access to initiatives like the Indigenous courtworker program and the Gladue report writing project; prevention and enforcement of drug-impaired driving; funding for the drug treatment court; continued funding for the family information liaison unit; new funding positions under the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program; RCMP incremental increases; continued funding through the gun and gang violence action fund; funding for the Yukon Human Rights Commission; capital funding of preliminary work on a new morgue for the Coroner's Service; capital investments for a number of upgrades at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre; and major upgrades for the Old Crow RCMP detachment.

I am proud of the work we are doing with Yukon First Nation governments, with the RCMP, with independent agencies, and with Yukon communities on many initiatives that are helping us making Yukon a safer and healthier place. I look forward to carrying on this work to create a justice system that continues to be easier to navigate and more accessible to all people of the Yukon.

The Government of Yukon strategically invests in ways that enable us to build relationships with our partners to foster

safer communities, to support culturally relevant services, and to encourage innovation and support good governance.

In July 2023, the governments of Yukon and Canada signed an agreement to advance the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. It allocates \$16.4 million over four years to 16 initiatives that are designed to prevent violence in the territory and to support survivors of such crimes.

The Department of Justice will receive over \$6 million between 2023 and 2027 for seven new initiatives that address gender-based violence from multiple angles, including: prevention, breaking the cycle of violence in families, intervention, specialized care, court support, trauma healing for justice-involved Yukoners, and First Nation models of justice. To this end, I am pleased to announce a funding increase of \$1,598,000 for the 2024-25 budget for work at the Department of Justice to address gender-based violence in the Yukon.

Substance use and drug toxicity and overdose-related deaths continue to devastate our Yukon communities. Since declaring a substance use emergency in 2022, the Government of Yukon has worked closely with First Nation governments and community groups to coordinate a response focusing on prevention, harm reduction, treatment and community safety, and well-being. The *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* contains 43 recommended actions to be co-led by the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice. This strategy is adaptive and responsive.

We will continually assess, adjust, and report on our response in an effort to meet our long-term goals. I would like to note that our government will support the strategy by allocating \$1,110,135 to the Department of Justice this fiscal year. The funding supports the 10 actions that are outlined in pillar 4 — which is called “Community safety and wellbeing”— of the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*, which was launched in August of 2023.

The Government of Yukon will add \$1,734,000 in funding for Yukon First Nation community safety officer programs in the 2024-25 budget, 52 percent of which is recoverable from the Government of Canada through the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program.

Community safety officer programs continue to be funded to support the First Nations-led community safety activities across the Yukon. The Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada are funding four First Nation governments' community safety officer programs. They are operated by the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Selkirk First Nation, the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, and the Teslin Tlingit Council. Community safety initiatives, such as the community safety officer programs developed by these Yukon First Nation governments, have been very successful in improving the citizens' feelings of safety in their respective communities. We are committed to working with First Nation governments and the Government of Canada to support community-designed and community-led initiatives such as these community safety officer programs.

In addition, through the community safety planning program, up to \$200,000 continues to be available to each

Yukon First Nation to support community safety planning and implementation activities to address identified priorities.

As the population of the Yukon increases, courts have been faced with an increase to the number of judges requiring administrative and other support services, cases of greater complexity, a higher number of self-represented litigants, and more jury trials. Court Services staffing levels have remained static despite this growth, and for part of 2023, the registry's front counter was operating at reduced hours and staff were unable to take regular leave. Additional staff are needed to ensure access to justice and the proper administration of Yukon's court system. To support the timely hearing of matters and the efficient court administration, Court Services staff is increasing by one sheriff, one court clerk, and one counter clerk. Thus, we have allocated \$206,000 in funding within the 2024-25 budget for staffing of these operations.

As you all know, the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Employees' Union ratified a new collective agreement in June 2023. As part of that agreement, union employees received a three-percent wage increase effective January 1, 2024. This corresponds to a \$2,816,896 wage increase for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

I want to touch on the access-to-justice initiatives that are supported by the Department of Justice and by this government. Access-to-justice initiatives like the Indigenous courtworker program and the Gladue report writing project are incredibly important initiatives for Yukoners.

The Gladue report writing project provides the courts with important background information about Indigenous offenders. Information about the effects of residential schools, systemic discrimination, and economic and social disadvantages is provided to the courts to inform sentencing decisions that take into account these factors that are relevant to understanding an individual's story.

The Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon continue to support Gladue report writing through the access-to-justice funding agreement. \$47,775 is dedicated here to increase funding for the Gladue report writing project to support ongoing capacity and to support an increase of Gladue requests.

Additionally, we will see an increase of \$150,000 to the Indigenous courtworker program until the 2026-27 fiscal year. The purpose of the Indigenous courtworker program is to help Indigenous peoples navigate the criminal justice system and to support clients to obtain fair, equitable, and culturally relevant services. More precisely, the objectives of the Indigenous courtworker program are to assist First Nation people to understand their right to speak on their own behalf or to request legal counsel. It works to advocate for culturally or community-based alternatives to the justice system, such as a restorative justice process or diversion or perhaps circle sentencing. It also works to help First Nation persons accused of crimes to understand the nature of the charges against them and to support them in navigating the criminal justice system. It works to assist those involved in the administration of the criminal justice system to increase their awareness and appreciation of the values, customs, languages, and socio-economic conditions

of Indigenous peoples. It also works to respond to problems and special needs caused by communication barriers between Indigenous peoples and those who are involved in the administration of the criminal justice system.

Alcohol- and drug-impaired driving in the Yukon are public health and safety issues that we must address collectively. They are also completely 100-percent preventable.

Since the legalization of cannabis in 2018, our government has been working closely with Public Safety Canada and the RCMP to improve detection and enforcement related to drug-impaired driving.

Our government has committed to building and enhancing law enforcement capacity in the Yukon to address drug-impaired driving through research, standardized field sobriety test training, roadside surveys, and public awareness and education campaigns.

The drug-impaired driving fund was extended to March 2025, and its increase of \$45,000 is fully recoverable from the Government of Canada.

Next, I would like to mention the Community Wellness Court program. We entered a five-year funding agreement with the federal drug treatment court funding program, from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2028. This agreement provides \$510,000 for this fiscal year, 100 percent of which is recoverable from the Government of Canada. This funding will allow for additional staff: two clinical counsellors and a case manager.

