



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 224

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, March 6, 2025 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2025 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, March 6, 2025 — 1:00 p.m.**

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: I would like to begin the 2025 Spring Sitting of the Legislative Assembly by respectfully acknowledging all Yukon First Nations, also that we are meeting on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper because they are now outdated: Motion No. 889, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin; Motion No. 1070, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge; Motions No. 593, 968, and 976, standing in the name of the Member for Riverdale North; Motion No. 1063, standing in the name of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin; Motion No. 467, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane; Motion No. 1069, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt South; Motions No. 580, 647, and 716, standing in the name of the Member for Mountainview; Motions No. 777, 830, 961, and 1016, standing in the name of the Member for Riverdale South; Motions No. 322, 583, 863, and 954, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse West; Motions No. 524, 714, 800, 831, 964, 991, 999, and 1007, standing in the name of the Premier; Motion No. 986, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike; and Motions No. 881 and 1022, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper, as the actions requested in the motions have been completed in whole or in part: Motion No. 76, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre, and Motion No. 917, standing in the name of the Member for Mountainview.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper at the request of the Member for Copperbelt South: Motions No. 119 and 1078.

Motion No. 1146, of which the Member for Riverdale North gave notice on November 21, 2024, and Motion No. 1154, by the Member for Porter Creek North, were not placed on the Notice Paper, as they are outdated.

The following two motions were not placed on today's Notice Paper, as they are not in order: the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes' Motion No. 1143 and the Member for Whitehorse West's Motion No. 1151.

INTRODUCTION OF PAGES

Speaker: It gives me great pleasure to introduce the legislative pages who will be serving the House during the 2025 Spring Sitting, and they are: Aaima Hafeez and Sophia Morales from Porter Creek Secondary School; Jack Benedet and Caleb Nirza from St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Secondary School; and Lyka Dangiwan, Tara Shaw, Yumi Traynor, and Mariella Wentzell from F.H. Collins Secondary School.

Today, we have with us Aaima Hafeez and Lyka Dangiwan. I would ask members to welcome them to the House at this time.

Applause

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Under Introduction of Visitors, the Chair would like to introduce visitors.

Visitors introduced

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Visitors introduced

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the 2026 Arctic Winter Games

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an exciting milestone. In one year and two days, the Yukon will welcome the circumpolar north for the 2026 Arctic Winter Games.

The Arctic Winter Games are the north's largest multi-sport competition, taking place over one week. The games will involve more than 2,000 athletes, coaches, and mission staff.

These games are about more than just sport, Mr. Speaker; they are a celebration of culture and community that will strengthen bonds across the north and inspire a shared sense of pride and probably create some of our next leaders. During the next 365 days, more than 300 of our territory's athletes will be honing their skills so that they can perform at elite levels in front of a raucous home crowd. I wish them the best in their preparation and applaud the coaches for their dedication to our Yukon athletes as they ready themselves for the height of their sporting career.

Mr. Speaker, one year might seem like a lot of time, but to the host society, they must feel like they're in the final quarter, period, or lap. They have already put a tremendous amount of work into these games, and I salute them all for their passion for these games and for the Yukon. Hosting a party for 2,000 friends is never easy, but we thank them for all that they are doing. I cannot wait to see their vision of the games.

Hosting the Arctic Winter Games doesn't solely fall upon the host society or the funders, however; it is a true community effort. We can't all be athletes, coaches, or mission staff, but we can all be volunteers. Being a volunteer means being an integral part of the games and showing our northern neighbours

the very best in Yukon hospitality. Thank you to everyone who makes the commitment to get involved.

Mr. Speaker, the games are getting closer. It is time to start crossing off the days on the calendar leading up to March 8, 2026, and it is time for us all to get excited about sharing our Yukon with our friends. These games will be unforgettable.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize all of those involved in the planning and organization of the 2026 Arctic Winter Games, which will be held in Whitehorse from March 8 to 15 next year. Work is underway to cultivate an incredible experience for thousands of participants. The games will take over the city during the event, with visitors from across the circumpolar north. The impact of the games extends beyond just sport and the participants; it spreads throughout the whole community — volunteers, businesses, and spectators alike.

The experience of the games contributes to personal, organizational, and cultural growth and helps to build community partnerships and relationships that wouldn't otherwise be possible. For the athletes and all who are involved in the games, they are about to make memories that will last a lifetime.

I wanted to recognize Megan Comarty, who is here today and who has taken on the role as general manager of the 2026 host society. Megan's dedication to sport and enthusiasm are well known in the community and are so important to these games. That dedication and enthusiasm are reflected throughout the incredible team and have been throughout all stages of planning.

I would like to take a moment to recognize and thank all of those who took part in the planning of the 2020 Arctic Winter Games, many of whom are with us today.

Of course, like many other Yukoners, we were disappointed that those games were cancelled right at the onset of the pandemic, and it's great to hear that many of those individuals will be helping out with the 2026 games.

We have a great opportunity to highlight Whitehorse and the Yukon and to make this a memorable event for all. It also provides Yukon youth a chance to display their talents here at home in front of a home crowd.

I know that hundreds of our athletes are looking forward to the special opportunity to compete in front of hometown crowds and maybe even bring home an Arctic Winter Games ulu.

Thank you to all those involved in planning and community engagement, and best of luck to you as we rally the community behind Team Yukon in 2026.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, today the Yukon NDP celebrates all of those hard-working individuals behind the scenes of next year's Arctic Winter Games, and they are easy to see today because they are wearing their blue-and-black-checked shirts. More than just a sporting event, the games are a celebration of culture, community, and personal growth. I know how the games impacted me all those years ago, so I am

excited for the next batch of northern athletes who will get to experience the 2026 games right here in Whitehorse.

In order to host an event of this calibre and size, all hands are needed. Sport bodies and the host committee are lining up volunteers as we speak. Just to be clear, there is a role for everyone. So, don't be shy, and sign up to volunteer today. It's really easy to do.

I laughed out loud last year when I was asked by cross-country skiing to emcee next year's events, so it just goes to show that it's never too early to volunteer or to be recruited to volunteer. You just have to say yes.

I look forward to watching Yukon's hospitality and ingenuity shine in 2026, and I encourage everyone to put your hand up so you can play a role in the fun as well.

Applause

In recognition of the 2024 Yukon Heritage Awards recipients

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the recipients of the 2024 Yukon Heritage Awards. The ceremony took place last month at the Yukon Archives. It is one of my favourite events of the year.

Each year, the Yukon Historical and Museums Association recognizes individuals and organizations for significant contributions to the conservation and celebration of the Yukon's heritage — our stories.

This year's History Maker honourees were Benjamin Charlie and Sally Robinson. At 84 years young, Ben Chuck is a beloved voice of the Gwich'in, hosting shows live on CHON for over 30 years. As a fiddler, Ben performed across the north and mentored younger Gwich'in musicians, helping Old Crow to be inaugurated into the Canadian Fiddle Hall of Honour last year.

After 20 years working for museums in Dawson and around the territory, Sally Robinson is the second History Maker Award winner. She joined Yukon Historic Sites as an interpretive planner. Sally has done research, interpretation, and heritage planning. She is a past president of the Yukon Historical and Museums Association and has been a member of the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon board. Recently, Sally launched "Yukon who is who", a database with over 3,500 entries to hold our stories of the people of the Yukon.

The Helen Couch Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Sylvia Burkhard — who I think is listening in today — for her work with the Dawson City Museum and her passion for the Klondike region's history. For 15 years, she has shown exceptional dedication as a board member, a contributor to the museum's collections committee, volunteered countless hours for every museum event and program, and is a keeper of institutional and community memory. She gets stuff done.

The award for Innovation, Education, and Community Engagement went to Société d'histoire francophone du Yukon for their new podcast series *Récits de vies de nos aînés franco-yukonnais* — stories of the lives of our Franco-Yukon seniors. Highlighting the francophone perspective of Yukon and Canadian history, the series brought together French-speaking

seniors for first-person oral histories with a focus on the post-war period, 1950 until the creation of the Association franco-yukonnaise in 1982.

Fait notable, la série de balados est en nominaHon pour le Prix d'histoire du Gouverneur général pour l'excellence des programmes communautaires deux mille vingt-quatre. *Récits de vies de nos aînés franco-yukonnais* was also notably shortlisted for the 2024 Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Community Programming.

The work accomplished by the award recipients and the legacy that they have cemented cannot be overstated, and we thank each of them.

I would also like to thank the board and staff of the Yukon Historical and Museums Association, who continue to provide leadership in heritage programming and collaborative opportunities for Yukon museums and the cultural sector.

