



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Tuesday, March 11, 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

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Deputy Clerk	Allison Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Karina Watson
Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
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Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
 We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to draw the attention of the House to the reason why two motions were not placed on today's Notice Paper. Yesterday, the Member for Whitehorse West tabled a screenshot of a social media post and then later gave a notice of Motion No. 1175. That motion is out of order, as it is the opinion of the Chair that it is written for the purpose of mockery. I will remind all members that what might be acceptable if spoken by a member in the course of debate may not meet the higher threshold for formality that applies to motions.

The wording of a motion should be respectful and reflect the fact that, if approved by the House, the motion would become an order or a resolution of the Assembly as a whole. Members should keep in mind that, should a motion be put to the House, it will be read from the Chair. The Speaker is neutral in these debates, and therefore, members should be careful about the words that they put in the Speaker's mouth.

The motion that the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin gave notice of yesterday — Motion No. 1177 — is also not in order. The matter has already been debated and decided during this session of the Legislative Assembly.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: In addition, I will note that members appear to be drifting back to adding modifiers to the term "Yukon Party", which describes one of the duly elected parties in the Assembly. In this case, I have previously ruled on this matter and remind members to use the appropriate titles of the parties in the Assembly without modifiers.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Introduction of Visitors.
Visitors introduced

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Day of Observance for COVID-19

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to national pandemic observance day.

Five years ago almost to the day, the world changed. By March 2020, the Yukon reported its first two cases of COVID-19. That diagnosis was a stark reminder that the pandemic was no longer a distant crisis; it was here in our own communities.

Thanks to the preparedness of our health care providers and the foresight of the first patients, the spread of the virus was minimized. Their actions demonstrated the power of personal responsibility and reinforced the importance of self-isolation and early prevention in protecting the broader community.

Over the months that followed, Yukoners faced unprecedented challenges. We lost loved ones, family members, and friends. Each of them was cherished. Each of them is missed. Their memory continues to inspire us to care for one another and to build a strong, healthier future.

Today, we wear this pin to symbolize a forget-me-not — a symbol of love and remembrance.

We also recognize and honour the dedication of our health care providers, our first responders, and our community volunteers who worked tirelessly on the front lines.

We recognize the people who went to work every day to keep our communities operating: store clerks, grader operators, police officers, and so many more. Their resilience, compassion, and selfless service helped to guide us through some of the most difficult times in our history.

While we have come a long way, COVID is still here and vigilance is required. One of the most effective ways that we can continue to protect ourselves and our communities from infectious diseases is by staying up to date with seasonal and routine immunizations.

Last fall, we launched our latest vaccination campaign and over 23 percent of Yukoners — many of whom are among our most vulnerable community members — have received a COVID-19 vaccine this season. While this progress is significant, it also underscores the importance of continuing our efforts to increase vaccine uptake.

I encourage all Yukoners six months and older to get their flu and COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccination remains one of the most effective ways to prevent severe illness and to keep our communities safe. To book an appointment, please visit www.yukon.ca/appointments.

Mr. Speaker, as we reflect on the past five years, let us not only remember the hardships that we endured but also recognize the strength that we found in each other. The resilience of our communities, the sacrifices made by so many, and the lessons that we have learned must guide us forward. Today, we affirm our commitment to supporting our health care system and protecting one another. Together, by staying informed, taking preventive measures, and caring for one another, we will continue to build a healthier and stronger Yukon.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to commemorate national pandemic remembrance day.

Five years ago around this time, Yukon students said goodbye to their classmates and teachers to head off for spring break. They had little indication that this would be the last time they would be together as a class in person, as school was not called back to session. The next months and even years marked a change that we felt throughout the world — a change from the way we lived, socialized, and did business. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were widespread and felt by all. Not all families made it through the pandemic intact. People lost loved ones and others are still facing health issues as a result. The pandemic also caused a polarization of views and sadly some divisions within society and even families.

