



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, October 6, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Fall Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, October 6, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

I would like to begin the 2022 Fall Sitting of the Legislative Assembly by respectfully acknowledging all Yukon First Nations and that we are meeting on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Mr. Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper, as they are now outdated: Motions No. 18 and 416, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre; Motions No. 34, 82, 216, 220, 310, and 347, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane; Motions No. 39 and 62, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition; Motions No. 74, 139, 203, and 204, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge; Motions No. 124, 125, 218, 351, and 352, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; Motion No. 146, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake; Motions No. 171 and 360, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin; Motion No. 217, standing in the name of the Government House Leader and on which debate adjourned on November 17, 2021; and Motion No. 263, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the actions requested in the motions have been taken in whole or in part: Motions No. 64, 247, 273, 353, and 406, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge; Motion No. 120, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre; Motions No. 238 and 260, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; Motion No. 267, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin; and Motion No. 291, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane.

Motion No. 413, standing in the name of the Minister of Justice, was removed from the Order Paper, as it is similar to Motion No. 427, which carried on April 28, 2022.

Motion No. 418, notice of which was given by the Minister of Highways and Public Works on April 28, 2022, was not placed on today's Notice Paper, as the motion is not in order.

Similarly, Motion No. 425, notice of which was given by the Member for Kluane on April 28, 2022, was not placed on today's Notice Paper, as the motion is not in order.

Motion No. 419, notice of which was given by the Minister of Highways and Public Works on April 28, 2022, was not placed on today's Notice Paper, as the motion is outdated.

Finally, Motion No. 423, notice of which was given by the Member for Kluane on April 28, 2022, was not placed on today's Notice Paper, as the motion is outdated.

Also, Written Question No. 22, submitted by the Member for Lake Laberge on April 28, 2022, was not placed on the Order Paper, as it is not in order.

INTRODUCTION OF PAGES

Speaker: It gives me great pleasure to introduce the legislative pages, who will be serving the House during the 2022 Fall Sitting. They are: Zayda Bilton and Bella Ganzer from St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Secondary School; Conrad Snowshoe and Sarah Cave from Porter Creek Secondary School; Alexandra Ibrahim, Sydney Sinclair, and Declan Wise from F.H. Collins Secondary School; and Paul L'Heureux from CSSC Mercier.

Today, we have with us Sydney Sinclair and Declan Wise. I would ask members to welcome them to the House at this time.

Applause

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: I have a few folks in the gallery that I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome here today. We have Carly Carruthers, our president of the Yukon Liberal Party. We also have in the gallery Mike Pemberton and also, no stranger to the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Ted Adel. We have Clarence Timmons as well, I believe — maybe not; my eyesight is not that great these days.

I will say too, this brings me a lot of joy as well — I have in the gallery Aaron Casselman, who is my ministerial assistant, and his father, Dave, who is visiting from Alberta. It is really great to see you, sir. We also have in the gallery Renée Francoeur, who is with our communications staff. I had better get that name correctly because I kind of bungle it every once in a while because her mum is here — Mary Harris.

Thank you for joining us here and welcome.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: It is really great to be back in the Legislative Assembly and to see so many people whom we all know. I want to ask my colleagues to please help me welcome two very special people in my life: my son, Jedrek Dendys — it is Jedrek's 23rd birthday today, so I just thought I would do a special mention of that — and my daughter, Bria Rose McLean. It is really great to have the two of you in the House today, so welcome.

I would also like to welcome Amy Ryder, my former ministerial advisor and now an employee for Air North. Welcome to all of you.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would also like to ask my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly today to welcome the team that is here from the Da Daghay Development Corporation. With us

today are Ben Asquith, Tiffany Eckert-Maret, Dakota Eckert-Maret, Aberdeen Broeren, Desiree Coad-Broeren, as well as Corey Reimer. These are folks who have been doing incredible work on wildfire, affordable housing, as well as innovation and investment in the Yukon.

Thank you for coming today.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if we could also welcome my colleague, Moira Lassen, who is in the gallery today.

Applause

Mr. Dixon: I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming Mel Brais, the president of the Yukon Party.

Applause

Ms. White: There is a person in the gallery who is not unknown to us all, but it is not often he sits as a spectator in the gallery; of course, it is the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, Joe Mewett.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further visitors to be introduced? Tributes?

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to pay tribute to Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and recognize her lifetime of service. On September 8, 2022, the world learned of the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Throughout her 70-year reign, her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II served the United Kingdom, Commonwealth, and overseas territories with dedication and dignity. She travelled the globe and made it a priority to support causes that were close to her heart.

Her Majesty was patron to more than 600 charities and organizations, 36 of which were right here in Canada. These include the Canadian Cancer Society and also the Canadian Nurses Association. Her Majesty dedicated her life, as the longest serving monarch, to public service and helping Canadians and others, for which we are extremely grateful. Through our own grieving, individually and collectively, the world came together to pay respects to the Queen, and also the royal family, as one of the most-watched historic recent events in TV history. Her service impacted several generations, obviously, and demonstrated the depth and impact that Her Majesty had throughout her reign.

Her Majesty visited Whitehorse in 1959, and that was an historic event. Yukoners gathered with excitement to meet Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, and that visit became a cherished moment in Yukon's history, and many still reflect on this with great fondness: their opportunity to meet the Queen.

She visited Canada more than any other country in the Commonwealth, demonstrating how important Canada was to her and how much she enjoyed our country and our culture.

As we mourn and mark her passing, and with the ascension of His Majesty King Charles III, this is a moment to reflect on the complex but important relationship between the Crown and indigenous people in Canada and here in the Yukon. We acknowledge that this relationship is part of Canada's painful history of colonialization. Here in the Yukon, we are committed to continuing the important work of reconciliation. We are encouraged that His Majesty has expressed that he is committed to working on reconciliation between the Crown and indigenous peoples.

His Majesty has also demonstrated a long-lasting commitment to his duty and has been a champion for our climate advocacy, including environmentalism and fighting climate change.

On behalf of all Yukoners, I extend our sympathies, once again, to all the members of the royal family. Her Majesty's legacy will forever be recognized in Canada, in Canadian history, and her visit to the Yukon, a very special moment for many, which will never be forgotten.

Thank you very much.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and it is truly an honour. The history books will record September 8, 2022, as the date that Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II passed away at Balmoral Castle in Scotland. Her death certificate states her given name, Elizabeth Alexandra Mary; her surname is Windsor; her occupation, Her Majesty the Queen.

Her reign of 70 years on the throne is unprecedented and unlikely to ever be repeated. As I had stated earlier this year, when I spoke to a motion regarding the Queen's Platinum celebration, she was a symbol of stability and grace. Even though we knew Her Royal Highness was the young age of 96, and she was not as agile as she was the months before, we were still surprised at her sudden passing.