I ask colleagues to join me in recognizing this year's Yukon Heritage Awards recipients for their contributions to historical preservation, their commitment to cultural revitalization, and their efforts to inspire future generations.

Mahsi' cho. Congratulations. Félicitations.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the 2024 Heritage Awards recipients. The Yukon Historical and Museums Association, or YHMA, celebrates individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to preserving and promoting Yukon culture and history.

Sally Robinson was honoured with a History Maker Award for her work to preserve Indigenous languages and traditions. Sally's work in the heritage sector began in the 1970s. She is a researcher, a curator, and an exhibit designer and producer. Her time with the YHMA and the Yukon museums has made an important part of our cultural preservation real. She has assisted with many projects with her expertise and knowledge throughout the Yukon — well-deserved.

Benjamin Charlie, fondly known as Ben Chuck was presented with a History Maker Award for his dedication to the preservation of history. We are most aware of Ben as a radio personality at CHON-FM for over 40 years. Speaking his language, he shares the oral stories of his people and creates a bridge for all Gwich'in across the north. He is not only defined by radio, but he was a star Old Crow ski athlete in the 1960s, and to top it all, he's a loved fiddle player, making those around him jig and dance — a wonderful choice.

Sylvia Burkhard received the Helen Couch Volunteer of the Year Award for the hours, time, and dedication that Sylvia has given to the Dawson City Museum and to the preservation of Klondike heritage. It cannot be measured. Sylvia's passion cannot be captured in just a few sentences. Her lifelong love of the history of Yukon and especially Dawson City has led to this award. I had the pleasure of touring the new displays at the Dawson museum with Sylvia, and it was wonderful to walk down memory lane with her. Working in the tourism industry — her Claim 33 — for many years and being involved in all the workings of the museum have made her the perfect choice

for this win — marvellous. Société d'histoire francophone du Yukon — Innovation, Education, and Community Engagement Award — recently launched a podcast series, *Récits de vies de nos aînés franco-yukonnais*, or stories of the lives of our Franco-Yukon seniors.

Just as the title says, the series highlights stories of 11 Yukon francophone seniors, illustrating the richness of the francophone perspective and involvement in Yukon and Canadian history. This important avenue will educate the public about the Yukon francophone in an accessible, modern, and dynamic way.

Congratulations to all of the 2024 award winners — well-deserved, a wonderful choice, marvellous and awesome work. Thank you for all you do for Yukon.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Yukon's Heritage Awards. Each year, the Yukon Historical and Museums Association presents a select group of Yukoners for their exceptional contributions to preserving Yukon heritage. This year, we have two History Maker awards for outstanding contributions to Yukon heritage: Benjamin Charlie, commonly known as Ben Chuck, who is a citizen of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, and Sally Robinson. Both have been recognized for decades of work here in the Yukon. Ben Chuck has been a part of CHON-FM for over 30 years, hosting music shows and the Gwich'in language show.

Sally Robinson has been working Yukon museums and in the heritage sector since the 1970s.

Sylvia Burkhard has won the Helen Couch Volunteer of the Year Award for her passionate advocacy for the Dawson City Museum over the last 15 years and her work on the City of Dawson's Heritage Advisory Committee.

Finally, we have the Société d'histoire francophone du Yukon, recognized under the Innovation, Education, and Community Engagement Award, for their podcast series recording first-person oral histories from Yukon francophone elders.

These awards highlight the incredible efforts of individuals and organizations in preserving and promoting Yukon's rich heritage. Their dedication ensures that the stories, traditions, and history of the Yukon continue to be celebrated and remembered for generations to come.

Congratulations to Ben Chuck, Sally, Sylvia, and the Société d'histoire francophone du Yukon.

Mahsi' cho.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under Tabling Returns and Documents, the Chair has for tabling the *Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sittings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees*, dated March 6, 2025.

This report is tabled pursuant to the direction of the Members' Services Board.

In addition, the Chair has for tabling a letter from the Clerk regarding the assent to Bill No. 40, *Act to amend the Clean Energy Act (2024)*.

Finally, the Chair has for tabling, pursuant to section 35 of the *Yukon Act*, a report of the Auditor General of Canada on procurement and contracting in the Government of Yukon.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today a letter from the Yukon Legislative Assembly's House Officers — that is, the Yukon Ombudsman, the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate, and Elections Yukon — entitled “Ensuring the independence of Legislative Officers’ budgeting process”.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 216: *Third Appropriation Act 2024-25*

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 216, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2024-25*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 216, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2024-25*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 216 agreed to

Bill No. 217: *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 217 agreed to

Bill No. 218: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26*

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 218, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 218, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 218 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?
Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Yukon physicians, and the Department of Health and Social Services in their collaborative efforts to continue to explore initiatives like the joint blitz surgical proposal and to advance initiatives that will help to reduce wait times and improve outcomes for Yukoners.

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

THAT this House congratulates Rob Lantz for being sworn in as the new Premier of Prince Edward Island and thanks Dennis King for his work and dedication during his time as Premier.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House congratulates Premier Doug Ford on his government's re-election in the Ontario provincial election.

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

THAT this House congratulates the 2024 AME Award recipients, including:

(1) “Spud” Huestis Award winner Scott Berdahl of Snowline Gold Corp;

(2) David Barr Award winner Archer, Cathro & Associates (1981) Limited; and

(3) AME Special Tribute Award winner Maurice Colpron of the Yukon Geological Survey.

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

THAT this House congratulates Yukon University for signing a new articulation agreement with Acadia University allowing students graduating with a diploma from Yukon University's earth sciences program to apply to enter directly into third year of geology or environmental geoscience at Acadia.

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

THAT this House:

(1) acknowledges the recent White House incident between President Trump and President Zelenskyy, a moment that has shaken international relations and Ukraine's lifeline of support;

(2) notes with grave concern the US suspension of military aid, including artillery, armoured vehicles, Patriot systems, and the alarming cessation of intelligence-sharing, both vital to Ukraine's defence;

(3) recognizes the dire risks, namely the weakened air defences, looming supply shortages by mid-2025, and the heightened vulnerability of Ukrainian cities to Russian strikes;

(4) identifies Russia as an aggressor violating international law with the 2014 seizure of Crimea, support of pro-Russian

militants in the Donbas region, and the 2022 invasion driven by Putin's broken promises;

(5) condemns Russia's aggression and duplicity, reaffirming our steadfast support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity;

(6) honours the resilience of Ukrainian Canadians and the Ukrainian people amid a humanitarian crisis marked by immense sacrifice; and

(6) commends President Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian Parliament, and the Ukrainian people for their unwavering pursuit of peace and democracy in the face of adversity and external pressures; and

THAT this Legislature stands in resolute solidarity with Ukraine and Ukrainian Canadians, pledging unwavering support for their fight for freedom against tyranny.

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

THAT this House supports the Government of Yukon's response to the unjustified and short-sighted 25-percent tariffs imposed on Canadian goods by the Trump administration, including:

(1) directing the Yukon Liquor Corporation to stop placing orders of US-made alcohol and to remove US-made products from all Government of Yukon liquor stores;

(2) directing the Department of Highways and Public Works to update territorial government procurement policies and encourage the purchase of more goods and services from local businesses and non-US companies and minimize the purchase of US goods and services;

(3) developing an assistance program complementary to the federal support program to help Yukon businesses adapt to the uncertain economic environment created by these tariffs;

(4) supporting the development of Buy Local campaigns organized by local chambers of commerce; and

(5) working with Yukon chambers of commerce and provincial and territorial partners to reduce barriers to internal and international trade and promote access to non-US markets.

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

THAT this House congratulates Joe Hanson on being signed by Ireland's Treaty United F.C., becoming the very first Yukoner to play professional soccer.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to postpone all permitting of American interests in the Mactung mine.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Government of Canada on a response to American tariffs to prevent the export of Yukon tungsten to the United States of America.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Government of Canada to support the development of a Canadian-owned and -operated low-orbit satellite network that could provide Internet for the three territories.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

American trade tariffs

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, if I could ask the indulgence of the House to share news that has come in since we entered at 1:00 today — just that there has been a report that President Trump exempted goods for both Canada and Mexico and there has been a pause put on tariffs to April 2. I do this because we have all prepared our statements based on the information that we had coming in.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak directly to Yukoners about the US administration's decision to impose 25-percent tariffs on all Canadian goods and to speak directly to Yukoners and to update this House on how our government is responding. These tariffs are unjust, unfair, and frankly un-American.

I know that many Yukoners are wondering what this means for their businesses, for their jobs, for their families, and for our country.

Canada is a nation of polite people who respect the law and look out for our friends and neighbours, but what the US is doing right now is not how you treat your friends and this is not how you treat your neighbours. First, I'll speak to what Canada is doing in response to these tariffs.