I would also like to note an increase of \$285,000 in time-limited funding for the family information liaison unit, which is funded through an agreement with the Government of Canada until March 31, 2025. The family information liaison unit offers centralized and coordinated support for family members of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit+ people. This service includes assistance to families in accessing information related to their loved ones' cases. The agreement provides for funding for one staff member, travel for staff and clients, training for staff to support families of victims, funds to support families of victims, and funds to support professional fees and honoraria for supports. This agreement also provides for a transfer payment agreement with the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council to assist with their work to support families.

Providing support for families remains an important component of the Government of Yukon and their work to implement *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice*, which is Yukon's missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit+ people strategy.

Public safety is, of course, a top priority for our government and for Yukoners. As such, I am pleased to announce the creation of six new RCMP positions under the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program. This program is cost-shared between the governments of Yukon and Canada. We have earmarked \$1,040,834 to cover our share of that program. These positions will provide enhanced, responsive, and dedicated services to First Nation communities under the community tripartite agreements specific to each community.

Our government is committed to supporting Yukon First Nation needs and interests relating to policing and to

community safety. Along with Public Safety Canada, we continue to work with First Nation governments and the RCMP to understand the resources that are needed and how to effectively implement this program across the territory.

With respect to the Yukon RCMP funds that are included in this year's budget, an amount of \$1,724,000 has been earmarked to fund policing cost increases, including the Government of Yukon's contractual obligations under the *Territorial Police Service Agreement*. It will also support the most critical operational needs of the Yukon's RCMP M Division, namely, eight and a half new positions for specialized units as well as for general duty and support staff.

A further \$1,422,000 of this increase is for human resources, which includes funding for the plain-clothed unit, such as the emergency response team, the crime reduction unit, other specialized units, members for the Whitehorse detachment — general duty constables — and one public service employee.

The remaining \$302,000 includes operation and maintenance costs for contracted services and minor repairs.

In December of 2023, the Government of Yukon and the Government of Canada signed a new gun and gang violence action fund agreement for five years, which includes \$800,000 of funding in the 2024-25 fiscal year. This agreement is recoverable at 100 percent from the Government of Canada. Through these funds, the safer communities and neighbourhoods unit has increased its investigational and analytical capacity. This funding supports three investigators and one crime prevention analyst so that the unit can address the evolving nature of criminal activities reported in Yukon communities. The funding will also help support a variety of initiatives, including education and awareness and prevention programs.

Lastly, on the operation and maintenance budget, we have allocated an increase of \$255,000 for the core funding of the Yukon Human Rights Commission. This increase of \$255,000 in funding supports salaries and the operating costs of the commission.

I will now note the overview of some of the significant planned capital expenditures. The Department of Justice works with the RCMP and Public Safety Canada to ensure that our policing infrastructure receives ongoing maintenance, renovation, and eventual replacement of detachments on a schedule. Through the *Territorial Police Service Agreement*, the cost of the operation of the territorial police service is cost-shared between the governments of Yukon and Canada at 70 percent from the Government of Yukon and 30 percent from the Government of Canada.

This fiscal year's increase of \$3,149,000 corresponds to the finalization of the annual budget for cycle 3, which began in fiscal year 2022-23. Cycle 3 is proposed to fund major upgrades to the detachment in Old Crow and to finalize projects that are happening in Carcross and Faro. The Department of Justice will continue to work with the RCMP to make sure that policing facilities are meeting the needs of the RCMP and the communities that they serve.

With respect to the capital expenditures that are related to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, the department is continuing updates and replacements to video surveillance equipment at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre that is now at the end of its life cycle. The increase of \$40,000 earmarked in the capital budget will be used to fund the scheduled system upgrades. The video surveillance system is a key security requirement of the facility to ensure that the safety of staff and clients is looked after.

We have also allocated \$202,000 for replacing and upgrading equipment at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. This includes equipment for medical services, food services, and for the arrest processing unit.

Finally, \$1,354,000 has been set aside for the building security and communication systems at the Correctional Centre. It covers the replacement and modernization of security infrastructure and technologies within the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, addressing systems that have exceeded or are nearing the end of their operational lifespan to ensure improved functionality and reliability.

This capital budget also includes an increase of \$250,000 to commence the preliminary work on the construction of a new —

Deputy Chair: Order. Member for Lake Laberge.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I would like to begin this afternoon by welcoming the officials here as well.

My first question is regarding the increases to the RCMP for new positions. As the minister knows, this is something that my colleagues and I have been pushing for, for a while, so we are certainly pleased to see increases provided to the RCMP for new members.

Could the minister please provide a breakdown of those new positions? Specifically, what I am wondering is how many of these are front-line positions versus administrative support positions. Obviously, there is a need for both types of positions, but I'm just interested in that information. Secondly, if the minister could indicate which communities those new members are going to be located in.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. I just want to be clear that our government has increased the budget for the RCMP every year since I have had the honour of being minister and sitting in this chair since 2016, understanding the issues and important community support for the RCMP and the incredibly important job they do for us as a community.

The *Territorial Police Service Agreement* also includes a cost-sharing capital asset management program, which I spoke about briefly earlier. In the 2024-25 budget for the Government of Yukon, we are proposing an increase of \$1.724 million to the *Territorial Police Service Agreement* budget to support responsive policing services. \$1.422 million of that funding for this year is for human resources. It will include: a plain-clothed unit commander; members for the Whitehorse detachment general duty constables; members for the emergency response team, also known as ERT; a 0.5 of a member for the crime reduction unit, which was previously funded for 0.5 of a member, so that will include the addition of one full-time

equivalent to the crime reduction unit; and one public service employee.

I'm sorry that I don't have the numbers for the general duty constables or members for the emergency response team. Those are decisions that are made by the RCMP based on the funding that I hope will be allocated to them when this budget passes. The proposed increases this year will bring the total number of RCMP regular members assigned to the territory as follows: *Territorial Police Service Agreement* members will be 121 in total; the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program will be a total of 25 members; and the total regular members then across both programs will be 146.