On September 6, 2022, the Queen received the newly elected leader of the Conservative Party, Prime Minister Liz Truss, at Balmoral. Then her royal doctor stated she was under medical supervision and must rest. Two days later, the royal family, the Commonwealth, and many around the world mourned her passing, and we witnessed a genuine outpouring of grief.

The legacy of Queen Elizabeth II, as she adapted to the changes that kept coming with the decades, portrayed her dedication and the strength she needed to be the head of state. On September 19, after lying in state, the funeral at Westminster Abbey was held, and Her Majesty was laid to rest with symbolism and traditions that are marked only for a sovereign.

When someone dear to you passes, we have privacy and can be alone to grieve, if necessary. The royals have no such luxury, and with social and instant media, they have to shoulder the burden of being that public face of the Crown and be judged for every nuance of their behaviour. I personally wish them comfort and send them prayers.

The Yukon Party Official Opposition, again, sends our sincere condolences to her family, her children, her grandchildren, and all her royal family. The heir and first son of Her Majesty, Charles, then Prince of Wales, has now ascended the throne as King Charles III.

God save the King.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to mark the passing and the life of Queen Elizabeth II, the United Kingdom's longest serving monarch, who died peacefully on September 8, just a few short weeks ago.

Canada and the Yukon have a long, shared history with Queen Elizabeth. Many Yukoners grieved her passing, and others had conflicted feelings about the relationship between First Nation people in the Yukon and the monarchy she represented for so long.

The Queen came to the throne in 1952 and, in the seven decades that followed, she witnessed enormous social change, not just around the world but right here in Canada: the continuance of residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and other awful things. I know that we as people grow and we change and we evolve, and I hope that to be true for the most powerful woman in the world.

In her last official statement, the Queen offered condolences to the families of the 10 people who died during the horrific mass killings on the James Smith Cree Nation. The Queen of England showed compassion to a small rural First Nation located 58 kilometres east of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan that most of us couldn't point to on a map. She went out of her way to extend her condolences to those suffering a loss. This was a small step toward a better path — the path of recognizing colonial harm and fostering the intent of reconciliation.

There is a real opportunity for the new reigning monarch, who is the symbolic head of the Anglican Church, to take responsibility for its role in the genocide of Indigenous peoples and the failure to fulfill agreements made with the Crown under treaty, to truly honour truth and reconciliation.

No matter how people remember Queen Elizabeth, her seven decades of public service is unmatched in modern times and a remarkable feat. Throughout this Queen's reign, she was an influential role model for generations of women who will be remembered for normalizing and evolving the perception of strong female leadership.

Mr. Speaker, this is the end of an era and an opportunity to go forward in a good way.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling *Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees*, dated October 6, 2022; *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly of Yukon — Yukon Housing — Yukon*

Housing Corporation — Department of Health and Social Services, dated May 25, 2022.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I have for tabling a ministerial statement on inflation that the opposition didn't want you to hear today.

Mr. Cathers: I have for tabling today a letter to the Minister of Justice regarding federal firearms legislation, Bill C-21, and I would also note, just for the record and for Hansard, that the enclosure referenced in the letter is a copy of the National Police Federation's position statement on firearms issued in November 2020, which I previously tabled here in this Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling three legislative returns.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the third report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, dated September 26, 2022.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have for tabling the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees, dated August 22, 2022.

Speaker: Are there any further committee reports to be presented?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 206: *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 206 agreed to

Bill No. 305: *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Ms. Blake: I move that a bill, entitled *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin that a bill, entitled *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of the Bill No. 305 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT, for the duration of the 2022 Fall Sitting, any Member of the Legislative Assembly who is unable to attend sittings of the House in person due to COVID-19 symptoms, illness, or protocols may participate in the sittings of the House by video conference, notwithstanding Standing Order 8 or any other Standing Order, and by video conference shall:

(1) be recognized to speak in debate, notwithstanding Standing Order 17;

(2) be permitted to vote, notwithstanding Standing Order 25;

(3) be permitted to participate in counts in Committee of the Whole notwithstanding Standing Order 44 and Standing Order 44.1;

(4) contribute to constituting quorum in the Legislative Assembly, under Standing Order 3 and under the *Yukon Act*; and

(5) be considered to have attended the sitting of the Legislative Assembly, with no deduction of indemnity required under subsection 39(5) of the *Legislative Assembly Act*.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT, for the duration of the 2022 Fall Sitting, if the Legislative Assembly stands adjourned for an indefinite period of time, the Government House Leader and at least one of the other House Leaders together may request that the Legislative Assembly meet virtually via video conference, with all the Members of the Legislative Assembly being able to participate remotely, notwithstanding any current Standing Orders regarding members' physical presence in the Chamber.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT, for the duration of the 2022 Fall Sitting:

(1) the Clerk shall keep a daily list of paired members in which any member of the Government and any member of an opposition party may have their names entered together by noon on that date to indicate that they will not take part in any recorded division in the Legislative Assembly held on that date; and

(2) following each such division held, the names of any members entered on the list of paired members for that date shall be printed in Hansard and the Votes and Proceedings.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to sections 2 and 3 of the *Ombudsman Act*, recommends that the Commissioner in Executive Council appoint Jason Pedlar as the Ombudsman of the Yukon for a term of five years, effective October 14, 2022.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to section 18 of the *Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) Act*, reappoint David Phillip Jones, QC as a member of the Conflict of Interest Commission for a three-year period, effective November 1, 2022.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to:

(1) review the penalties associated with drivers failing to respect the flashing lights and stop signs mounted on school buses that are intended to keep students safe; and

(2) implement the recommendations from *Strengthening School Bus Safety in Canada*, a report of the task force on school bus safety, issued in February 2020.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to support the valuable work of the Golden Age Society by entering into a multi-year agreement to assist them with core funding.

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

THAT this House condemns the actions of Hockey Canada in response to the allegations of sexual abuse and urges Yukon hockey organizations to reconsider their affiliation with Hockey Canada.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to recognize that over one-fifth of Yukoners are without a family doctor by taking action now to improve physician recruitment and retention initiatives and to support doctor recruitment efforts by the Yukon Medical Association.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to ensure that territorial policing resources are not diverted to assist in the implementation of the federal Liberal government's flawed gun buyback program.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide funding to Yukon municipalities to help them address the financial impacts of the public health restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, which included loss of municipal revenue and increased operational expenses.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with other levels of government, tourism stakeholders, and the Canada Border Services Agency to:

(1) determine appropriate opening and closing dates for Yukon-Alaska border crossings for the 2023 tourism season;

(2) determine appropriate operating hours for Yukon-Alaska border crossings that reflect the needs of Yukon and Alaska tourism; and

(3) establish stronger communications between border operators, contractors, tourism operators, and governments about the ongoing operation of the Yukon-Alaska border crossings.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the City of Whitehorse to examine the feasibility of increasing the number of residential suites allowed in commercial or industrial buildings.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to discontinue plans to close rural transfer stations and to meaningfully consult with affected communities about plans to change solid-waste operations in those communities.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to recognize and support the global feminist protests led by Iranian women in solidarity with Mahsa Amini.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide further inflation relief for Yukoners in the form of:

(1) a one-time payment of \$500 for every individual and household who earns less than \$70,000 annually;

(2) an income-tested amount for households earning between \$70,000 and \$100,000, up to \$250;

(3) an increase in the Yukon child benefit up to \$173, and indexed to the rate of inflation going forward;

(4) a \$300 monthly increase to social assistance rates; and

(5) a comprehensive social assistance review of the rates started by January 1, 2023.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government to plan for and provide a safe home for children and youth in the community of Old Crow.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to update *Our Clean Future* to include recommendations from *Climate Shot 2030*, such as the actions in *Our Clean Future* will reduce the Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030.