As the Prime Minister said earlier this week, and with the support of the premiers, the federal government will be implementing a 25-percent tariff against \$155 billion worth of American goods, starting immediately with tariffs on \$30 billion worth of goods. They will also be challenging the Trump administration's illegal actions through the legal mechanisms available through the World Trade Organization and the USMCA.

Our government was consulted and we support these actions. Here in the Yukon, our government is working directly with federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts to implement our own non-tariff measures. These are designed to demonstrate to the US administration that there are consequences to their attempts to start a trade war. Our government is committed to team Canada.

I will now update the House on what we will be doing here in the Yukon as part of the first phase of our response.

First, we have directed the Yukon Liquor Corporation to stop all new orders of US-made alcohol products and to remove these products from Government of Yukon liquor stores.

Second, we are updating government procurement policies to promote the purchase of goods and services from local and non-US companies. Later today, the Minister of Finance will also speak to new programs and supports that we are making available through the budget 2025-26, all of which, of course, are subject to legislative approval. We're working directly with

local chambers of commerce to support Buy Local campaigns. We are also working with Yukon chambers and provincial and territorial partners to break down barriers to internal and international trade.

We are considering additional options for a second phase of non-retaliatory measures should the US administration not see the error in their ways.

I want to thank all Yukoners who have reached out to share their ideas via e-mail, in person, and on social media. Your support for Canada is so important. The public service is working through your ideas. I don't want to get ahead of the public service, but please know that we are listening to your ideas and looking at what we can do in the short term, medium term, and long term and what we would need to work on with our provincial, territorial, and federal counterparts.

I'll end there for now, but know this: Despite, again, what Donald Trump thinks or wants, Canada will never be the 51st state.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to rise in response to this ministerial statement on the state of relations between our country and the United States.

Like many people of my generation, I have grown up with the United States being our closest neighbour, ally, and friend. Our economies, societies, and cultures are intertwined. There has rarely been an international incident, event, or even war in which we haven't worked and fought alongside each other. So, the shocked response that we have seen from Canadians is entirely understandable. Canadians' response to the current administration's statements about our sovereignty and about the imposition of what is clearly a trade war has been that of betrayal, insult, and anger. All of those feelings are well-justified.

At the federal level, we support the retaliatory tariff measures announced by the federal government, and I am pleased to hear from the Premier that the federal government has worked closely with all provinces and territories on that response. In addition to that response, there has been a range of non-tariff retaliatory measures proposed by provincial and territorial governments. There have been too many individual measures to comment on all of them, but my general view is this: The best way to describe the US administration's actions and approach is, to put it simply, chaotic. They seem to change from one day to the next, and there seems to be a profound absence of coherence or rationality to them.

In the face of that chaos, we need our leaders — our political leaders — to offer the opposite. We need to remain cool, calm, and collected in the face of this chaos. Our political leaders need to meet that irrationality with rationality. We also need to recognize that these measures will create significant economic pain for both American and Canadian families alike. We need to remember that this is not the American people who have taken these actions against us; it is an increasingly unstable and unpredictable American federal government.

I start to get concerned when I hear proposals like forbidding Alaskan children from participating in the Arctic Winter Games or cancelling parts of the bike relay or road relay

or fining American tourists who want to visit the Yukon — measures that, while symbolic or performative, will do very little to influence political decision-makers and will do a lot to hurt Yukoners or Yukon communities.

I have no doubt that whatever the situation is today, it will change tomorrow or next week. Perhaps it has already changed today. The nature of this US administration has been consistent only in its inconsistency. In the face of that, we need our political leaders here to remain calm and to focus on what we can control and to ensure that we take a long-term view of what we want the American-Canadian relationship to be. We need to chart a path that looks beyond these current troubles to a future where our two countries can work to repair what has been damaged and to ensure that our abiding friendship can persist.

I'll close with a quote from a former Prime Minister: "Canada is, and always has been, our country. And we want Canada to be a True North that is as strong and as free as it can be in every way that matters: the best country in the world. That's why we're here, that's why we strive, that's why we serve."

So, Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for the opportunity to speak on this matter and look forward to tending to the business that Yukoners elected us to address over the course of the rest of this Sitting and of this Legislature.

I would close as well, Mr. Speaker, by noting the Premier's comments about the change in approach from the federal government and I would ask if he could use his response to indicate whether or not any of the non-tariff retaliatory measures that he has announced will be removed as a result of the announcement made today.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the world has watched events unfold in the United States since the last election with a mixture of disbelief and fear. The past several weeks have been stressful for Yukoners and Canadians alike as we face unprecedented threats and actions from our long-time allies and friends in the United States.

Hearing Donald Trump repeatedly refer to Canada as the 51st state isn't funny or lighthearted. He has said that, through economic pressure, Canadians would be brought inside. Although it appears that he has waffled again on those tariffs, Canada cannot waiver in our response to his threats.

There are so many things happening in the United States right now that go against everything that I and many other Canadians stand for and believe in. This is a government that is attempting to erase trans people and their identities, that has ended policies protecting 2SLGBTQS+ rights, that is attacking access to abortion care, and that has stated that it has a goal to carry out mass deportations at a never-seen-before scale of one million people per year. We cannot allow this to happen here, so we must stand in our solidarity with Americans who are being harmed by their government's brutal policies.

The horrifying actions of the United States government have united Canadians in a way that we haven't seen in a long time. The team Canada approach has made us all stronger and it's something that the Yukon NDP supports. Buy local, support

Yukon businesses, support Canadian industry and businesses, and boycott America.

The removal of American liquor from our stores is a very visible step in the retaliation to the American tariffs. Taking US booze off Canadian and Yukon shelves is a powerful visual reminder of what we need to do, and that is to act. But we know that this is not the end. We have heard about retaliation for the retaliation and other new measures that the Americans may or may not take. Yukoners won't stand for it; Canadians won't stand for it, and we are united in our opposition to becoming the 51st state. We must look at all available options and tools to show the American government just how we really feel about that threat.

The outfitting industry is one that many Yukoners are talking about targeting. Several outfitting concessions are owned by Americans, including one concession owned by the American president's son. The majority of paying clients to these concessions are American, and Yukoners are asking: Should we be levying a tariff or fees on American clients of outfitters and not just on the cost of the hunting licences but on the actual cost of the hunt?

Yukoners have also asked: What is the Liberal or the Yukon Party position on the future of the Mactung mine? Will they both support the Mactung mine with its stated investment from the United States Department of Defense?

We know that tungsten is a key component in weapons manufacturing and the reason for the US government's involvement in the project. Will they knowingly support the arms industry of a now hostile nation, a nation that supports Putin and therefore the unlawful invasion of the Ukraine? Do they support a US president who has proposed the forced relocation of Palestinians from Gaza so that Americans may have a new vacation destination? Will they allow Yukon minerals to kill civilians? Will they allow these same minerals to be used against Canadians?

The First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun has been clear that they don't support the use of minerals from their lands to be used in weaponry; neither does the Yukon NDP. For us, that is a line that cannot be crossed.

There are many ways that we can express our dissatisfaction with the United States government, and I hope it doesn't get worse, but I want to know that our government will be ready to act if it does. The next days, months, or maybe even years won't be easy, but we'll weather it together.

Mike Myers gave Canada our marching orders last Saturday night when he mouthed the words "elbows up". So, elbows up, Yukon — we got this.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, in the recent days and weeks, we have heard many ideas coming from Yukoners, from the opposition, concerning the Trump administration's tariffs on Canada. I would like to start by first answering the question that was posed by the Official Opposition.

When we conclude our session here today, we will be reaching out to other jurisdictions, identifying how both the federal government is treating the response on retaliatory tariffs and looking to see the actions of other provinces and territories

to have a cohesive response, understanding that this threat has just been pushed off to April 2.

I appreciated many of the words that were shared, truly, from both oppositions. I think that, as we speak to some of the comments made by the Leader of the NDP, I would just like to respond to those questions. I think that it is important, first and foremost, to note that my understanding, as we speak about the project at Mactung, is that it is a Canadian company, actually. There has been a lot of information shared yesterday and today. I urge the member opposite to do a bit of research on that. It's actually not an American company.

What I am aware of is that, under the Biden administration, there was money that was provided to that Canadian company to look at the feasibility of a transmission line, bridge, and roadwork. Really, it is helping a Canadian company that has absolutely no obligation within that grant of dollars to provide any options to the US to do that work. So, as we look at what's happening across North America and as we look at Canada and the resources that we have in critical minerals, I think that it's incredibly important that we support the mining industry and that we support good Canadian companies, like the one that's working in Mactung and doing good work, supporting many people — from my experience there — from Ross River and adjacent areas who are working around that project.