In 2024-25, the proposed budget will increase the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program and the number of members there, which is currently 19, to a total of 25 regular members to provide community policing services in First Nation communities.

According to the latest *Police Personnel and Expenditures in Canada* report, which came out in 2022, the Yukon has the third highest police-per-capita ratio in Canada, with a police strength of 320 officers per 100,000 population — of course, Yukon's population — our smaller population — always needs to be taken into account. A total of 136.5 officers would be the math with respect to that based on our population. Only the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have higher police-per-capita ratios.

With respect to the FNIPP — or the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program — officers, which we have noted will be six new individual members, the RCMP will be collaborating with Yukon First Nations to determine where those officers should be stationed or posted, and that has not yet been decided.

Mr. Cathers: Deputy Chair, my next question is regarding the increase in employees in the Department of Justice in this year. According to the handout that we were provided by officials, the total increase in new full-time-equivalent positions is 21 for the 2024-25 fiscal year. According to the list that we were provided, there are six for the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*, three for the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*, three for the Court Services branch, five for the gun and gang violence action fund, three for the drug treatment court funding, and one family information liaison officer, totalling up to 21 positions.

Can the minister tell us what the total cost is of the increase to personnel associated with those 21 positions this fiscal year?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. The breakdown that was provided in the question was the one that was given during the briefing for the budget for the department. In the total of 21 full-time equivalents, I should note that 12 of those are recoverable completely with respect to programming and the various programs that I mentioned during the opening remarks, 15 of them are term positions, six of them are permanent positions, and the cost with respect to those is done in the department breakdown by each division or category of the department.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that information.

My next question is in follow-up to the public notice that was issued in March of a break-in at the Whitehorse Victim

Services office. The questions regarding that, of course — I did touch on that, as it happened to be on the same day that we debated the supplementary budget. I recognized that at the time it was quite new.

My questions for the minister, which, of course, reflect the concerns that Yukoners have — how the breach of personal information and assets such as cellphones was possible. I will just briefly quote the release, and for the reference of Hansard, I am referring to the release from March 18. It noted that — and I quote: "Confidential files and other items have been accessed. Individuals who have obtained services through Victim Services may be affected, as may other individuals who may be referenced in victims' files. It is still unclear the extent to which confidential information may have been compromised." Again, recognizing that no one in government wanted this to happen, the questions we have heard from people include how it was possible for this information to be accessed, including cellphones which we understand were stolen. Secondly, what has the department determined by this point about whether victims' private information was accessed as a result of that breach? If indeed some people's information was compromised, what steps have been taken to support and protect any individuals who may be put at risk as a result of it? Finally, what is being done now in the wake of that incident to take whatever steps may be necessary to prevent such a breach from happening in the future?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. The notification that was given and that is referenced in the question was, of course, given almost immediately in compliance with the requirements of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the laws regarding privacy and potential privacy breaches here in the Yukon Territory. It was, of course, done with the purpose of making sure that everyone who could potentially be affected could be made aware of this. Work continues to make sure that the requirements of the privacy commissioner with respect to a potential breach of private information and personal information is being addressed and complied with.

I can say — the member opposite may know — that an arrest has been made with respect to an individual who has been charged with this crime. As such, I am not able to say much about some of the details that have been asked for. I can't discuss the evidence, for instance, with respect to cellphones or how this occurred, which I think is one of the questions. The details of this situation are still under investigation. We are cooperating completely with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police while they carry out that investigation and then the matter before the court will continue.

With respect to Victim Services work that is continuing, I can indicate that they are determining, through each and every file — in the event that someone's personal information was accessed or that there could be a concern, they are working individually with each person, one at a time, to address any concerns that they have and any support that they need.

Lastly, as part of this question, steps have been taken. The building where Victim Services is located is not owned by the Government of Yukon, but it is leased space, and additional security measures with the building owner as well as within the

department's purview have been taken to hopefully ensure that such activity does not happen again and that the office is secure and that the personal information held there is secure.

Mr. Cathers: I look forward to hearing more about this going forward, recognizing that it is still relatively recent. In particular, I would note for the minister and for officials that what we will be looking to hear is what steps the government takes to ensure that, at Victim Services and other government offices, appropriate steps are taken to protect people's personal data — especially the information of victims, which, of course, is highly sensitive — from the potential of future unlawful activities resulting in their information being shared unlawfully, potentially putting them at risk.

I want to go back to an issue that I raised with the minister in a previous discussion on justice, which is regarding bail reform. As the minister knows, the changes made by the Trudeau government in Bill C-75 have caused serious problems across the country. This resulted in steps including all premiers jointly writing to Prime Minister Trudeau asking for specific parts involving violent crimes and homicides — to have the bill provisions changed.

It was also clear in that letter that premiers agreed that those were the most urgent changes but not the only changes that were necessary. It clearly seems to have been an effort by the premiers to identify the very highest priority and to reach agreement quickly on the content of a letter.

So, in that area — I noted before that more change is necessary — I pointed out to the minister that we have heard from RCMP members, as the minister may have herself, about the frustration that members have in dealing with people whom they arrest and then release and the very next day are out on the street committing crimes again. It is a tremendous strain on police resources, and in many of these cases, RCMP members believe that it is in the interest of the public to have that individual behind bars awaiting trial, not out causing more harm.

When I raised it with the minister previously, I made reference to that. I noted that the National Police Federation has identified bail reform and additional changes as necessary and has been clear that Bill C-48, which the federal government brought in to undo some of the most problematic changes that they had previously made in Bill C-75 — when I raised it with the minister, I asked her questions including what, beyond Bill C-48, the Yukon government has identified as specific areas to the federal government where they would like to see additional changes made to bail provisions to put the onus on the accused instead of on the Crown. At the time, the minister indicated in response — this is from Hansard page 4773 — and I quote: "... the Yukon has not encouraged the federal government in any particular way to add or change bail provisions with respect to specific criminal offences."