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

THAT this House do order the return of a written response to each of the leadership and capacity-building recommendations contained in *Climate Shot 2030*.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Public sector growth

Mr. Dixon: In the lead-up to the Fall Sitting, the current Premier has touted Yukon's economic growth as one of the highlights of his record and one of the things he is most proud of. However, what he leaves out is where the actual growth has occurred. There is no doubt that there has been job growth in the Yukon since he took office, but what he neglects to mention is that the growth has occurred almost entirely in the public sector. This unsustainable ballooning of the public service has come at the cost of the private sector.

Does the current Premier recognize that the dramatic increase in the size of the public service that has occurred under his watch is unsustainable and actually serves to hamper the growth of the private sector?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think it would be important to point out that we have seen growth across many sectors. Of course, when you look at our contribution, province by province right now, and you look at our per capita input, when you think about mining and what we've done as an economy, we're fourth in the country, leading almost all provinces, I believe, except for Alberta.

Today, we had good numbers that also came out, based on what our compensation is, not just for the public sector, but for the private sector, in those numbers across the board.

Again, we have seen growth in the mining sector. We have seen, up until COVID, some very strong growth and strong numbers in the tourism sector. There is a really diverse sense of growth across many, many sectors. I think that the comments from the Leader of the Opposition are accurate, that it wasn't just one particular area of the economy, but we have seen some strong growth. Of course, that has led to the population growth in every province and territory in North America.

Mr. Dixon: My question was for the current Premier, not the presumed future Premier.

The data from the Yukon Bureau of Statistics paints a stark picture of the current Premier's job record. When he took office in December of 2016, total employment for the Yukon was 21,500. Of that, 8,600 jobs were in the public sector. Fast-forward to now, in August of this year, total employment was 24,100. Of that, a shocking 11,000 jobs were public sector employees. That means that, of the 2,600 new jobs created since the current Premier took office, 2,400 of those jobs are in the public sector and only a few hundred are in the private sector.

Does the interim Premier recognize that his legacy is big government squeezing out the private sector?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The Leader of the Official Opposition has been proven unreliable and now he is saying that basically every government job in the Yukon is a Yukon government job. Those numbers are all governments right across Yukon, for the record, just so he knows.

In the 2022-23 main estimates, we are reporting 5,421 full-time equivalent jobs here in this Government of Yukon. They are all very dedicated public service employees. In our Supplementary No. 1, there are absolutely no additional FTEs; however, due to increased fire activity in the territory, there will be some additional overtime cost overruns.

We are fully committed, Mr. Speaker, to providing transparency and up-to-date accounting of the budgeting of FTEs in the mains and the supplementary budgets, and the government shares these updates in the House with all members during the briefings.

During COVID, our economy boomed. The member opposite doesn't speak about that. Also, a lot of the growth that we have seen with FTEs were due to responses to COVID. We have asked the member opposite many times in the Legislative Assembly which jobs he would take away from the public service. If he could give us a list of the people that he is going to axe if his government gets into power, that would be very helpful.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the data I am citing is from the Premier's own statistics branch, so I don't know why he finds that unreliable.

The simple fact is that the rate in which the interim Premier has grown the public service is unsustainable and it's having a negative impact on the private sector. It is not just me saying this, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this year, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce wrote to the Premier to express their concern. They called this trend "highly disturbing" and pointed out that it was hurting the private sector's ability to hire staff and driving up costs for small businesses.

In last year's Bureau of Statistics business survey, 96 percent of businesses said it was difficult to find staff and one of the top reasons was competition with government.

Does the interim Premier recognize that his record of ballooning the public service is not only unsustainable but it has created real hardship for small businesses in this territory?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I see two themes in questions from the Leader of the Official Opposition. The first theme was about really a lack of respect for what we have seen in growth in the private sector, and the second piece was a labour market challenge.

First of all, when it comes to the labour market challenge, I hope we have a chance to talk about this and debate it through the fall. We see this across the country right now. Again, part of our challenge is that we are far above everyone else when you look at where we are from the standpoint of our unemployment rate. Our unemployment rate right now is 1.7 percent. We see the biggest participation from our population of folks who are able to work, and we are essentially leading the country in that category — if we're not number one, then we're number two for participation in the labour market.

Our folks are working. There are lots of jobs for them, but we see a labour market challenge across the country.

Again, when we talk about the private sector, our stats from our expenditure and GDP growth in 2020 was attributed to year-over-year growth from 2019 and 2020. Of that, 18 and a half percent was made of exports of goods and services — almost all mining. Again, we are seeing growth there. And 18.3 percent was the general government. The member opposite said it was all really from that, but it is 18.3 percent from there.

Again, our consumption and growth and our capital work —

Speaker: Ten seconds.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: — was 6.6 percent. Again, growth in the housing sector, which is really a driver, was 6.2 percent. So, as you can see across the board — construction, mining, tourism — all leading.

Question re: Fuel-wood supply

Mr. Kent: Last week, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources admitted that he is nervous about the supply of firewood in the Yukon. This comes after years of the industry, opposition parties, and members of the public who rely on firewood to heat their homes raising serious concerns with the government.

More than a year ago, the Yukon Wood Products Association raised the alarm directly with the minister in an emergency meeting. They told the minister that there was a problem with a massive lack of supply.

Why has the minister failed to take any meaningful action to address the significant shortage of commercially available firewood in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I thank the member opposite for the question. This is important. We did meet with the Wood Products Association last year. Of course, we have been meeting with them in between; I just spoke with the new executive director last week. At the beginning of this week, the executive director went down with the director of the Forest Management branch, met with Liard First Nation, met with our major harvester down in Watson Lake, and was working on identifying new areas for harvesting. Normally, that harvester has been working north of BC, along the Stewart-Cassiar Highway. They expressed an interest in opening up new areas in the Yukon, and the Forest Management branch went down and met and worked with them.

I'm happy to talk about all the work that we're doing in forestry. It is an important issue. I thank the member opposite for the question and I look forward to the responses.

Mr. Kent: The Liberal government has imposed rules and red tape on commercial woodcutters that has restricted their ability to harvest, and the minister has taken very little action to address the massive supply shortage. The result has been that Yukon finds itself relying to a great degree on firewood imported from British Columbia.