As I have said previously, we want our American friends to show their support for Canada and for visiting Canada. I will make a comment: I have seen some political leaders in this country justify the booing of the US national anthem. I can stand and say that this is not something I support. I think it's incredibly important that we continue to have the support of Americans to put pressure on the presidency. We need to keep buying Yukon products and supporting Yukon businesses and spending our money here.

Many industries across the territory have support from US customers, like tourism and outfitting. I would urge the Leader of the Third Party to sit down with great Yukon companies that support that industry — the ones who fly folks here out to those concessions, the ones who house people, and the restaurants that are here — just to understand what these businesses mean and the fact that we still want to see a strong economy here in the Yukon.

Look, I only have a few seconds left, and I just want to say that we should all be standing together. What I can tell you is that we are Yukoners and we are Canadians. There is not a challenge that we have never stood up to, and I know that we will do that again.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Economic outlook

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, as Yukoners look at the turmoil and chaos that we see in the world today, they are thinking about what it means for them and their families. They are worried about their jobs, they are worried about the cost of living, and they are worried about our economy.

Many Yukoners are looking to the territorial government for security, stability, and certainty. Unfortunately, that is not what we have seen from this government. This government has been characterized by chaos, instability, and a profound lack of focus. Today was their last chance to correct that, and I am afraid that they have squandered it, Mr. Speaker. After four years of this Liberal-NDP coalition government, the economy is weakened and shrinking, and our public finances are in tatters.

Does the Premier accept responsibility for where his government has taken this territory?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, what I would say in response is that I am going to share a couple of figures, and I think it is important to look at the data in front of us and to understand if this seems like an economy that is weakening or a government that is moving in chaos when you see these numbers. This is the economy that is in front of us.

Between 2019 and 2023, our GDP growth was 3.8 percent; that was the second highest in the country. From 2019 to 2023, Yukon's GDP per capita has grown 9.9 percent, making it the highest GDP per capita in the country. Our annual — when we look at unemployment in 2024 — Yukon's average unemployment rate was 4.3 percent. That was the lowest in Canada. From 2018 to 2024, Yukon's unemployment rate ranged from 3.5 percent to 6.1 percent. Our unemployment rates from 2022 to 2024 were 4.1 percent. In 2025, right now, in January, our unemployment rate was 4.5 percent. That is the lowest unemployment rate in the country. When we look at our labour force in 2024, Yukon had the highest employment rate in the entire country.

I am going to go on, as we go through these questions, to show —

Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals came to power almost a decade ago, they inherited a strong position. In 2016, Yukon led the country in economic growth, and the territory had some of the strongest public finances in the country. We had money in the bank, hundreds of millions of dollars in net financial assets.

Today, we find ourselves on the precipice of a trade war and some of the most uncertain and chaotic economic times that any of us have ever seen, and the territorial government has never been weaker. Public finances are a mess, and the economy is in decline.

Does the Premier accept that, after his short time in office, the Yukon is in a far weaker position than when he took over just over two years ago?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, what I will say is that, coming into this job, all of us, about a decade ago — what we saw was an extraordinary gap in investment in infrastructure. We did see that, and that was a commitment we made. We knew that we would have to support all of our communities and build the important infrastructure that was required.

We have had an absolutely incredible economic track record over the last eight years, and today, again, we're seeing the most opportunity for jobs; we're seeing the lowest unemployment in the country; we're seeing our tourism sector,

for instance, bouncing back to pre-pandemic numbers, something that I think many provinces and territories look fondly on.

I look at how we've handled a number of huge challenges, and every time, it has been a calm hand, a mature approach to governance with energy that is required to ensure that we're doing the work that Yukoners want us to do. That is what we will continue to do.

In the preamble for that question, you heard almost a blame toward us for what's happening in the trade war. After speaking points earlier talking about Donald Trump, what we will focus on are the things that we can control. This budget today, you will see, invests in what Yukoners want to see investments in.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, Yukoners deserve a government that is responsible and prudent with their tax dollars. That is far from what they have seen from this government. Since this government took office, government spending and the public service have ballooned at a rate that is truly unsustainable. We have seen borrowing and debt skyrocket alongside it.

The result is what we see here today: unprecedented levels of borrowing, unprecedented levels of debt.

Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are rightfully concerned about where this is all headed. They want to see a change. Does the Premier acknowledge that the reason so many Yukoners want to see change is because his government is taking this territory in the wrong direction?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, first I will note that I believe that the change that the leader of the opposition is talking about is having the individuals who are sitting across from us and who have collectively sat in this House for 103 years come back into power after having the challenges of being voted out in 2016.

What we will do is exactly what we have done each and every year, which is to listen to Yukoners and take on insurmountable challenges that folks would think just can't be solved and solve them. We will do that by listening to Yukoners — all Yukoners — and by making sure that we make the right investments — and today what you will see in our budget. Coming into this role with my colleagues, we could have put a number of things into the budget that may be favourable going into an election, but that's not what Yukoners are going to see today. What Yukoners are going to see is a disciplined budget investing in health care, investing in education, investing in housing and the infrastructure that is required. Some may call this an absolutely boring budget, but it is a disciplined, mature budget, and that's what we do.

Question re: Government of Yukon borrowing

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, just over four months ago, the Minister of Finance said this to this Legislative Assembly — he said that his government was going to — quote: "... very conscientiously avoiding the need for significant long-term borrowing to date, as we have held that Yukoners should not be burdened by long-term costs..." He then went on to say — and I will quote again: "The only borrowing we have undertaken

has been to address the unforeseen and urgent pressures, and they are on a short-term basis.”

I would like to ask the Minister of Finance: Does he stand by his comments from just a few months ago?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon is continuing to grow and it is continuing to evolve, as a dynamic territory does, with its expanding population, its thriving communities, and its increased demand for essential services and for infrastructure. To support this development, the Yukon government is committed to maintaining the fiscal flexibility required to respond to both immediate and long-term needs very, very effectively.

While the territory has historically operated under a robust financial plan that did minimize borrowing, recent challenges such as the urgent environmental responses that we are facing in the mining industry, growing pressures to health care, let alone climate change — these all underscore the importance for adaptability in financial planning.

Now, strategic borrowing plays a key role in addressing these challenges. It not only provides the flexibility to manage fluctuations in cash but also unlocks opportunities for future growth and resilience.

In the fall, the Yukon government provided Yukoners with an update on the need to reassess the territory’s borrowing limits and engage with the federal partners.

Through close collaboration with the federal government, the borrowing limit was increased to \$1.2 billion. This increase provides the necessary capacity to manage cash flows and fluctuations more effectively.

Mr. Hassard: So, it doesn’t really sound like he does stand by them.

I know the Minister of Finance gets uncomfortable when we quote him directly, but here’s another one — this one from his time in opposition when he said — and I will quote: “For the second year in a row, our economy has actually shrunk...” and “By most economists’ definitions, we are now in a recession.”

I will go on to quote again: “Does the Premier accept responsibility for the fact that our economy has gotten smaller two years in a row, under his government’s watch, and that the Yukon is now in a recession?”

Now, when the Minister of Finance looks at the economic outlook and the projections, I would like to ask him if he stands by his words still.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, yeah, the opposition definitely knows what a recession is, because we were living in it when they were in power. I do know that they asked the economists today in their briefing, as well, whether or not we are in a recession, and you know, they got a firm no then and they are getting a firm no now.

Mr. Speaker, when you have a participation rate for 2024 of 76.3 percent — and this can be found in the budget highlights — this is a proportion of working-aged population, either working or looking for work, at 76.3 percent — the highest in Canada; no, we are not at a recession.

I love how this is going to be what we are going to play out in the Legislative Assembly this session: all the statistics to

determine whether or not we are in a recession. There are very few indicators that would say that we are in a recession. We are the envy of every other jurisdiction when you take a look at post-recovery for the pandemic, post-recovery for the supply chain issues, and inflation. The Northwest Territories next door just upped their borrowing limit to \$3.2 billion. We have done an extraordinary job of catch-up and keep-up that the Yukon Party did not do on capital infrastructure — the Dempster Highway, the Dempster fibre, the airport — the list goes on.

We have maintained excellent numbers moving forward, including debt-to-GDP ratios.

I will continue with my second and third.

Mr. Hassard: Well, like I figured, this does make the Finance minister uncomfortable, obviously, but my final question for him is quite simple. This is his final budget. When he looks at the total borrowing and the level of long-term debt that he plans to saddle Yukoners with and he looks at the poor state of our economy, does he view his legacy as Finance minister, and what is he leaving for the next government to deal with?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I will leave legacy for those who write history. I am more focused and dedicated on a daily basis on making sure that we are open and transparent with our budgeting process.