My question for the minister is: Since we last discussed this, has the minister reached out to the RCMP or have officials reached out to the RCMP to seek their views on which areas regarding bail should be priorities for the federal government to make changes to the *Criminal Code* bail provisions? Have they reached out to the RCMP and sought their input from the

Yukon RCMP on what issues or priorities — what offences, for example, would be priorities — and what they believe would be the appropriate legislative measures by the federal government to improve the situation regarding bail reform and the issue of repeat offenders in particular being allowed back out onto the street?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, thank you for the questions. The new bail provisions came into force through Bill C-48, which was before the House of Commons last year on January 4, 2024, so a little more than two months ago, and these amendments are aimed to strengthen public safety by targeting repeat violent offenders and serious offences that are committed with firearms and other dangerous weapons. They will also do this by shifting the burden to the accused person to demonstrate that there is no reason warranting their detention. This is called the "reverse onus", which is common to some individuals.

The amendments work to expand the reverse-onus provisions for certain firearms and other offences involving intimate partner violence. These are certainly progressive and welcomed changes. I need to note that there are many other reverse-onus provisions in the *Criminal Code*. These are certainly only in addition to many other situations, including the fact that, if an individual comes before the court having breached the terms of their previous release, they are in a reverse-onus situation. That is quite common here in the territory.

The matter of repeat offenders and the bail system involves many complex factors, and the amendments to the *Criminal Code* are just one part. We will monitor the effectiveness of the impacts of Bill C-48 here within our jurisdiction, as we remain fully mindful of the potential impacts of these measures on groups who are overrepresented in the justice system but also on our Yukon community.

The solutions to repeat violent offending and random acts of violence lie in addressing the root causes of crime, and that is work that continues to be done by our Department of Justice, by all departments of government, and by Health and Social Services through mental health services, substance use treatment, social supports, and supportive housing — so live to that issue.

His specific question with respect to RCMP officials and conversations there — we are in constant discussions with the RCMP about many issues that affect their services, our community, and community safety here in the territory. There are ongoing and regular meetings. In fact, the deputy minister and the assistant deputy minister will be meeting next week with the chief superintendent and Inspector Ellis with respect to a number of issues.

This is one of the issues that we are live to here in the territory. I am keen to know what changes will be supported or recommended by the RCMP here in the territory. This is definitely a live issue on the federal-provincial-territorial meeting schedule for deputy ministers and for ministers. Deputy ministers will meet next with respect to their schedule of an agenda of issues, including this one, in May of this year — so, next month. I look forward to also scheduling a meeting

with the federal Minister of Justice, and my discussion with him will be informed by the federal-provincial-territorial meeting with the deputy ministers and the issues that arise and are discussed at that meeting. I will also have information from our local RCMP when I go to attend a meeting with the federal minister.

Lastly, I think it is important to emphasize that these are changes that can and should be sought by those who are experts in the field — RCMP, Crown prosecutors, judges, and others — in the process, but it is important to note that changes to the *Criminal Code* will hopefully pan out and have some practical impact in the community. Crown prosecutors have the discretion to seek the detention of anyone whom they believe to be of concern to the safety of our community or anyone whom they believe has not met the grounds for release following an appearance in court and being charged with offences, whatever they might be. Those decisions are made based on their record, based on the offences that are before the court, and based on the circumstances of those offences.

Their discretion to seek detention is, of course, then assessed by an independent court process. We can make changes to the *Criminal Code* that send a signal to both — or certainly to the independent courts — that these are incredibly important issues for Canadians, and ultimately, they get worked into the court process, but it will remain an independent one, and it will remain one that unfortunately will not manage to resolve every repeat offender, but we will continue to work to strive toward that.

Mr. Cathers: I would just remind the minister that some of the problems that are being seen around bail and commented on by police forces across the country — the changes were the direct result of Bill C-75, misguided legislation that the Trudeau government brought in this area.

All premiers jointly signed a letter identifying some of those specific areas that needed be reversed as a matter of urgency, but even the joint letter signed by premiers, including the Yukon Premier, noted that more changes were needed regarding the *Criminal Code* and bail provisions.

I am pleased to hear that there is a meeting scheduled with Yukon RCMP leadership next week, and I would just encourage, again, the minister — if they have not formally done so — to ask the Yukon RCMP to identify what areas related to bail reform they would like to see advanced, recognizing that, when it comes to *Criminal Code* changes, the Yukon government needs to request those changes and can't make them. What I am strongly encouraging the minister to do is to work with the RCMP on this to inform the Yukon's position and for the Yukon to specifically make a request to the federal government and work with the other provinces and territories around lobbying for additional changes in the area of bail reform to again address this very important area, because the courts are limited and constrained by what the law itself says, including around whether the onus is on the accused or on the Crown to make the argument about whether they should be out on bail or not out on bail.

Moving on to another area that I touched on previously with the minister is the question of Whitehorse Correctional

Centre and its assets potentially being used for the purpose of drug trafficking. The minister is aware — although she indicated when we discussed this previously that she had not seen the CBC March 15 article which I referred to in debate. I would assume that she has taken the opportunity to make herself aware of it by now.

Again, as I stated in Hansard on March 18 on page 4775 — I want to be clear that, while I am referring to what the story noted from the court case, what I am asking the minister to do is not to comment on a particular case but on the policy and other measures, including security measures, that the department is taking to prevent misuse of the phone system at Whitehorse Correctional Centre from occurring.

In that situation, the article noted that the offender has been accused of not only discussing supplying drugs to individuals outside Whitehorse Correctional Centre and facilitating entrance into the jail of drugs and payment but also discussing the use of violence to ensure compliance of other individuals.

As I noted, this is an issue of utmost concern, because we should not have a situation where someone is incarcerated at Whitehorse Correctional Centre and is able to engage in calls from the jail related to facilitating drug trafficking and threats of violence.

At the time, the minister indicated that she hadn't seen the article. She said — and I quote: "I'm confident in saying that it is not common that a telephone is used in this way by an individual..." But ultimately, what I am hoping to hear from the minister is more detail than when I raised this with her previously about what the government is doing to prevent any situation like this occurring in the future where somebody is able to, according to the article, make hundreds of calls, many of which involved these illegal activities, including engaging in drug trafficking and threats of violence to others. What is the government doing to prevent the misuse of the phone system at Whitehorse Correctional Centre in this way?