This in turn has created a dramatic increase in price. We're also hearing that wait-lists for some suppliers are as long as three months, and some of those are stretching well into the new

year. The only solution the Liberal government has come up with to deal with this situation is to subsidize this imported firewood by \$50 per cord. The irony is not lost on Yukoners that the Liberals are now subsidizing a product after contributing to a supply shortage.

It doesn't take an economist to point out the problem here. Does the minister really think that a \$50-per-cord subsidy will do anything but increase the prices further?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I hope that the \$50-a-cord relief will bring down the price of a cord by \$50. This is an inflationary relief. The inflation is largely due to the price of diesel. We've always had wood from BC, especially at the north end of the Stewart-Cassiar Highway — or not always, but this has often been the case, certainly for a long period of time. That is good wood. We work with BC to support our harvester from the Yukon who works there, to make sure they're getting permits there.

I think that it is important that we look for other ways to support the industry. I think we are looking for ways to reduce red tape. I look forward to sharing that information further. I just got a good report today from the crew who went down just this week to Watson Lake. I look forward to ways to support our harvesters to get access to wood as quickly as possible, because we know that there is a shortage and pressure on the system. We will continue. I would like to thank the forest resources branch for their work to try to support our harvesters.

Mr. Kent: It is clear to us, those operating in the commercial firewood industry, and just about every Yukoner who relies on those commercial firewood providers that the minister is out of touch with what is actually happening on the ground. Harvesters in the Quill Creek area can't access that area during the summer and they have fallen behind by hundreds of loads with their deliveries. In the southeast Yukon, we have heard that available harvest volumes are falling far short of what has been promised in certain areas. The result of all of this is that we will continue to rely heavily on firewood from British Columbia.

I am going to ask again: When will the minister start treating this issue with the urgency it deserves and start taking action to solve the firewood supply crisis that the Liberal government has created?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I can let the member opposite know that, throughout the summer, I have indicated to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources that this is the top priority. I have asked them to work hard and I will say that they have been working hard on it. Respectfully, the member wrote to me maybe a week or so ago and asked me about it. He talked about individuals and I said, "Hey, please get in touch with me for those individuals, because I want the forest resources branch to reach them directly." I say again: What are we doing? We are working in Quill Creek to open up a firebreak area, which would allow for access over extended periods of time, because we are going to honour the YESAB agreement or the work that was done out of YESAA. That is not red tape. That is proper, regulatory authority. We will work with the harvesters in the southeast Yukon, whether that be the Liard First Nation — our largest harvester in the area — to make sure that we provide

access for them as directly as possible. We will use all the tools at our disposal to increase the amount of firewood supply for Yukoners because we know that it is incredibly important.

Question re: Cost of living

Ms. White: Each and every day, Yukoners are struggling to make ends meet. For folks on a pension or with a low income, it has become impossible to keep up with rising costs, no matter how hard they try. Recent announcements have made it clear that this government doesn't understand what poverty feels like. In the words of one senior living downtown: "I want ministers to come and look at what is in the fridges and pantries of seniors. They would be shocked. They clearly don't realize how bad things are."

A few weeks ago, the Yukon NDP asked the government to create a \$500 direct inflation relief payment that could benefit about 10,000 Yukoners over the age of 18. It's within the government surplus and it would make a huge difference in people's lives. Will the government listen to Yukoners who are in need and give them the relief that they need through this cost-of-living crisis?

Hon. Mr. Silver: We don't have enough time in Question Period to go over all of the things that we've been doing as a government over the last six years to make life more affordable for Yukoners. We would have loved to have had our ministerial statement today, but the opposition blocked you from hearing that today — on inflation.

I will say that the government is conscientious of the effects of the rising inflation that families are going through, and we have taken action. We've taken action specifically to the inflation increases; we've taken actions when COVID reared its ugly head; and since the very beginning, when we were in a recession with the Yukon Party, in our first years, we made sure that we were putting money into the right places for families and making sure that life is more affordable.

This includes \$5 million worth of inflation-relief measures just announced last month. There is not enough time in Question Period to go over all of the items, but as the debate goes on, this legislative session will be getting into what we are doing as the Yukon Liberal government to support Yukoners in these very, very trying times.

Ms. White: I'll take that as a no, and the problem is Yukoners are saying that the government isn't doing enough. So, it's not just seniors and elders who are struggling to keep up with inflation; families across the territory are being forced to make impossible choices. Do they pay for food, or do they pay for their rent? Do they spend money on bus passes or gas, or do they pay for the Internet and phones? Do they buy school supplies, or is it healthy food for their children? These choices wouldn't be as hard if a child benefit reflected today's cost of living, but in the Yukon, the child benefit is not indexed to inflation. Worse, it hasn't seen an increase in over seven years — more than the entire term of this government.

Mr. Speaker, families need a break. Will the minister immediately increase the Yukon child tax benefit and index it to inflation?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Speaking about our most important resource, the youth of Yukon, we introduced the first universal affordable childcare program in the Yukon. This program serves Yukon families and gives them over \$700 per child per month. This is absolutely a game changer when it comes to our youth and when it comes to our families. We are recognized as a national leader, actually, in early learning childcare. The Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at the University of Toronto heralds us in that regard.

I will also say that, with what we are working on in this budget, Yukoners who heat their homes with wood will receive that \$50 per cord for fuel wood, which is extremely important to those who heat their homes with wood stoves. There is a six-month extension of \$500 per month for caregivers of children who are in and out of care homes. We are also extending the inflation relief rebate another three months, which gives Yukoners another \$50 credit on their power bill each month. These new affordability measures will complement those that are already in budget 2022-23 which invests in housing supply, in universal childcare, paid sick leave, and a territory-wide dental plan with no taxes or fee increases.

Thank you.

Ms. White: Sadly, it sounds like another no from this government. There is no increase to the Yukon child tax benefit, and they're definitely not tying it to inflation.

So, with winter approaching and more money spent on heat and electricity, life is only going to get more unaffordable. People are falling further and further behind. People are going hungry, and people are facing winter without a place to stay. The base amount of social assistance has not been reviewed in this territory since 2007. Successive Yukon Party and Liberal governments have repeatedly ignored and refused calls from the Yukon NDP to review these rates so low-income Yukoners could survive. Vulnerable Yukoners shouldn't be left to fall deeper and deeper into poverty. They need relief and they need it now.

Will the government immediately start a review of social assistance rates?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Everything we do is to try to make things more affordable for Yukoners. I will add, as well, that we have just fully funded and regulated the midwifery in the Yukon health care system — a new free service for all Yukoners, which will make having children more affordable for Yukon families.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: From what I am hearing from the Leader of the Third Party, she is not in favour of midwifery.

When we come to all of the actions we have taken over the last few years, this is the best jurisdiction in Canada to live in; I really believe that. We cut the small business tax to zero percent. We have raised the minimum wage by over a dollar. We have also introduced that five-year capital plan that the Yukon Party keeps making fun of, but we have been told by local businesses that this plan has saved them millions of dollars.