As we move forward, it is important to remember that even though we may have different viewpoints, it is important to respect one another, as we all care about our families, our communities, and the Yukon. Today, we remember those who lost their lives during the pandemic. On a personal note, this includes my father, who passed away from COVID.

Thank you to my colleagues for this opportunity to remember him and acknowledge that he is missed. I am also appreciative that we can once again give our thanks to those who worked so hard in a scary and confusing time to keep us as communities safe while potentially risking their own safety.

Salamat po.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to honour national pandemic observation day as a solemn reminder of the resilience and unity that emerged during one of the most challenging periods in recent memory.

We acknowledge the countless lives affected by the pandemic, including those who lost their lives, those who battled illness and continue to battle illness, and the front-line workers who served their communities with so much dedication and compassion.

We observe this day as a reminder to reflect on the sacrifices made and the strength demonstrated by individuals and communities worldwide.

As we observe this day, we also recognize the profound impact that the pandemic had on our daily lives, reshaping our interactions, work, and priorities. It brought to light the importance of health, science, and the collective effort needed to overcome a global crisis. The pandemic underscored the need for compassion, adaptability, and innovation as people found new ways to connect, support each other, and navigate unprecedented challenges.

We observe this day as a testament of our ability to come together to fight adversity, but looking forward, we must realize that we have to carry forward the lessons that we learned, that we must continue to show compassion and caring, and that we must continue to support public health initiatives. This day is a call to continue to support public health initiatives, to build community resilience, and to prepare for future challenges with the knowledge and experience gained. The pandemic showed us the power of unity and compassion. Moving forward, we can build on these foundations to create a brighter, healthier future for all.

Together, we can make sure that the lessons learned and the strength gained will guide us in overcoming any challenges that lie ahead, and let us remind ourselves that, even in the darkest of moments, the human spirit can shine brightly and lead us toward a better tomorrow.

Applause

In recognition of Bravo Awards

Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the winners of this year's Bravo Awards. Every spring, the Yukon Convention Bureau, in partnership with the Whitehorse chamber and the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, holds an awards ceremony to recognize the top Yukon meeting and event hosts and hospitality industry businesses. Conventions, conferences, and meetings are great economic drivers in the Yukon and contribute to year-round tourism visitation. While visiting the Yukon, attendees spend money at our hotels, restaurants, and businesses. More often than not, they check out our great arts scene, embrace our amazing outdoors, and often stay beyond their meeting dates. These visitors often bring new ideas, expertise, and investment that contribute to the development of the Yukon. They also become great word-of-mouth spokespeople for all of us.

Both awards this year were handed out for the exemplary job that the Yukon did in hosting the International Conference on Permafrost last June. For their role in bringing this outstanding conference to the Yukon, the Bravo Award was accepted by the local organizing committee: Dr. Fabrice Calmels, Philip Sedore, Cathy Koot, Louis-Philippe Roy, Panya Lipovski, Muhammad Idrees, Grant Zazula, and Chris Stevens.

Focusing on permafrost thaw, change, and adaptation, the week-long conference brought together 800 delegates from around the world. I know the Minister of Environment and I got a chance to say hi to folks. They learned about recent developments, research initiatives, and challenging engineering projects in the ongoing pursuit of understanding and adapting to climate change in the world's circumpolar regions.

More than 220 of these delegates spent another week doing site visits and fieldwork in Yukon communities. The Golden Bravo Award went to Gúnta Business Consulting for their event coordination and technical logistics for the permafrost conference. From the planning stages to the mounting of the event itself, the staff at Gúnta proved themselves knowledgeable, responsive, and enthusiastic. Their problem-solving knowhow and grace under pressure during the inevitable contingencies of such a large and prestigious international event were consummate.