Also, on a related note, as I mentioned to the minister at the time — and again, for Hansard, I am quoting from page 4775 — I noted that the minister has been made aware of other allegations of illegal activities involving drugs on Whitehorse Correctional Centre grounds. I went on to ask her, with regard to the possibility of drugs entering the Whitehorse Correctional Centre grounds or the facility on that site operated by an NGO, can the minister tell us, in response to those allegations and concerns, what are she and the department doing in response to them and to ensure that the government is preventing drug trafficking from occurring anywhere on Whitehorse Correctional Centre grounds?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I certainly appreciate this question. There are, of course, extensive regulations under the corrections act and then policy measures that deal with inmates' rights and rules and requirements and responsibilities at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. With respect to the specific issue of the phone system — in the case that is being referred to — again, neither of us can say much about that. I certainly agree that no such activity should occur on the grounds or in or with the use of equipment at Whitehorse

Correctional Centre. This activity is not only serious crime but investigated at every instance.

With respect to telephones, inmates do have the right to access communications; all such communications are recorded. There are processes under the corrections act to access those recordings by the officials at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre if the circumstances are appropriate. That process worked in this situation, and the appropriate process being followed contributed to the evidence that is before the court and the basis of the charges that are now before the court. Not to say too much more about that, but that is my understanding of the very high-level situation at the moment.

There have been charges laid with respect to the situation that is being described, I believe — not being aware of names, et cetera, but that process will proceed through the court.

With respect to the allegations of drug trafficking on the grounds or near Whitehorse Correctional Centre, the NGO in question has policies in place to monitor and to address concerns with contraband, and the Whitehorse Correctional Centre meets regularly to discuss concerns and provide support. I would go so far again as to say that every instance, every report of a crime in this situation or on the grounds of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, is investigated fully. I can say with respect to the budget that is now before the Legislative Assembly that the Whitehorse Correctional Centre building security and communications systems upgrades encompass — of which \$1,354,000 is in this budget — those specific upgrades will include the replacement and modernization of security infrastructure and technologies within the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, addressing the systems that have exceeded or are nearing the end of their operational lifespan. Of course, there have been improvements to that kind of equipment since it was installed upon the opening, I believe, of the Correctional Centre. Nonetheless, it will be upgraded to ensure improved functionality and reliability. The project is currently going through the procurement process.

Over the past year, we have gone through a site assessment and review of operational lifespans of the current building security and communications systems, developing a comprehensive scope of work that is needed. The increase of \$1.3 million will be used to replace systems that have exceeded or are nearing the end of their operational lifespan, including but not limited to servers, operating systems, perimeter detection systems, and cabling.

With respect to a \$40,000 increase that is in this particular budget, the Whitehorse Correctional Centre requires hardware and software upgrades for equipment, and the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, of course, is a 24/7, multi-level security facility, and the video surveillance system is an essential requirement to ensure the safety of staff and clients and to facilitate evidentiary requests. A failure of this equipment would not be appropriate and could result in significant security implications for the facility, and we are working to ensure that does not occur. The increase of \$40,000 is being used to obtain and replace hardware to ensure the continued operation of the system, such as cameras and hard drives, to support the security of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

Deputy Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Cathers: Just taking up where we left off, could the minister please confirm what the total extent is of the Department of Justice's relationship with Connective? Specifically, what contracts, transfer payments, or agreements do they have with Connective and what work is Connective required to do — what are those specific activities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Department of Justice has two separate transfer payment agreements. They are for the purposes of running supervised housing programs for men and women, separately. Each of those programs provide structured support in a home-type environment for individuals who are justice-involved. Residents for each program receive person-centred support and programming based on individuals needs and goals, including but not limited to: criminogenic programming; employment support and education; Indigenous-focused programming; homeless prevention programs; reintegration services into the community; community living services; peer support; inclusive community drop-in centres; and food security support.

I can note that we, the government, received formal notification back in December 2019 that the Salvation Army had decided to discontinue its supervised housing program in the territory. That was a program that they ran at what was known as the Yukon Adult Resource Centre or often called the ARC. That ended in April 2020.

With respect to continuing to provide those services, Connective was contracted to operate the supervised housing and reintegration program for justice-involved men. They have done so since 2020. I can indicate that Connective runs that facility on the grounds at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre in one of the pods or wings of the Correctional Centre that was not otherwise used. Renovations occurred and there is a capacity there for some 40 beds. All residents are subject to general and specific conditions of release. Safety considerations for the community, staff members, and residents are ensured by 24-hour staff who provide structure, monitoring, and support. It is a 24/7 operation.

For the 2024-25 fiscal year, the annual operating budget for the men's program will remain the same as it was last year — \$807,632. From May 2020 to March 2024, Connective has provided services to 129 bail and probation clients and 14 federal parole clients.

In June 2023, Connective officially opened the women's supervised housing and reintegration program. It is also on the

grounds of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre — on the property — in a building formerly known as Takhini Haven. I think we still call it Takhini Haven. It is separate and independently operated by Connective. Again, individuals are justice-involved who stay there or who are assigned or directed to stay there by court order. In January 2022, the Department of Justice received the approval that was needed to proceed with the implementation again of a 24/7 supervised housing pilot program for women. It continues to be a pilot program. Back in 2022, the budget was \$561,000 — a little more than that — and I just want to make sure that I have the correct number. For the period of April 2024 until September 2024, the operating budget for the women's program will be \$280,917.

I hope that is of some assistance and I will end my comments there.

Mr. Cathers: Deputy Chair, I do appreciate the information provided. With regard to Connective and the two supervised housing facilities that they operated, could the minister tell me what the Department of Justice does to monitor compliance by Connective with the terms of their agreement with government? Again, noting that we have heard some concerns and allegations about that, of which the minister is aware, what I am driving at is, just to confirm — the minister indicated that there are regular meetings between Connective and Department of Justice officials, but meeting to discuss something and taking steps — for example, inspections — are two different matters. In the case of using a private business as an example, restaurants are subject to the possibility of inspections by environmental health and by Occupational Health and Safety. Does the Department of Justice do inspections of the facilities run by Connective to monitor Connective's compliance with their contracts with the Department of Justice? If so, how regularly does that happen, and are those scheduled inspections that the NGO is aware of, or do those occur without advance notice?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question.