Whether it is working with our business sector or working on social issues, every single minister here will spend the time

in the Legislative Assembly this fall session talking about all the hard work that they are doing to make lives more affordable for Yukoners. We will debate the necessity for these programs, including midwifery, which I think is extremely important. We know that inflation, being a global issue, is something that every government in the world is tackling right now. In the Yukon, we are doing all we can to make sure that taxpayers' money goes into the right places so that life is more affordable here in the best place to live on the planet.

Question re: Fuel and carbon taxes

Mr. Cathers: Over the past month, Yukoners have seen record high fuel prices. The price of gas and diesel affects drivers and contributes to cost increases for basic necessities, including food and home heating fuel. As winter approaches, many people are concerned about the cost of living and their ability to put food on the table or heat their homes. One of the easiest ways this government can reduce the cost of living for almost every Yukoner is to cut the fuel tax. Jurisdictions like Alberta and Ontario have done this, and the result has been a decrease in the price of fuel and lower cost increases for food and essential goods.

Will the Liberal government here in the Yukon reconsider its opposition to cutting the Yukon fuel tax and giving Yukoners millions of dollars of tax relief?

Hon. Mr. Silver: When it comes to the fuel tax in Canada, other than Alberta, which has done a complete cut of their taxes, as they are in election mode, we still have — including the deductions the member opposite is talking about in Ontario — the lowest fuel tax in Canada, outside of Alberta now cutting that to zero. So, even with other jurisdictions — not many, but a few — cutting fuel taxes across Canada, we still have an extremely low fuel tax here in Yukon.

We decided that the best thing for us to do was to have inflation relief, as we mentioned already, of \$5 million just within the last month, with money going directly to Yukoners, but also, again, in our budget, we can spend the whole legislative time this fall — we will need that time — to go through all of the issues and all of the line items that are making life more affordable for Yukoners.

We have heard the Yukon Party ask this question countless times in the spring. I am sure they are going to ask us countless times here as well. We believe that there are other ways that we can make sure that we distribute the money to people who need it the most when it comes to inflationary relief, and we will continue to do that. We will continue to listen to the opposition for ideas as well, and we respectfully will disagree that this is the most beneficial way to hit most Yukoners, when it comes to inflation.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, this government could provide Yukoners with millions in tax relief by cutting the fuel tax, but it is choosing not to.

Another important driver of the increases people have seen in the price of gas, diesel, and home heating fuel has been the Liberal carbon tax. The carbon tax increased this year and is set to increase again this winter. The Yukon Liberals welcomed the federal carbon tax but failed to ask for an exemption for home

heating fuel. People in the Northwest Territories do not pay a carbon tax on home heating fuel. It is an essential item for many people, such as people who are unable to buy firewood. We would like to see the carbon tax removed completely, but if this government is still unwilling to ask for that, will they at least agree to try to get a carbon tax exemption for home heating fuel? Will this territorial Liberal government ask their federal counterparts to remove the carbon tax from home heating fuel in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm confused, because the individual who was trying to be the leader of the party says that we don't want a carbon tax at all, but yet the leader of the party, during the campaign, said that they were going to implement a carbon tax. So, I don't know which one it is; I don't know which leader we're supposed to be listening to from across the way — mixed messages for sure.

Mr. Speaker, we've cut the taxes across the board — no new taxes in this year. We've cut the tax for businesses; we extended the interim electrical rebates back in 2017, which reduced the amount that residents will pay on their kilowatt hours — we're making life affordable that way. We have a made-in-Yukon carbon rebate system where all of the money actually goes back to not only individuals, but also to businesses, First Nation governments, and also municipalities. That program benefits Yukoners: this year, individuals receiving more on average than they pay in carbon pricing.

Mining companies internationally and nationally say that this is the most effective way to deal with climate change and to deal with carbon. Are we hearing from the Yukon Party that climate change is not important? And if they're now saying that they wouldn't have a carbon tax, even though the leader said that they were campaigning on a carbon tax, what is their plan? We're hearing mixed messages from the two leaders of the Yukon Party on this one.

Mr. Cathers: The only mixed messages are coming from this Liberal government and the Premier, who we know is confused. The simple fact is that the NWT negotiated a better deal than the Yukon Liberals on the carbon tax. They were able to get that tax removed from home heating fuel for their citizens, because they know it's not fair to northerners — and that was even before the inflation crisis hit. That was clearly the right decision.

Here in the Yukon, people are facing a Liberal-made firewood shortage, taxes imposed by the Liberals have made food and essential goods more expensive and are skyrocketing food and home heating fuel prices. In response, this government is not willing to lift a finger to take any meaningful action.

Why is the Liberal government unwilling to take any real action to help Yukoners heat their homes this winter, and will they agree to cut the fuel tax and lobby the federal government for exemptions to the carbon tax?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just a minute ago, the Member for Copperbelt South stood and said you shouldn't rebate on wood, because it's a supply issue, and then I just heard the Member for Lake Laberge say we have to deal with a heating rebate, but we have just announced a heating rebate for fuelwood, and by

the way, the biggest rebate that we're giving on heating homes is with electricity, because that is what most Yukoners now heat their homes with. We have been switching over to electricity, and that is all part of this transition away from fossil fuels. I am glad for that, because the less dependence we have on fossil fuels, the better off we are. That's an amazing step for a territory here in the north.

I appreciate what Yukoners are doing in making that transition, and we are looking to support Yukoners with these inflationary rebates, and we will continue to do that work to support Yukoners.

Question re: Whistle Bend development

Ms. Clarke: Salamat. In phases 4 and 5 of Whistle Bend, the Government of Yukon sold lots that fronted onto what are called "green streets". According to the plans and the sales agreements that land buyers signed, these green streets were intended to be small, landscaped walking paths not intended for vehicle use. Over the summer, I have heard from many constituents who are concerned that, since they have purchased these lots and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars building homes on these streets, the government has now changed its plans; instead of small walking paths, the Government of Yukon is now pushing for a 20-foot-wide asphalt road. This is not what these residents paid for when they bought these lots.

Why isn't the government honouring its contractual obligations to Whistle Bend residents who purchased lots —

Speaker: Order please.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The arrangement here in the Yukon is that our municipalities plan their communities. They take the decisions on how they would like to see that development proceed. They then ask the Land Development branch from Community Services to develop those lots. They then ask Energy, Mines and Resources to sell those lots.

This was at the request — the change of design was from the City of Whitehorse, and I believe they have reached out to many of that member's constituents from Whistle Bend to talk about why they made the decision to change things. I appreciate the question today. I am happy to loop the member opposite into the responses we will be giving to the residents, but we are taking our direction from the City of Whitehorse, which plans and designs these neighbourhoods.

Ms. Clarke: Here are the facts: The Government of Yukon sold lots saying that they would front onto a landscaped, green walking path. The builders, the realtors, and the eventual buyers all operated under the assumption that this was the case. Dozens of Whistle Bend residents spent hundreds of thousands of dollars expecting this to be the case. Then the government, without warning, changed those plans after people moved in.