If the member opposite will read the budget highlights and the economic outlook, he will see that we have a plan to make sure that we do not saddle the next generation with the debt that we are incurring right now in these troubling times, unlike the Yukon Party, which we are still paying every year \$5 million in interest on a loan they took out of \$100 million back in 2010.

Mr. Speaker, by the time that loan — that grant — is done, Yukoners will be saddled with \$150 million in interest and the principal would have moved zero. Then we are going to have refinance that. That will be 2030, so what we won’t do is saddle debt like the Yukon Party did onto next generations of governments.

Question re: Health care system

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, Yukon’s health care system is interconnected. Access to primary care affects everything else, and this system is in crisis. Instead of listening to doctors and health care professionals who are openly sharing solutions, the Liberals are trying to fix it on their own. For example, the Yukon Medical Association is advocating for a medical residency program for family doctors. A rural residency program is already working well in the Northwest Territories, and we can follow suit, but this cannot happen in the Yukon without direct action by the government.

A residency program means establishing a curriculum and agreements with an Outside university credentialed to train family doctors. It’s not something that can happen overnight, and that is why the medical community needs a commitment now.

What is this government doing right now to support the YMA’s request for a medical residency program and to ensure that the territory helps to train new doctors?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, in the 2025-26 budget, subject to its passing here in the Legislative Assembly, we have budgeted \$5.6 million to support physician benefit programs, the majority of which are administered by the Yukon Medical Association. The amount may be adjusted as we enter into the MOU negotiations going forward. We look forward to that work, and we look forward to working with the Yukon Medical Association on those interesting conversations, as we are keen to stabilize primary care. It's a key priority for our work plan. We are keen to stabilize acute care as well.

We are certainly aware that the Yukon Medical Association passed a resolution. We are in support of a rural family medicine residency program and, in fact, have provided funds to the Yukon Medical Association so that we can pursue this work together. It will include negotiations with universities in Canada to make sure that they support having their medical students come and do a residency program here in the territory, but it is a solution — just one of the many that will help us recruit and retain physicians.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, it's about more than money; it's about how that money is spent. Not one of the 153 locum physicians who came to the territory in 2024 chose to stay here. So, if it was just about money, I would have guessed that they would have.

Four family medical practices have closed in the last 18 months. The Yukon desperately needs a way to attract new doctors, and the fact that no locum stayed highlights the crisis in health care.

Although we have the Constellation clinic and, thanks to the NDP, a walk-in clinic, there are still thousands of Yukoners without consistent access to primary care.

The Yukon Medical Association recommends more government-run family clinics. Nova Scotia has made substantial progress in improving access to primary care by opening dozens of these clinics. These clinics have significantly reduced the strain on emergency departments and have increased access to primary care.

So, when will this government get serious about finding people a family doctor and open a publicly run medical clinic staffed by doctors, as suggested by the YMA?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, a healthy and strong community of primary health care physicians is critical to ensuring that Yukoners have access to the excellent primary care services that are here in the territory.

In 2022, we negotiated a memorandum of understanding with the Yukon Medical Association to help increase Yukoners' access to primary care services and to foster a strong physician community through a series of innovative initiatives that are in effect now until the end of this month. That memorandum of understanding includes an attachment and attraction program, which provides financial support to Yukon physicians by subsidizing clinic overhead costs.

The Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Medical Association are preparing for the next round of negotiations on a new memorandum of understanding. We know that this opportunity to come to the table together and to determine what is best for primary health care in the Yukon to

serve Yukoners and acute health care in the Yukon to serve Yukoners will be key to our work together to make sure that our health care system is improving and is transitioning in the needs of the community.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, when the surgical services team drafted a comprehensive renewal plan in 2019 to address necessary updates to the surgical suites, they were hopeful. This plan clearly laid out the need for four surgical suites with equipment redundancy and adequate space. However, the Liberal government ignored these experts, and here we are today with surgical staff working desperately to try to address the chaos caused by sterilization problems at the hospital, lack of space, and outdated equipment.

This government has allowed surgical systems to deteriorate to the state of crisis, even though surgeons have been offering solutions for the past six years. Yukoners are stuck in a situation where our surgical system is crumbling because this government has refused to listen to experts and act on the recommendations.

Why would health care professionals choose to move to the Yukon if this is the state of health care? When will this government listen to experts and upgrade Yukon's surgical services?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak to Yukoners about the importance of our surgical facilities here in the territory and really to reach out and have the opportunity to support the surgical team who works here in the territory. It is extraordinary and it is home-based. It includes surgeons who are here for the purposes of providing services to Yukoners through their skills, and it is supported not only by the YMA but by Health and Social Services and by our government.

Planning for a new surgical facility has begun, with budget allocations anticipated within the 2025-26 main estimates. Short-term improvements have also been made with the existing surgical areas to mitigate challenges, including a flexible OR suite to help move certain day procedures out of the main ORs. There has been a scope reprocessing unit developed adjacent to allow the ORs to be more flexible. There has been an introduction of post-anaesthesia care unit and trained post-anaesthesia staff to improve the quality of patient care post-surgery.

We continue to listen to surgeons to work together to improve health care for Yukoners.

Question re: Placer mining

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, as Yukoners wrestle with the economic implications of a trade war, there has been a growing consensus that we must take action to support our local economy and jobs. One area that the Liberal government has neglected for too long is the regulatory and assessment process for the placer industry. Unfortunately, the regulatory system's backlogs and delays for this important local industry are reaching a breaking point.

In a recent letter to the government, the Klondike Placer Miners' Association, or KPMA, pointed out a sizable regulatory backlog affecting licence renewal applications.

According to the KPMA — and I quote: “If placer licences expire while under regulatory review, due only to the fault of processing timelines, it will lead to business closures, employee layoffs, and widespread economic decline.”

Mr. Speaker, that is the last thing that we need during these turbulent times. So, my question for the minister is: What is he doing to resolve these regulatory issues?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, first of all, can I give a shout-out to our placer mining industry? I listened to the opposition talk about our economy and about how they think that it is so bad. The placer industry just hit their record year last year. What they have been saying to the Premier and me is that they think that they can knock it out of the park again — so, first of all, a shout-out to them.

By the way, if we go back to the pandemic and we think about how our economy stayed strong during the pandemic, I think that we should give some acknowledgement there as well. There are a lot of renewals coming due. It has to do with the fact that YESAA started 20 years ago and most of those licences are on a 10-year cycle, so there is a wave of them coming. The department has been working to address this. There is a team that has been set up to look at it. In my last set of meetings in Dawson with the Klondike Placer Miners’ Association, we talked about the strategy.

So, it is a concern and we have been working with the industry to try to navigate through it, but thanks so much to the placer mining industry for their strong work in our economy.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, the Klondike Placer Miners’ Association and the placer mining industry is warning of a widespread economic decline. What is particularly frustrating for so many Yukoners in this industry is that this issue has been raised with the Yukon government for years.

Here is a quote from the KPMA’s letter sent last week to the minister — quote: “Despite the KPMA raising this concern for some time with government and regulators alike, the backlog continues and is getting worse.” They go on to point out — I will quote again: “This backlog can and should have been anticipated — it occurs cyclically...”

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain why he didn’t see this coming? Why have so many of these local businesses been pushed to the brink, and when will he finally take this issue seriously?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I think, as I stood up to answer the last question, I pointed out how the problem is cyclical. By the way, the department pointed that out to me. I have had conversations with the Klondike Placer Miners’ Association. There is an awareness of it and there has been a strategy at work to try to assist the placer miners with their renewals to get them through as quickly as possible. Some of this moves out to other bodies, like the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. Some of it moves out to our Water Board. So, I’m not, as a government, dictating what those bodies do.

But I think that the member is incorrect to think that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources wasn’t aware, wasn’t working on it, and wasn’t working on it with the Klondike Placer Miners’ Association. They have been, and my

thanks to them for the hard work that they have been doing. It is a concern, and the department is looking to work with the Klondike Placer Miners’ Association to navigate.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I have to remind the minister again that this letter of frustration from the KPMA arrived on his desk just last week. So, the Yukon is going to be facing some serious economic headwinds. Some economic challenges, like tariffs and trade with the US, are completely out of our control, but there are concrete actions that the Yukon government can take to help support our local economy.

According to the KPMA, the placer industry contributes significantly to local economies, like in Dawson City, accounting for over 45 percent of total business revenue in that community during the pandemic. The regulatory backlog that they face could create significant economic decline unless the government is willing to act.