The transfer payment agreement with Connective for each of these two operations has terms and conditions embedded there that allow the department to take steps to address issues or to enforce any concerns. As I said earlier in some of my answers, Deputy Chair, investigations are initiated with respect to every allegation of a crime, and I am confident that Connective is alive to those issues. I can assure you that the Department of Justice is alive to those issues, should there be specific allegations of concerns on the property or otherwise.

We monitor compliance with the terms and conditions of the transfer payment agreement. We have not conducted — I guess it would depend on your definition of "specific inspections", but there are site visits that have been done.

I can also indicate that the Department of Justice officials meet with Connective on a regular basis to make sure that the programs are achieving their criteria and their goals. The men's program transfer payment agreement is renewed annually at the amount that I have said for 2024-25. The women's program is a pilot until September 2024. I do anticipate that we will — which is why I have given that one particular amount in my last answer. I do anticipate that we would extend that women's

program for the purposes of evaluating it over the next, perhaps, six months or so and after that to determine if it is achieving the goals and, if so, if there is room for improvement and how we would do that and determine then what steps will be going forward.

Ms. White: Deputy Chair, I thank my colleagues for the conversation so far and, of course, welcome the officials.

Just to jump straight into it, specifically around issues, concerns, or questions around Old Crow and Vuntut Gwitchin, how is Justice coordinating with Health and Social Services for necessary services in Old Crow? For example, Old Crow needs a full-time social worker.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm sorry; I didn't hear the last part of that question.

Ms. White: As an example, Old Crow needs a full-time social worker, so the question is: How does Justice coordinate with Health and Social Services for necessary services for the community of Old Crow?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. I can indicate that not only through me, who sits in one chair, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice collaborate extremely well. We have so much work that overlaps. I note that the former Premier, having had those two departments sit in one place, was smarter than he should have been in those decisions. I think that both departments have benefited in a way, and their cooperation continues.

Our one-government approach, of course, has always been available and emphasized with respect to having departments work together on initiatives.

I will first speak just briefly more specifically — because I don't want to take too much time. I am mindful of the questions that the member opposite may have. There currently is a vacant position for a social worker in Old Crow. I have been advised that we are busy recruiting for that position. I am looking for information now — which might be updated — that they have hired, but as of a few weeks ago — I am just getting that determination, so I look forward to that position being filled.

With respect to other services supported by Health and Social Services in the community, there are substance use health workers who attend there — counsellors. There are community support workers who operate and support Old Crow as a community. I am very mindful of the ruralness of Old Crow and the access to Old Crow being limited. I know they are supported well by counsellors and service providers in Dawson as well, but that's not always perfect. We look forward to making sure that those individuals are supporting on the ground in Old Crow as much as possible.

I can also indicate that the increased use of electronics and phones for those kinds of supports have been not only increased during COVID but maintained so that individuals can have access to so many services that they have not had in the past, if they need services and support in between.

With respect to the Justice side of my responsibilities, legal aid is supported, of course, and attends every court circuit in Old Crow. There is access to the Yukon Public Legal Education

Association. There is support through Indigenous courtworkers who attend in Old Crow for court.

With respect to Yukon community corrections, they are also active and responsible for supervising and supporting individuals who are on probation or bail or serving conditional sentences in the community. They make sure that they are in touch with individuals there. There are probationary supports in the community through the Department of Justice. There are, as I have noted, Indigenous courtworkers. We are working to support and enhance RCMP support in the community.

In Old Crow, I certainly know personally and otherwise that the RCMP don't simply provide policing functions; they are integral players and part of the community. They support community events, they support individuals who live in the community, and they certainly are an integral part of the fabric of what makes Old Crow such a special place.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the extensive supports that are provided by Victim Services for individuals in Old Crow.

We are very mindful of the fact that Old Crow can be isolated by virtue of its geography, and we are also mindful of making sure that the services that are available through both Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice are truly accessible to community members.

Ms. White: What happens when offenders are sent back to communities? There are communities that are accessible by road, of course, but there are fly-in communities, like Old Crow. Who follows up with them, and who protects community members from any kind of risk?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the opportunity to expand on Yukon community corrections and the services that I've just noted with respect to the RCMP community function and impact in Old Crow. Yukon community corrections is responsible for supervising and supporting all individuals who are on probation, bail, or serving a conditional sentence that could be served in their community, at their residence or another location, if directed to do so. Yukon community corrections provides services that are unique in nature to each client's needs and circumstances.

Probation officers are assigned to each community outside of Whitehorse and are available to support each client through the court process. Other than direct contact with an already-assigned probation officer, individuals can contact Yukon community corrections to determine supports. I can also indicate that, as I've noted, Yukon community corrections is dedicated to maintaining regular contact with clients across the territory and building relationships with all Yukon communities.

Yukon community corrections has three fully staffed offices located within the communities of Whitehorse, Dawson, and Watson Lake. The Whitehorse office provides probation supports to communities that do not have a designated office. Each community is visited by a probation officer for the purposes of meeting with clients and attending court circuits. Outside of community visits, clients can access their probation officer through texts, phone calls, or e-mail. Probation officers are aware of the availability of supportive resources and that

they vary across communities. They will refer clients to programming or counselling or other services in Whitehorse that offer remote service delivery. I'm going to note here that this includes the Department of Health and Social Services and the substance use counselling and other services provided by the unit at the Department of Health and Social Services.

With respect to concerns of lack of accountability for court order violations, the RCMP and probation officers have the authority to investigate potential breaches if clients are not meeting their court-ordered conditions. We certainly encourage individuals who are aware of such things to report them, understanding fully that reporting such activity in a small community is very difficult on occasion, but Yukon community corrections works collaboratively with the RCMP to ensure that all clients throughout the territory are upholding their court-ordered conditions and are held accountable for violations of these conditions. If facts support charging an individual with breaching of a condition, either the probation officer serving in the community or the local RCMP can do so. I have noted earlier that the operations of the RCMP in Old Crow are committed to ensuring that the community has efficient and effective policing operations and work to ensure the provision of a professional, effective, and responsive police service truly worthy of the public's trust.