Who did the government consult before making these changes?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is an honour to stand here this afternoon and address the issue the member opposite has brought forward on behalf of her constituents. I do appreciate that this is an issue that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, the Department of Community Services, and the

City of Whitehorse are working to resolve with the residents at the moment.

To be honest, we consulted with the City of Whitehorse and set out the standards through which Community Services built those lots to those standards dictated by the City of Whitehorse. That is the process that this goes through. The city planned the neighbourhood and we built to the specifications laid out to us by the City of Whitehorse. We are now working with the City of Whitehorse, Energy, Mines and Resources, Community Services, and the residents to resolve this dispute between the City of Whitehorse and the people who bought the lots in that neighbourhood.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, this is a big problem for many of my constituents. The Government of Yukon told people that they were buying one thing; then they changed it at the last minute. It wasn't until my constituents started raising concerns that the government went into damage control. Later today, there will be a meeting with some residents to finally tell them what is happening to their homes. The only problem is that these residents were only given a few days' notice of this meeting.

Will the minister agree to hold another consultation with adequate notice so that all of the affected residents can properly participate and have their voices heard?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We are always happy to meet with residents to talk to them about their concerns. We are happy to seek to address them. Look, this is a little strange, because we did get letters from some of the constituents, but we didn't get a letter from the member opposite. So please, if you have concerns, I urge the member to write to us to let us know, but we are working on it.

There was a hope for this to be designed a certain way. The city has indicated that it needed to be different. I believe it's for safety reasons. We're happy to sit down and have the conversation. It's a little strange to be hearing that we're not working fast enough and to be asked if we can please give more time for meetings. The answer is sure; of course, we can.

For all those Yukoners who are concerned about this issue, I can say to you that we are working with the city, Community Services, and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources to work with you to try to resolve it.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Mr. Silver: Pursuant to Standing Order 55(2), I request the unanimous consent of the House to move second reading of Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, at this time.

Unanimous consent re moving second reading of Bill No. 206

Speaker: The Hon. Premier has, pursuant to Standing Order 55(2), requested the unanimous consent of the House to move second reading of Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, at this time.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 206: *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 206, standing in the name of the Hon. Premier.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am very pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill No. 206, otherwise known as the first supplementary estimates for the 2022-23 fiscal year.

Before I begin, however, I would like to again express my sympathies to all members of the royal family on the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. As elected officials, serving the public is at the root of everything we do inside and outside of this House. While we do this to the best of our abilities during the terms that we are given, Queen Elizabeth II served the public with poise and grace for seven decades. Her leadership, dedication, and commitment to public service will leave a lasting legacy. I believe I speak for all members of this House when I express the deep respect she commanded from all territorial governments — both current and previous. Her Majesty will continue to be honoured and remembered for decades to come. It has been an honour to serve in her name, and we will continue to serve in the name of King Charles III, going forward.

As we all know, supplementary estimates are about responding to unanticipated areas of needs and pressures. They are used to make sure government has appropriate funds to cover evolving emergencies and emerging challenges. Supplementary estimates ultimately support Yukoners. In the last several years, this has meant using supplementary estimates to ensure that programs were in place to support Yukoners throughout the pandemic, for example. We did this through a range of business supports, wage top-ups, and paid sick leave programs that became the gold standard in Canada.

We also know that both fires and floods have been especially challenging in the last few years, as the realities of climate change continue to impact our territory.

Supplementary estimates have also helped to ensure that funding was available to deal with record-level flooding and increasingly challenging forest fires. Last year, Yukon saw some of the worst flooding on record. Last fall's supplementary estimates supported the largest flood relief effort in the history of Yukon, allowing us to bring in response teams, flood specialists, supplies, and equipment from out-of-territory to assist property owners with mitigation efforts.

This year, we have continued to see the impacts of climate change and once again have had to work together with our partners to protect the health, safety, and properties of

Yukoners. The 2022-23 *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* is being used primarily to help cover the costs associated with the unprecedented fire season that we experienced this summer. We also experienced serious flooding events in some communities this summer as well.

We work closely with our partners to respond to these events, and the costs of the successful efforts will also be reflected in this bill.

One thing members will notice in these supplementary estimates, however, is that they are particularly lean. The reason for this is that our government, led by the Department of Finance, continues to improve its budgetary and forecasting abilities year after year, so much so that our government has been recognized by the not-for-profit research institute, C.D. Howe Institute, for its budgeting abilities. In fact, in its 2022 report, *The Right to Know: Grading the Fiscal Transparency of Canada's Senior Governments, 2022*, the Yukon received an A-minus grade in recognition of how easy it is to find our budgets and forecasts, the fact that they can be understood easily by non-experts, and for the reliability of our government's budgets, estimates, and financial statements. This is the highest ranking that the Yukon has ever received. Out of all the provinces and territories this year, only one — only Alberta — has a higher grade in this most recent report. This is a testament to our government's commitment to openness and transparency when it comes to our government finances.

I am also pleased to say that S&P Global Ratings recognized the Yukon's strong financial position with a double-A stable credit rating for this year. In its report, S&P highlighted the Yukon's strong fiscal management in producing solid, stable financial results for the territory. The S&P's independent assessment also shows that the Yukon's strong relationship with the federal government will allow the Yukon government to continue its robust capital plan to invest in the territory's transportation infrastructure, land development, social development, education, and health. S&P expects the territory's debt burden to remain very low, especially in comparison with other jurisdictions. Our government remains committed to sound fiscal management for the benefit of all Yukoners, and this rating assessment is another reflection of the territory's strong fiscal position.

It is important to emphasize that these supplementary estimates reflect only what's needed. Overwhelmingly, they represent higher costs being experienced for delivering existing programs, rather than new initiatives or projects.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to outline the budgetary changes that we are proposing between the main estimates and the supplementary estimates. In total, the 2022-23 first supplementary estimates contain \$26.2 million in additional gross spending. This is made up entirely of O&M expenditures, as there is no new net capital spending. The result is a revised surplus of \$33 million, which is a change of \$6.5 million from the \$39.5 million forecast in the 2022-23 main estimates.

The first supplementary estimates also show a revised net debt of \$240 million, or an increase of \$6.5 million from the

mains, which coincides with the increased O&M spending and revenues. While these supplementary estimates show little change in the government's recoveries picture, it does show a notable increase in revenues of just over \$18 million. I'm pleased to say that this appropriation also contains no drawdowns or changes to the COVID-19 contingency fund.

The 2022-23 main estimates, as you recall, Mr. Speaker, included a \$10-million COVID-19 contingency, which was reserved in the government's financial framework to fund further potential supports, without affecting the surplus or the deficit position. As I said, the first supplementary estimates on the floor of the Legislative Assembly today propose no reduction to this fund.