So, the KPMA, in that letter, has laid out a clear set of actions for the minister. Is the minister willing to follow their advice and take swift executive action to prevent this economic catastrophe?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I just want to share with Yukoners that, as early as today, I was in discussion with executive members from the Klondike Placer Miners’ Association. The commitment that I made to them is that, today, if I had a chance to amplify the importance of that industry, I would. I have been given that opportunity by the members opposite.

This is an incredibly important industry. Although you will hear the challenges that are in front of us and you will hear that we’re not supporting properly, you have to take into consideration that last year was a record year for that industry, with over 90,000 ounces of gold extracted here in the Yukon.

We know how important that industry is to all communities in the Yukon. So many Yukoners play a role and support that industry. The commitment we have made is to go back and look at absolutely all the tools that we have available to us. We’re working with multiple departments to understand that. We know that there is a cyclical backlog. This is something, of course, that you would have seen years ago.

I have sat down with the Water Board leadership throughout the year. We have resourced them better to make sure that they can meet their demands, but also, it’s important to note that the complexity of interventions that are coming in on every licence now is much more than we have seen in the past.

But we support this industry and it’s very important at this particular time that folks keep mining.

Question re: Dawson City daycare

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, in 2015, the MLA for Klondike made his very first promise as Liberal leader. He promised to fund the expansion of the Little Blue Daycare. Today, almost a decade later, he is tabling his final budget.

Can the MLA for Klondike tell his constituents if he will still use his last budget to fulfill his first-ever promise?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak to investments that we are making in early

learning childcare not only in Whitehorse but in our communities. I note that the member opposite is fully aware that we have recently signed an agreement with the Government of Canada that will bring new dollars into the territory for early learning childcare infrastructure — very excited about that. There are other announcements, of course, that were made today about early learning childcare.

The Little Blue Daycare, of course, is very important infrastructure in the City of Dawson, and the Government of Yukon is, of course, committed to high-quality learning and childcare that is accessible, affordable, and inclusive. We continue to work closely with the Little Blue Daycare and are hoping, of course, to have some announcements. So, when the member opposite talks about not having dollars in this budget, we absolutely have dollars in this budget for early learning childcare infrastructure. We're happy to be working closely with the community and happy to have the question as well about early learning and childcare. It is so vital and important to our territory.

Ms. Van Bibber: Here is what the Minister of Finance and the MLA for Klondike said in the Legislature back in 2015 — quote: “A Liberal government would fund this facility. When will the government be making a decision on this request, or should it be added to the ever-growing list of projects the next Yukon government is going to have to address?”

Mr. Speaker, I would like to put that very question to the Liberal government today: Can the Minister of Finance answer the question that he himself asked 10 years ago?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I want to, of course, again thank the member opposite for raising the importance of early learning childcare. Our government has made historic investments in early learning childcare.

We, in fact, made childcare universal in 2021. We went ahead of our federal partners. We have worked very hard. We fulfilled that agreement with the Government of Canada and are very happy that we have had some announcements from the federal government just today that they will be reinvesting in the next four years of early learning childcare.

We have a historic investment in early learning childcare in this budget — which, of course, is subject to approval of this Legislative Assembly — for over \$46 million. We have been investing over \$40 million each year in early learning childcare.

Mr. Speaker, 70 percent of that comes from the Government of Yukon. We have a brand new infrastructure fund that, as well, will be extended beyond the initial agreement. It's for \$10.5 million. We will continue to support the Little Blue early learning centre and I will continue to build if I have a chance to in further questions.

Ms. Van Bibber: On October 12, 2016, the Liberal Party did a news release that said that the MLA for Klondike planned to use the candidates' election forum in Dawson City to — and I quote: “... remind Dawson residents of his long-standing commitment to find a permanent home for the Little Blue Day Care.”

Can the Minister of Finance tell us if this commitment will be part of the Liberals' 2025 election platform?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I do quite enjoy this trip down memory lane. I was also in the Legislative Assembly at that time. Let's take a look at some of the commitments that the Yukon Party gave to my community, including a rec centre that they didn't do, so we are building that.

I also do remember — as they catcall off-mic because they don't like these answers at all — that we did work with a lot of different boards of the Little Blue Daycare. We had some plans in the beginning that didn't work, and now the minister is doing incredible work when it comes to working with all agencies throughout the Yukon, in the rural communities, when it comes to early learning and daycare.

I would also point out that the Yukon Party was going to have a fibre optic redundancy loop that was going to exclude Dawson back in the day. I do remember that this was a plan to work with the American government for a 10-year contract and, after that, they didn't know what the costs would be for that. That was redundancy not for the rural communities but just for Whitehorse. My community remembers the legacy of the Yukon Party commitments and failures therein for Dawson City, including the wastewater treatment facility, including the rec centre, including clean drinking water that they didn't give to our community because, well, they didn't have a candidate up there who was wearing a blue pin.

That is not how we work, Mr. Speaker. We work with all communities mattering, and we make sure that we spread our taxpayer dollars across every single community. So, the members opposite can be glib about the fact that, yes, I wish that we could have done more in the time frame that I was here, but I do have a lot of faith in the minister responsible for early learning daycare for all Yukon.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 217: *First Appropriation Act 2025-26* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 217, standing in the name of the Hon. Sandy Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, thank you for your indulgence as I switch gears here.

Mr. Speaker, colleagues, distinguished guests, members of the media, and anyone who is tuning in at home, it is my absolute honour to table Government of Yukon's 2025-26 territorial budget.

This budget sets a responsible, sustainable, and compassionate path forward for our territory and everyone who

calls it home. Since our government was elected in 2016, we have worked to make Yukon a strong, inclusive place where people can build a life, start a family, and grow careers. We put reconciliation at the centre of all we do. We have tackled global crises from the pandemic to inflation to economic uncertainty caused by the actions of the new United States administration.

We have partnered with the private sector to build up our territory, as well as with people across the political spectrum, to advance shared priorities. We are doing this because our vision for the territory is one where everyone can enjoy a sustainable, affordable, and vibrant future. We believe in a Yukon where hard work pays off and, when people face challenges, they are not left out in the cold.

We believe in a Yukon where everyone is recognized for the inherent value that they bring to our society, whether your ancestors have lived here since time immemorial or you recently arrived. We believe in a Yukon where our collective success depends on the health care providers — the professionals in health care — education professionals and also first responders. With significant investments in our health care system and in education, this budget acknowledges the efforts of the private sector workers and helps to make the Yukon a more attractive place to live, to do business, and to explore.

We believe in a Yukon where everyone can feel safe in their homes, their communities, at their work — where communities are able to meet the needs of their population and where life is affordable. This budget provides new funding for the RCMP, supports residential land development, increases the comprehensive municipal grant, and puts thousands of dollars back in the pockets of Yukoners each year. This budget contains investments that will make life more affordable, support safe and healthy communities, protect the environment, and build the economic and social infrastructure that our population needs in order to thrive.

As in previous years, this budget responds to pressures beyond our borders, like climate change, worker shortages, rising health care costs, and global economic uncertainty. We are being responsible. We are including an \$82-million surplus and a \$75-million contingency that will allow us to continue to respond to climate change and natural disasters, pressures on the health care system, and economic uncertainty caused by the evolving US trade policies.

This budget reflects careful stewardship of public funds, responsible investment in essential services and infrastructure, and a commitment to long-term financial sustainability so that people and businesses can plan for their future.

Public servants in the Yukon work tirelessly to ensure that essential services are provided in communities across the territory. This includes everything from the delivery of health care to education to emergency response. They play a critical role in responding to emerging challenges, such as the substance use health emergency, while continuously working to improve the lives of Yukoners. Their dedication and commitment to the territory are essential for supporting Yukoners' growth and maintaining a high quality of life for residents. They find innovative solutions to address the needs of Yukoners, often working across departments and

collaborating with partners to maximize impact. They continue to deliver vital services and contribute to the territory's development, ensuring that Yukoners receive the supports that they need even at the most challenging times.

I want to thank the public service; I want to thank them for their work on this budget, in particular, the staff at the Department of Finance who have worked hard day in and day out to ensure that the government's fiscal and operational decisions align with Yukoners' priorities.

Since this is my last budget that I will table and debate as the Finance minister and as the MLA for Klondike, I want to step back and take a moment to remind Yukoners of just how far we've come.

For several years, the Yukon has experienced a steady state of growth as we welcome new Yukoners to the territory. In response, we have built new housing, new schools, new infrastructure, and have supported new businesses opening in our communities. Our population is expanding. The demand for essential services and infrastructure is growing. This budget addresses growth pressures, invests in essential services, and helps ensure that we have the financial flexibility to respond to emerging needs.