The RCMP strives in all small communities — certainly including Old Crow — to provide adequate resources in the community but also to become part of the community. We acknowledge that retaining and recruiting individuals for such small communities — and having both the ability to enforce the law and become a member of that community in a supportive way are unique skills. We in the Yukon are very lucky to draw those individuals — more than a few individuals who come out of the RCMP Depot in Saskatchewan — who want to come to the Yukon, who know the reputation of M Division of the RCMP, and who want to serve the beginning and other parts of their career here in the territory so that they can work with Yukon communities and be available to respond to the issues as necessary.

Ms. White: I am interested to know what kind of community safety initiatives have been implemented by the Yukon government in Old Crow, and if they haven't been implemented yet, what are they and when can we see that implementation?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. The independent self-government of Vuntut Gwitchin is, of course, in charge of programming and initiatives with respect to community safety. We do have a community safety program available for funding of up to \$200,000 per First Nation government for the purposes of determining planning and how they wish to proceed in this way. I understand that the Vuntut Gwitchin Government is being funded through that program by the Department of Justice. I can also indicate that the Department of Justice is working with them on some restorative justice initiatives. They are currently working on pre- and post-charge diversion conversations.

I can also note that, with respect to community safety planning, we look forward to the development of that and

supporting that work with the government of the Vuntut Gwitchin people. I can also indicate that, under the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*, community wellness plans are contemplated for all communities in the territory. They will be developed through collaboration with First Nation governments, which will indicate who they would like to have work on the development of community wellness plans and how those will be developed in each community.

But I mention them here because it ties to an earlier question, which is collaboration between the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice — no community wellness plan, in my view, will be able to be complete without some of the concepts of community safety being embedded there and, I suppose, vice versa: No community safety planning or programming going forward will be able to be developed without concepts of community wellness also being embedded. I look forward to supporting that work with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government.

Ms. White: Why didn't the VGFN receive funding for community safety officers?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am sorry. I think the question is: Why have the Vuntut Gwitchin Government not received funding for community safety officer programming? What I can indicate is that the community safety planning fund that is available through programming with the Department of Justice is for the purpose of planning those types of initiatives. It is not for operation and maintenance of a program like that. It's not determined to be, quite likely, enough to support community safety officers.

I am not aware, although I can stand corrected, that an application has come from the Vuntut Gwitchin Government for a community safety officer program. If I am incorrect about that, it's because it's in the process of being assessed. The information that I have, as I said earlier in response to some questions, is that we are currently funding four First Nations with respect to community safety officer programs and that the Vuntut Gwitchin Government has been funded through the community safety planning process to do the early work with respect to what might be community safety officers — if that's what's determined by them to be appropriate — but it may not.

The community safety planning funds are not limited to examining whether community safety officer programs or processes are what is the answer. They are very broad intentionally so that communities can determine what sorts of community safety initiatives that they wish to explore.

Ms. White: We have heard from VGFN about barriers to accessing funding to self-policing, and they have told us that the lack of policing legislation prevents Yukon First Nations from accessing funding under the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program. What is this government's plan to address this problem?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, the federal First Nations and Inuit Policing Program supports law enforcement and community safety in First Nation and Inuit communities across the country. Our government has worked with the Government of Canada to secure more funding for several initiatives under this program — I spoke about them earlier

today — including funding for additional RCMP resources to support Yukon First Nation communities, because, of course, the RCMP is the contractual partner with the territorial government to provide policing services here in the territory — also to support Yukon First Nation communities and funding for Yukon First Nation community safety officer programs, which are also available currently in the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program.

Along with other provinces and territories, the Government of Yukon is participating in Public Safety Canada's engagement regarding the development of federal legislation to recognize First Nation self-administered police services as an essential service. This work is ongoing; it will be necessary should individual First Nation governments wish to stand up their own police force in some way. Of course, we have to take into account capacity issues to do that.

If the reference in the question is to — I think that it is to some legislation that is not currently available in the territory. I don't want to guess at the answer, but I will note that we do not have a police act here in the territory which may or may not, in some jurisdictions, permit the kind of services in individual communities that the member is speaking about. I think that it is important to recall that the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program is cost-shared between the governments of Yukon and Canada. Yukon's share of those costs, whatever they might be — in this case, it is \$1,040,834, Yukon's share at 48 percent, and Canada pays 52 percent for this First Nations and Inuit Policing Program. These positions do provide enhanced, responsive, and dedicated services to First Nation communities under the community tripartite agreement.

We are committed to supporting Yukon First Nation needs and interests related to policing and community safety. Along with Public Safety Canada, we continue to work with First Nation government partners and the RCMP to understand resource needs and effectively implement the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program across the territory.

I hope that is responsive to the question. As I said, I don't want to guess at what the concern is, but we are working very closely to try to meet the needs and are very pleased to introduce the extended and increased budget amounts to support the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program here in the territory.

Ms. White: Deputy Chair, that was directly from the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, and my guess is that they have concerns about the lack of a policing act in the territory and that is preventing them from accessing the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program funding. That is my understanding.

I will move on and hope that the minister, when the nation reaches out, will have that conversation directly.

We have heard both from communities and from people being released from the Whitehorse Correctional Centre that they do not have supports for exits. They need supports to get back to their communities and to maintain treatments and programs that they started when they were in WCC, but these often do not exist in communities. So, what can this government do to increase community and individual supports for people who are returning to communities from WCC?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. At the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, there is a First Nation liaison officer. Part of their responsibility is to connect individuals who are leaving the Correctional Centre with community supports in their home community. If there is an individual who has been connected to the housing program run by Connective, known as SHARP, there is, as part of those services and supports provided, a reintegration into communities.

Recognizing that both at the Department of Health and Social Services and at the Department of Justice there can be on occasion a gap to having individuals successfully reintegrate to communities, particularly if they have been away for a while, the Yukon community corrections, under Justice and in connection with the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*, have created positions of an outreach worker and a clinical counselling position or person. Both are designed to help individuals reintegrate into communities and be successful upon their return. Issues of housing, issues of food security, and issues of employment will be supported.

Other kinds of support, should they need counselling or want to continue some supports and services — those things must all be taken into account and supported.