What that means is twofold: First, this shows that our government has appropriately budgeted for COVID-19 spending in its main estimates; second, it shows that the Yukon continues to navigate and emerge from the most acute phase of the pandemic, as we proceed to decrease the amount of spending needed to keep Yukoners safe, secure, and healthy when it comes to the terms of COVID-19.

As a result, we're able to keep \$10 million of the COVID contingency line for future use to respond to any new pandemic needs or potential future waves throughout the year, which we certainly hope to avoid.

As I mentioned, the entirety of the new spending contained in the 2022-23 first supplementary estimates is in operation and maintenance spending, a total of \$26.2 million. The bulk of the spending is the Department of Community Services. As part of this bill, the department is seeking \$20.2 million to address ongoing emergency needs that we've seen in response to climate change. \$16 million of this new spending is required for wildland fire costs associated with a more active fire season seen in the territory. \$3.8 million is required for flood-related expenses, particularly in response to efforts needed in Teslin, in Carmacks, Ross River, and also Upper Liard. This includes costs associated with cleanup efforts happening this fall.

I would like to thank everyone who has assisted, and who continues to assist, in this extremely important work for Yukoners; from participating to mitigation to cleanup, this work is critical to ensuring that our communities and their residents continue to be protected from ongoing risks and challenges of climate change, including increased flooding and more challenging fire activity.

While we are not able to predict how climate change and other factors will affect the Yukon in any given season, we are now seeing extreme weather events that challenge what we have come to expect and know when it comes to floods and fires, specifically in the Yukon. These types of events will become increasingly common as we continue to see the effects of climate change first-hand here in the Yukon.

Our government declared a climate emergency in 2019, and in 2020, we released *Our Clean Future* — a 10-year, territory-wide strategy for climate change, energy, and a green economy. The priorities and goals outlined in *Our Clean Future* were developed in collaboration with Yukon First Nations, transboundary indigenous groups, and Yukon municipalities. The strategy reflects input from Yukoners, non-governmental

and community organizations, industry and private businesses, First Nations, and municipal governments. It is truly the Yukon's strategy for tackling climate change, and it is helping to move our territory forward as we navigate the complexities and the real-world impacts of climate change. At all levels of government, we must plan for extreme weather events by creating communities resilient to wildfire and climate change and by investing in infrastructure that protects us from climate disasters.

This means increasingly managing forest fuels and creating wildfire-resilient communities through FireSmart areas and fuel breaks. This is why we are also including \$400,000 to enhance First Nation FireSmart projects with projects that have already been identified. In flood-prone communities, it will be important to consider infrastructure improvements, permanent dikes and breakwaters, and raising roads and highways to an adequate height to protect them against rising waters.

As we think about the future, we must take into account the changes of our climate landscape and environment, as we plan for our communities and our infrastructure. While our environmental landscape continues to change, so too does our economic landscape. Inflation has risen sharply in the last year throughout Canada and around the world, largely due to supply-chain disruptions associated with the pandemic and also Russia's unjust and illegal war in Ukraine, which has pushed up the prices of food and energy. As a result, the national inflation rate is near levels that have not been seen in 40 years.

While prices have risen across the country, the Yukon has not been immune to the forces driving up prices globally. Inflation in the Yukon is the result of a number of national and international forces, but our government remains focused on making life more affordable for Yukoners, and we've been doing that for the past six years.

This includes the \$150 inflation relief rebate that we announced in March and which is reflected in the first supplementary estimates under the Yukon Development Corporation's budget. This rebate was delivered as a monthly credit of \$50, applied to the electricity bills of all non-government residents and commercial customers for three consecutive months over the summer. This was on top of the existing interim electrical rebate, which saves Yukoners more than \$270 per year.

This is only one of the investments the government has made to improve affordability in the territory. As part of budget 2022-23, the government made several investments to help reduce the impacts of rising prices that are having an effect on family budgets.

This year, we built on historic investments in Yukon families by contributing more than \$40 million to early learning and childcare. This program offsets the cost of childcare by up to \$700 per month per child. It also ensures that fully qualified early childhood educators in the Yukon receive over \$30 per hour, the highest minimum wage for early childhood educators in the country. This is groundbreaking programming, and it has made the territory — and I quote: "Canada's new leader in early learning and care", according to the Atkinson Centre for

Society and Child Development at the University of Toronto. By investing in early learning and childcare, we are making life more affordable for Yukon families and ensuring that our children have the supports that they need to be successful. The universal affordable childcare program has significantly reduced the cost of living in the territory and helped close the gap between the living wage and the minimum wage.

We also continue to invest aggressively in housing and lot development. Over the past five years, housing construction has kept pace with population growth, with the number of private dwellings in the Yukon increasing by 12.9 percent. In fact, residential investment has reached record highs in the Yukon, with \$254 million in residential construction in 2021, shattering the 2020 record of nearly \$188 million.

This year's budget includes more than \$60 million for housing initiatives across the Yukon. We are also investing \$255 million in capital over the next five years to support access to stable, affordable housing that will allow for future development.

There are historic investments throughout the housing spectrum, from land development and affordable housing construction to barrier-free housing and supports — supportive, accessible housing for seniors and people with disabilities. Our government continues to make affordable and supportive housing available for Yukon families through our partnerships with the private sector. We are also working together with municipalities to make more residential lots available throughout the territory.

While I am on the subject of housing, I should add that we are happy to see the \$15-million contribution from the federal government for housing initiatives. This is also reflected in these estimates. This is a recognition both of our unique northern housing challenges and also the significant efforts that we are already making. I will speak more about this later on.

Our government also remains committed to making dental treatment available to all Yukoners. We know that dental care can be expensive and we are working to reduce the barriers to access it. In the 2022-23 budget, more than \$1.8 million will allow us to begin providing dental coverage to uninsured Yukoners. This groundbreaking work aims to save Yukoners hundreds of dollars a year by providing access to routine dental care in the territory.

Finally, Yukoners are also benefitting from the extension of the federal GST tax credit and the housing benefit top-up. As a result of the recent federal announcement, Yukoners can expect more than \$4 million in relief, as they benefit from these program extensions.

Mr. Speaker, we are well aware of the impacts that rising costs are having on Yukoners and on all Canadians. This is why our government is continuing to take action to make lives more affordable for Yukoners. Our government recently announced a number of new initiatives aimed at providing additional inflation relief for Yukoners. The largest of these is an expansion of the inflation relief rebate. This program will provide an additional \$150 rebate on ATCO Electric Yukon and Yukon Energy electric bills for Yukoners. All non-government residential and commercial electricity customers

will see a \$50 credit on their bills starting in October, and this will run through December of 2022. Again, this is an extension of those months from the summer as well.

This will ensure that Yukoners are able to save additional money on their electricity bills throughout the colder months of the year. For Yukoners who heat their homes with wood, our government is also here to help. We will provide a rebate of \$50 per cord of wood to Yukoners who purchase fuel wood from Yukon commercial fuel-wood suppliers.