We are responding to increased costs in providing health care services to a growing and aging population by investing over \$70 million in insured health services and core funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

While we have historically operated under a fiscal plan that minimized borrowing, our governance structures as a territory have matured. Our population has grown, and our climate is changing rapidly. Strategic borrowing will be a key tool in addressing our territory's evolving needs, providing the flexibility that we need to manage cash flow while unlocking needed opportunities for growth and resilience. Budget 2025-26 contains provisions for long-term borrowing of up to \$400 million. This is a prudent forward-looking measure that ensures that we can respond to emerging pressures in the medium term while continuing to invest in essential services and infrastructure to support territory-wide growth.

In the fall, we updated Yukoners on the need to reassess our territory's borrowing limits. The federal government increased our borrowing limit to \$1.2 billion, giving us the ability to better manage our spending as we work meeting the needs of Yukoners.

Recent unforeseen challenges — such as urgent environmental responses, pressures on the health care system, and continued need to address issues related to climate change — have highlighted the value of increased flexibility to manage cash flow throughout the year and using tools beyond the government's line of credit.

This fiscal year, we will seek to secure long-term financing that will be carefully aligned with fiscal planning and cash-flow needs to ensure that we access the most favourable lending terms available. Long-term borrowing instruments are not a new tool for the Government of Yukon. A similar approach was taken in 2008 when the Yukon Energy Corporation issued a bond to finance critical infrastructure investments. This

precedent highlights the government's strategic use of borrowing to support the territory's long-term development.

This fiscal flexibility is critical to supporting the population and the economic growth that we have experienced in the recent past. Borrowed funds will provide the government with the flexibility to manage cash-flow needs to meet rising health care demands, to respond to emergencies, and to support economic and environmental sustainability across the territory. They will allow us to continue to invest in the strategic economic infrastructure that helps businesses and communities thrive. Importantly, we have laid a path to repay borrowed funds in a sustainable, responsible way.

We are doing the hard work now to set up future governments for success. We will continue to provide regular updates on financial decisions and borrowing strategies and have introduced new levels of reporting in the mains and fiscal and economic outlooks to enhance transparency aligned with the high fiscal accountability grade given to us by the C.D. Howe Institute.

Mr. Speaker, the high cost of living is making it hard for people across Canada to get ahead, and in the north, the impacts are even greater. That is why we are fighting for Yukoners: holding cellular phone providers accountable, putting money back in people's pockets, supporting workers, and building new homes while ensuring that our economy remains on a strong footing.

We are making lives more affordable for families by reducing childcare costs, increasing the Yukon child benefit payments, and expanding support for caregivers and parents of children with disabilities. Yukoners will continue saving through our public dental plan, a new \$10,000 fertility tax credit, and a new upcoming winter electrical affordability rebate.

We are helping households switch to heat pumps, providing free transit passes for those in need, and investing in school food programs reflecting our commitment to students' health and well-being.

We are easing financial pressures on small businesses by keeping the small business tax rate at zero, maintaining the lowest fuel tax in Canada, and extending our paid sick leave rebate for a third year.

Our government is investing \$1.6 million in farm resiliency to strengthen food security and is continuing to prioritize buying local. This is particularly important as we prepare our response to the US tariffs. We are also allocating \$1 million in funding through the Department of Economic Development to assist our local business community in navigating this challenge.

We are supporting cultural industries with an investment of \$1.7 million in local media productions and funding for Yukon musicians. There is \$2.5 million for the Yukon arts community and \$2.5 million for museums and First Nation cultural centres.

Targeted investments in the knowledge economy, technology, renewable energy, and mining sectors are continuing to diversify our economy to make it more competitive.

We are making housing more affordable by investing over \$5 million to support the building of new affordable homes and launching a \$1-million program to help Yukoners purchase their first home.

Renters will benefit from the more than \$6.8 million in rent supplements and subsidies, including specific subsidies for survivors of gender-based violence, while investments in energy efficiency programs and rebates will help residents save on home heating and repairs. From our new housing projects to cost-saving initiatives to meeting our target of 1,000 new lots, we are committed to making sure that all Yukoners have access to safe, affordable homes. Budget 2025-26 will set a record level of capital investment made in developing new housing for Yukoners across the territory.

Our Premier, the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, will have more to say during his speech on supports for businesses and how we are looking to expand access to housing across the territory. Mr. Speaker, we are investing in housing. We are also continuing to build the economic infrastructure that people and communities need to succeed.

In budget 2025-26, our government has prioritized investments and upgrades to our transportation networks, including roads, bridges, and airports, to improve connectivity and to support economic growth.

Significant funds have also gone toward: modernizing health care and educational facilities; expanding digital connectivity and Internet redundancy in remote communities; and enhancing essential services like water, sewer, waste management, and energy systems.

Now, we can't do this all alone; a strong Yukon requires collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Changes to federal immigration programs have left Yukoners and employers with questions about the upcoming year. Our government is working with federal officials to explore our options and is reviewing our policies to better support employers in meeting their needs.

The Staffing UP program remains available to help Yukoners and employers find, hire, and keep workers who are a good fit for their organizations, while the STEP and summer career placement programs can help employers hire Yukon youth and students in secondary and post-secondary schools.

Our five-year innovation strategy sets a clear path for how government will support and enable innovative practices. Developed through extensive engagement with innovators and industry leaders both locally and globally, this strategy reflects a shared vision for a forward-thinking, prosperous Yukon. With nearly \$2 million in the economic development fund and another \$1.6 million to support technological growth, we are directly supporting business innovation, diversification, and competitiveness and improving our local entrepreneurial ecosystem.

We're proud to support local programs with partners like Yukonstruct and Yukon Venture Angels, which connect early stage Yukon businesses with capital, mentorship, and strategic guidance to drive sustainable growth.

The Trump administration's evolving tariff threats put jobs, businesses, and supply chains on both sides of the border at risk. In response, we're working with businesses and industry groups on a Buy Local campaign and we have set aside \$1 million to develop a program to support Yukon businesses impacted by tariffs if the need occurs.

We're also collaborating with the federal, provincial, and territorial partners to expand trade opportunities, cut shipping costs, and reduce red tape.

At the same time, we are prioritizing Arctic sovereignty and security. We are continuing work on a feasibility study for the Canadian Institute for Arctic Security to ensure that northern voices lead this national and global conversation.

We are making major investments in infrastructure, including roads, bridges, schools, health care facilities, and homes, to support our communities. This year, we are dedicating significant funding to transportation with: \$50 million dedicated to bridge infrastructure, including significant investment in the completion of the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement; \$31 million for north Klondike Highway upgrades; \$10 million for the Yukon Resource Gateway project; and \$75 million for upgrades at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport.

Our five-year capital plan prioritizes projects that will provide Yukoners with safer roads, stronger connections, and improved transportation networks. I encourage Yukoners to review the budget highlights documents for a list of infrastructure projects by community. I know that the Minister of Highways and Public Works will go into greater detail on our investments in infrastructure across the territory when he addresses the Legislative Assembly in the days to come.

The Yukon's communities are the heart of our territory, contributing to its economy, culture, and identity, with places like my community of Dawson City showcasing a rich gold rush history and a deep connection to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. To support strong local governance and services, we are increasing the comprehensive municipal grant to \$29.5 million this fiscal year and investing nearly \$3 million in local projects through the community development fund.

We are investing in sports, recreation, and active transportation infrastructure — for example, by expanding Whitehorse's multi-use trail network, upgrading arenas and facilities across the territory, supporting new projects like the nearly completed Polarettes gymnastics facility and climbing gym and the new biathlon facility, while also preparing for the 2026 Arctic Winter Games in partnership with Sport Yukon and the City of Whitehorse. We are also funding municipal building retrofits, lot development, and community infrastructure projects across the territory to ensure that every Yukon community thrives. I know that the Minister of Community Services will expand more on his portfolio programs and priorities when he addresses the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to supporting Yukon First Nations as we continue our shared responsibilities in the implementation of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and the individual self-government agreements that have been reached.

Several decades have passed since most of these agreements were established and much work has been done.

While we have many joint achievements to celebrate and key milestones to mark in our shared history, our work toward reconciliation does not stop.

We continue regular meetings with First Nation chiefs through the Yukon Forum. We are making progress on land use planning, including the Dawson regional land use plan and consulting on the potential creation of new parks, new national parks, or Indigenous protected and conserved areas.

With a \$700,000 investment, we are supporting the Yukon Residential Schools Missing Children project to uncover the truth about children taken from their homes.

We are implementing the *Breaking Trail Together* strategy to build a more inclusive public service and are continuing to invest in the Yukon First Nation School Board to support education rooted in First Nation ways of knowing and doing.

Our government is partnering with Yukon First Nation governments and development corporations to build essential infrastructure such as schools, housing, and wellness centres, including investments in the Range Point subdivision in partnership with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and providing support for the Council of Yukon First Nations Family Preservation Wellness Centre. Our government has always prioritized the well-being of families, workers, and communities for a safer and healthier Yukon; this year is no different.