Under the Department of Health and Social Services, under the substance use health emergency, the department has put in its budget this year some \$3 million — more than \$9 million over three years — for on-the-land healing programs. Funds can be applied for by First Nations governments, organizations, and individuals. There are very low barriers for the purpose of accessing these funds to provide on-the-land healing programs. They often focus on — and some of the conversations focus on — on-the-land healing programs for treatment and to provide aftercare for treatment programs. There have been lots of discussions about the concepts of reintegrating into communities either after treatment or after spending time at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, for instance. We very much look forward to the on-the-land treatment program funds being accessed by individuals, organizations, and governments that are looking to help individuals reintegrate into their own communities and be successful in their life choices going forward.

Ms. White: I appreciate the loftiness of the minister's response, but what exactly are the services now? I worked at Corrections for a number of years and, at the time, for example, there was a Greyhound bus, so you could go south from Whitehorse. You could get off in Teslin and you could get off in Watson Lake, but that was it.

I guess my question is this: If a person is apprehended in a rural community, brought into Whitehorse, and kept at WCC for a length of time, what happens upon their release? What does the Yukon government do to make sure that the person can get back to their community?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I thank the member for the question. I don't think my answer was lofty; I think it was specific about the programs that can be accessed by an individual but more importantly by the people who run those programs, who are in those positions, whose job it is to help an individual have a plan to get home and to get reintegrated into

the community. Getting home is only one aspect of that. Reintegrating into a community safely, reintegrating into a home life or to a living situation or to a group of friends who may or may not be supportive of your choices in life — those are very difficult things to do, and individuals deserve support through that process.

I hope to see that happen through some land-based healing programs. I hope to see us come to a time when individuals can return to some sort of land-based, interim opportunity before they return to these communities. The Whitehorse Correctional Centre First Nation liaison officer's job is to help an individual return safely to their community and to be reintegrated into programs there and to determine if those programs don't — if someone is going back to Pelly Crossing and they don't have those — whatever supports are necessary there, to help coordinate so that an individual can access those supports. If that is through Health and Social Services, we expect connection between those two offices — places of work — all for the purpose of helping individuals return.

The substance use health emergency positions — those positions related to the substance use health emergency strategy that have been implemented at the Whitehorse community corrections — an outreach individual and a clinical counselling individual — all designed to help someone through the reintegration from the Whitehorse Correctional Centre to their community.

Ms. White: I am just trying to understand more. What positions exist right now to, for example, facilitate a person's trip back when leaving WCC? Even just at the very beginning, how do they get back to Pelly Crossing? How do they get back to Ross River? Is it probation officers who are making that connection? Is it a First Nation liaison who is making that connection? What if the person is not First Nation? How does a person leaving WCC get back to the community where they came from? Who helps organize it? Who helps facilitate it? How does that person get home?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm sorry if I have been unclear. The Whitehorse Correctional Centre First Nation liaison officer's responsibility is to determine a release plan that is achievable. They liaise with First Nation communities for the return of First Nation individuals to their community. Are they getting a drive home? Is someone picking them up? Can we arrange for some assistance to make sure that they get there? I appreciate that there are no buses as there were many years ago, but I think I'm confident in saying that, many years ago, we didn't have a First Nation liaison officer whose responsibility it was to help individuals get home or reintegrate into communities.

If an individual was not from a First Nation community but is returning either to a life in Whitehorse — and their choices and communications and support systems are in Whitehorse — or to another community outside of Whitehorse, their case manager at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre has those responsibilities.

Ms. White: One of the reasons why the NDP has been so adamant about connectivity between communities — this is a good example of it. I will point out that First Kaska has spaces going between here and Watson Lake, stopping at Teslin on the

way. Of course, there is a new business that has just started up going toward Haines Junction, and we have the Husky Bus toward Dawson City.

My point is — I worked in corrections years ago, but there was a lot of stress when people were being released, especially if they got released on a Friday, because they were almost always going to breach by the end of the weekend and get brought back in. All they desperately wanted to do was get back home, but if the Yukon government just puts people outside and there is no plan to get them back to the communities, that's really where a problem can lie.

Deputy Chair, just seeing the time, I will move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*, and directed me to report progress.

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.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:23 p.m.

The following documents were filed April 4, 2024:

35-1-201

Dawson City ambulance coverage, letter re (dated January 28, 2024) from Dawson City Ambulance Association to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services, Hon. Sandy Silver, Minister of the Public Service Commission, Currie Dixon, Leader of the Official Opposition, Kate White, Leader of the Third Party, Bill Kendrick, Mayor, City of Dawson, and Darren Taylor, Hähkè, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (Dixon)

35-1-202

Teacher on call status at Golden Horn Elementary School, letter re (dated February 5, 2024) from Golden Horn School Council to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education (Kent)

35-1-203

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Advisory Committee for Yukon Education (McLean)

35-1-204

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Sandra Henderson, Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees (McLean)

35-1-205

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Barb Joe, Dän nätthe äda K'úkhiá, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations (McLean)

35-1-206

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Chief Amanda Leas, Chiefs Committee on Education (McLean)

35-1-207

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Jean-Sébastien Blais, Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon (McLean)

35-1-208

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Khà Shâde Héni Maria Benoit, Carcross/Tagish First Nation (McLean)

35-1-209

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Melanie Bennett, First Nations Education Commission (McLean)

35-1-210

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Dana Tizya-Tramm, First Nation School Board (McLean)

35-1-211

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Chief Sean Smith, Kwanlin Dün First Nation (McLean)

35-1-212

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Chief Robert Dickson, Kluane First Nation (McLean)

35-1-213

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Chief Stephen Charlie, Liard First Nation (McLean)

35-1-214

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Chief Nicole Tom, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation (McLean)

35-1-215

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Chief Dawna Hope, First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun (McLean)

35-1-216

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Chief Dylan Loblaw, Ross River Dena Council (McLean)

35-1-217

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Chief Sharon Nelson, Selkirk First Nation (McLean)

35-1-218

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Hähkè Darren Taylor, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (McLean)

35-1-219

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Chief Amanda Leas, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council (McLean)

35-1-220

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Naa Shaáde Háni Eric Morris, Teslin Tlingit Council (McLean)

35-1-221

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Chief Pauline Frost, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (McLean)

35-1-222

Private member's bill — locally developed courses of study, letter re (dated April 3, 2024) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Chief Bessie Chassé, White River First Nation (McLean)