Our government also recognizes budget pressures that are facing our seniors and our most vulnerable population. This is why we are announcing a one-time \$150 payment to social assistance recipients, as well as a one-time payment of \$150 to Yukon seniors income supplement recipients. We are also including a one-time 10-percent increase to pioneer utility grant recipients and a six-month extension of the \$500 per month to caregivers of children in and out of home care.

The Yukon government is also providing \$100,000 to Food Network Yukon to continue to support food security across the territory. These efforts will provide new relief for Yukoners, especially those most vulnerable to inflation, as we continue to look at every possible avenue for making life in the territory more affordable.

With respect to other changes in O&M, we will see a \$1.6-million increase in the Executive Council Office, primarily related to initiatives that help support reconciliation and continue to strengthen relationships with Yukon First Nations. We are working with First Nations to address the harms caused by a long history of inequality and discrimination and to achieve meaningful change and tangible benefits for all Yukoners through a range of environmental, economic, and social projects. This funding for the Executive Council Office is primarily to support consultation and engagement, bilateral negotiations, and implementation of final self-government agreements.

Lastly, there is an increase of \$1.4 million in the Department of Economic Development's budget to carry forward the labour market development agreement and the workforce development agreement, as well as increasing the performing musicians fund. The labour market development agreement continues to benefit Yukon workers through skills development, apprenticeship training and on-the-job experience, workplace accommodations, employment services for job seekers, and a whole lot more.

Every Yukoner deserves a fair and equal chance at success in the workplace. Through investments like the labour market development agreement, we continue to help Yukoners find opportunities that match their skills with the available opportunities, of which there are currently many in the Yukon.

The latter supports the growth and development of Yukon musicians by increasing the number of established musicians who earn most of their income from music. The result of these changes is a \$1.5-million increase to O&M recoveries.

I know my colleagues will have more to say about these important initiatives in the days and weeks to come.

I'm going to move to capital, and I'm pleased to say that, on a net basis, there are no changes in capital spending. On a

more granular level, there is a \$5-million roll forward of costs and recoveries related to the Mayo-to-McQuesten transmission line, as the project was delayed in 2021-22 and required additional expenditures in 2022-23. This is offset by a \$5-million reduction in Arctic energy fund expenditures, as funding is deferred to future years.

These are only changes in capital, and there are no associated changes in capital recoveries as a result. On the revenue side, the Government of Yukon will see a substantial increase as part of the first supplementary estimates. In total, the government will see an additional \$18.2 million, related to three different areas.

The first and most substantial item is the \$15-million payment being received as part of the federal affordable housing in the north program, which I mentioned earlier. As we are all aware, Canada's northern communities face unique housing needs due to higher construction costs, shorter construction seasons, infrastructure gaps, and the effects of climate change, which are increasing as the north has been warming at roughly three times the global warming rate.

In recognition of these challenges, the federal government is continuing to work with the territorial government in addressing housing availability and quality that disproportionately affects northerners, basically. In federal budget 2022, the Government of Canada committed to providing \$30 million to the Government of Yukon to assist with these challenges. Half of that amount is being reflected in this year's budget, and we'll be receiving another \$15 million next year.

The second item is a \$2-million increase in the Canada health transfer to the territory. This money is being received to address a backlog of surgeries as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, \$1 million is being received from land sale agreements.

Mr. Speaker, today, we are also releasing the interim fiscal and economic update. The 2022-23 interim fiscal and economic update presents updated expectations for Yukon's finances and the economy since the March 2022 fiscal and economic outlook. The outlook for the Yukon's economy continues to evolve in line with the report that we presented in March, which details the red-hot, strong economy that we are currently seeing in the territory. Estimates of real gross domestic product — GDP — show that the territory's economy has continued to perform well in the face of recent challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Preliminary estimates show that the Yukon's real GDP grew 9.1 percent in 2021, building on an estimated expansion of 5.2 percent in 2020 and marking the second year in a row that the Yukon has led the country in growth.

Strong mineral production was a primary driver of growth in both years, but unlike 2020, growth in 2021 was broad-based, with gains reported in 17 of 20 major industry classifications — 17 of 20 private sector industry classifications. The recovery has continued into 2022 with strong rebounds and performances in key Yukon industries, like tourism and mining. The current forecast is for growth of

4.8 percent in 2022, to be followed by similar levels of growth in 2023 and 2024 at 4.9 percent and 5.4 percent respectively.

Growth in real GDP is noted in every year of the forecast. The latest report also shows that Yukon's strong economy is increasing growth and competition in the labour market. The Yukon's unemployment rate averaged 3.9 percent over the first eight months of 2022, well below the average of 6.2 percent reported for the same period in 2021. As a result, the Yukon again has the lowest unemployment rate in the country, with the August figures coming in at a record low of 1.7 percent — the lowest unemployment figure in memory. This tight labour market also means that Yukon businesses must compete for workers, which has led to high average wages across the territory at \$26.85 per hour, the third highest in the country and well above the national average of \$24.20.

While we continue to face new hurdles related to the current national and global environment, Yukon is very well-positioned to weather these challenges. Our government's dedicated leadership has helped foster the strongest economy in Canada. The Yukon is currently leading the country in both population and economic growth. This brings with it opportunities but also challenges. In particular, we need to continue to work with our partners to increase housing options, to improve our health care system, and to expand access to mental health supports throughout the territory. Nevertheless, the territory is a much stronger place than when we formed government in 2016, and it continues to move in the right direction: forward.

We will continue to do what is necessary and needed to ensure that the Yukon remains a safe, healthy, and affordable place to call home. I am pleased to present sustainable and measured first supplementary estimates, which members see before them today. I look forward to sharing my future details that members of this House may have about the supplementary estimates during Committee of the Whole.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your attention and time today.

Motion to adjourn debate

Mr. Dixon: I move that debate be now adjourned.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition that debate be now adjourned.

Motion to adjourn debate on second reading of Bill No. 206 agreed to

Mr. Dixon: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition that the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 2:38 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled October 6, 2022:

35-1-55

Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees (October 6, 2022) (Speaker Harper)

35-1-56

Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Legislative Assembly of Yukon — Yukon Housing — Yukon Housing Corporation — Department of Health and Social Services (May 25, 2022) (Speaker Harper)

35-1-57

Third Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (September 2022) (Dixon)

35-1-58

Fifth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees (August 22, 2022) (Clarke, N.)

The following legislative returns were tabled October 6, 2022:

35-1-60

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Tredger related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 204, First Appropriation Act 2022-23 — climate risk assessments (Clarke, N.)

35-1-61

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 204, First Appropriation Act 2022-23 — transportation tenders (Clarke, N.)

35-1-62

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Tredger related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 204, First Appropriation Act 2022-23 — Medevac airstrips (Clarke, N.)

The following documents were filed October 6, 2022:

35-1-68

Inflation — Ministerial Statement — Premier Silver — October 6, 2022 (Silver)

35-1-69

Firearms legislation — Bill C-21, letter re (dated June 8, 2022) from Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge, to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Justice (Cathers)