In budget 2025-26, we are investing heavily in our health care system. In her speech, the Minister of Health and Social Services will discuss our additional \$47-million investment in insured health services and \$24.5 million invested in the Yukon Hospital Corporation, including increased bed capacity, support for vaccination programs, and investment in personal support workers. She will tell Yukoners how our government is working to establish the new health authority, Shāw Kwā'a/Health and Wellness Yukon/Santé et mieux-être Yukon.

She will discuss in greater detail the \$4.2-million investment in hospital maintenance, \$2.3 million to optimize long-term care facilities, and \$1.2 million for planning potential expansion at the Whitehorse General Hospital based upon the feedback from health care professionals and patients alike.

This past year, we made great advances to address health care workforce challenges, partnering with the Canadian Forces Health Services, offering virtual learning and skill upgrades for Yukon-based licensed practical nurses through the University of New Brunswick, and streamlining credential recognition for internationally educated health professionals — already assisting 45 professionals. This work continues.

We are also taking steps to enhance the medical travel system, including early work to identify options for a travel lodge in Whitehorse to support residents who need treatment in the capital. We are also continuing to fund efforts that ensure that Yukoners have access to services and information, especially related to health care and legal systems en français.

Our government believes that safe, healthy communities are built on inclusion, respect, and the freedom for everybody

to live authentically. We stand against the growing and domestic threats to the rights and safety of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. We continue to support partners like Queer Yukon and are committed to modernizing legislation, building on our historic achievements of covering broad gender-affirming health services, to ensure that all Yukoners are able to live as their authentic selves.

We will continue to celebrate and invest in our territory's cultural diversity, partnering with the Canadian Filipino Association of Yukon to plan for a Filipino community centre. We will continue to work with community organizations to foster cross-cultural learning, which enriches our territory.

We are investing in upgrading school infrastructure across the Yukon, including the reallocation of École Whitehorse Elementary School and building the Kêts'ádañ Kù school in Burwash Landing and starting the work to consult on building a new school in downtown Whitehorse.

We are supporting families and helping young people to get the right start in life by increasing the number of early learning and childcare spaces. We are also investing in educational professionals, continuing to support strong wages for early childhood educators, signing a new collective agreement with Yukon teachers, and hiring more educators and school staff. I know that the Minister of Education will look forward to discussing these and other improvements and investments in our education system when she speaks to budget 2025-26 initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, budget 2025-26 also continues to support projects that empower young people — through programs like the youth developmental assets program, the youth investment fund — and provide critical resources for our young people.

Community safety is a growing concern for Yukoners, with rising property crime and the ongoing substance use health emergency affecting every one of our communities. In response, our government has developed the downtown Whitehorse safety response action plan, collaborating with partners to tackle issues like homelessness, addiction, and public safety.

Key community partners, such as the Safe at Home Society, continue to provide essential programming and services. New programming, like the SafeBiz program, delivered in partnership with the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and helping local businesses address security concerns. In past budgets, we have significantly increased the funding for the RCMP. This budget continues that trend with an additional \$5.8-million investment that will increase the number of RCMP officers and hire more SCAN investigators.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon is a place of immense natural beauty, and with this privilege comes a responsibility to protect and preserve the lands for future generations. Mining is a key driver of the Yukon's economy, providing high-paying jobs and growth opportunities as global demand for minerals rises. Our government is committed to responsible resource development through the development of new minerals legislation in collaboration with First Nation partners. We are also working with the Yukon Chamber of Mines and other

stakeholders to ensure that mining benefits our economy while respecting the environment and the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

This year, our government is allocating \$118 million in loans to the court-appointed receiver for Victoria Gold Corporation to continue remediation efforts required following the heap leach facility failure at the mine site. Addressing this environmental disaster and ensuring long-term protection of the Yukon's land and water is an absolute priority.

We are also providing contributions to the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun as well as the cost for an independent review board to investigate the underlying causes of the failure. We look forward to receiving the independent review board's work, report, and recommendations when their work is complete.

Reclamation work will also continue at Minto mine, with over \$21 million allocated in this budget, and efforts to increase water treatment and address repairs to a suspected leak in the tailings storage facility will be undertaken at the Wolverine mine site this year as well.

Investments in mineral exploration are critical to future mine development in the territory. This work must be undertaken in a sustainable and responsible manner in partnership with First Nations. The Yukon has deposits of 12 critical minerals and occurrences of 13 more. These critical minerals are needed for a transition to a sustainable low-carbon and digital economy.

In 2023, our government introduced new criteria to encourage exploration for critical minerals. This budget will continue funding the well-established Yukon mineral exploration program to advance projects throughout their life cycle. One promising project is the Fireweed Metals Mactung project, which is one of the largest and highest-grade tungsten deposits in the world. We are pleased to see the Government of Canada and the US Department of Defence announce in December a \$35.4-million investment to advance pre-development activities at the site.

Investments through the Yukon minerals exploration program are also continuing for placer projects. In 2024, the Yukon saw the value of placer gold production in the territory reach record levels at \$271 million. As we focus on work that will ensure responsible development across our resource sector, we must also look ahead to ensure a sustainable future for our energy needs. Our path forward as a territory cannot be powered by fossil fuels. Efforts are underway to promote greener energy solutions, and we are continuing to work to connect the Yukon and British Columbia power grids to reduce emissions and ensure a sustainable, affordable clean power supply for people and industry across our territory.

Mr. Speaker, hunting, trapping, and outfitting have long been a vital part of Yukon's culture, providing food security for families, sustaining traditional ways of life, fostering a deep connection to the lands, and supporting our economy. Hunting also plays a key role in wildlife management, ensuring healthy populations and an ecological balance across our territory. Our government is investing in new technologies for data collection to improve residents' hunting opportunities. By using tools like GPS tracking, remote cameras, and drones to monitor wildlife, we can track and manage wildlife populations more accurately.

Access to better data helps the government make informed decisions to ensure that we are providing Yukoners with access to sustainable harvesting with continued conservation.

This year, we are continuing to improve Yukon campgrounds and enhancing the campground reservation service by ensuring Yukon seniors can reserve online and still receive their 50-percent discount. We are adding new campsites, collaborating with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Community Development Corporation on the Charcoal Ridge Trail in the Tombstone Territorial Park, and upgrading boat launches, day use areas, and playgrounds at campgrounds across the territory. I know that the Minister of Environment will expand on these and other investments when he addresses the Legislature in the days to come.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget, we are investing in emergency preparedness by increasing volunteer honoraria for emergency medical services and firefighters, purchasing a new fire truck for unincorporated communities, and enhancing wildfire prevention, flood mapping, and climate resilience efforts.

We all have a responsibility to be prepared, and I encourage Yukoners to have a 72-hour emergency kit but also know that these and other measures in Budget 2025-26 aim to strengthen our communities' abilities to respond to disasters and to protect lives and property.

Mr. Speaker, this budget reflects our government's unwavering commitment to a thriving and inclusive Yukon where everyone has the opportunity to succeed. We are investing in critical infrastructure, health, education, and innovation. We are bolstering economic growth while supporting the wellbeing of our communities.

With bold initiatives and strategic partnerships, we are laying the foundation for a resilient future that meets the challenges of today and seizes the opportunities of tomorrow. Together, we will continue to build a Yukon that is prosperous, sustainable, and united.

Thank you very much. Mahsi' cho. Gunalch'ish. Shāw níthän.

Motion to adjourn debate

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

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge that debate be now adjourned.

Motion to adjourn debate on second reading of Bill No. 217 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 3:02 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled March 6, 2025:

35-1-192

Report from the Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly on the Absence of Members from Sitzings of the Legislative Assembly and its Committees (March 6, 2025) (Speaker Harper)

35-1-193

Commissioner's Assent to Bill No. 40, *Act to amend the Clean Energy Act (2024)*, letter re (dated March 6, 2025) from Dan Cable, Clerk of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, to Hon. Jeremy Harper, Speaker (Speaker Harper)

35-1-194

Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly — Procurement and Contracting — Government of Yukon — Independent Auditor's Report 2024 (November 26, 2024) (Speaker Harper)

The following document was filed March 6, 2025:

35-1-296

Ensuring the independence of Legislative Officers' budgeting process, letter re (dated March 5, 2025) from Jason Pedlar, Ombudsman, Information and Privacy Commissioner, and Public Interest Disclosure Commissioner, Annette King, Child and Youth Advocate, and Maxwell Harvey, Chief Electoral Officer, to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Premier, Currie Dixon, Leader of the Official Opposition, and Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (White)