I would like the members of this House to join me in congratulating Dr. Fabrice Calmels of Yukon University, along with the conference crew, as well as Jessie Stephen, Blair Hogan, and their team at Gúnta for their much-deserved wins. Thanks for being great Yukoners. Not only are they experts in what they do, but they are also fantastic advocates for the Yukon and all that we have to offer: our natural beauty, our rich culture, and the experiences and activities on offer.

A shout-out as well to the Yukon Convention Bureau for their wonderful work in promoting the Yukon as a premier destination for meetings and events.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations again to the winners — bravo.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the winners of the Yukon Convention Bureau's 18th annual Bravo and Golden Bravo awards. Each year, there are meetings and conferences held in the Yukon, often on a national or international scale. These larger events not only provide employment and business opportunities for locals and individuals but have incredible trickle-down effects for our communities.

We see huge benefits to airlines, hotels, catering, and event planning. Local restaurants and businesses see an increase in visitors and sales, and overall, we see a positive economic impact in Yukon.

The Yukon Convention Bureau provides these awards to groups or organizations that involve Yukoners who have worked to organize and execute these events. This year's Bravo Award went to the local planning committee for the 12th International Conference on Permafrost for the work that they did to bring the conference to Whitehorse from June 16 to 20, 2024 for the first time.

\$2.2 million in total economic benefit for the territory was generated from this event. The Golden Bravo Award went to Gúnta Business Consulting for the work that they did on this convention. Nominated by ICOP, Jessie Stephen and Blair Hogan won for service excellence. This duo goes above and beyond as they work magic on events throughout the year.

It is so important to recognize the many people who make an event of this scale a huge success, so congratulations to all involved and to all who worked to bring people north of 60 to showcase our beautiful part of Canada.

Applause

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to add our voices to the chorus of congratulations to the winners of the 2025 Bravo Awards. First, the Bravo Award presented to the 12th International Conference on Permafrost local planning committee for their tremendous efforts for the 2024 conference in Whitehorse. I heard it was a wild success. Congratulations.

We also send our big congratulations to this year's winner of the Golden Bravo Award, Gúnta Business Consulting. This award is given in recognition of the Yukon Convention Bureau member who goes above and beyond, and they absolutely do that.

I would also like to extend our congratulations and thanks to the Yukon Convention Bureau for its 18th year of awarding the Bravo Awards and to its wonderful staff for all that they do in promoting the Yukon as an extraordinary meeting destination. Thank you to you all.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any 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. 48: *Early Learning and Child Care Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 48, entitled *Early Learning and Child Care Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 48, entitled *Early Learning and Child Care Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 48 agreed to

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports Yukon self-determination in matters of sovereignty and security as the federal government develops plans for investment and protection of Canada's interests in the Arctic.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports the Government of Yukon's foreign credential recognition navigation service to support internationally educated health professionals who are seeking credential recognition to enable them to work in the Yukon.

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

THAT this House encourages Yukoners to check their immunization status and stay up to date on their vaccinations.

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

THAT this House wishes Yukoners Owen Munroe and Darby McIntyre the best of luck at the 2025 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Turin, Italy.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House:

(1) thanks the Leader of the Official Opposition for his support for the Yukon and Canada's united response to the trade war imposed by the Trump administration;

(2) acknowledges the statement made by the Member for Lake Laberge in the Yukon Legislative Assembly whereby he states that he is personally disturbed by the anti-American tone in the new Liberal leader Mark Carney's speech; and

(3) urges all Members of the Legislative Assembly to support a strong Team Canada response to the unjustified and unprecedented trade war imposed by the Trump administration.

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

THAT this House:

(1) requests clarification of the comments made by the MLA for Lake Laberge on March 10, 2025 equating Canada's Prime Minister-designate Mark Carney's legitimate policy critique with the Trump administration's threats of annexation and documented USMCA violations and specifically:

(a) characterizing Prime Minister-designate Carney's speech as having an "anti-American tone"; and

(b) framing Prime Minister-designate Carney's criticism as comparable to the "unjustified imposition of tariffs by the US administration", which violates international law; and

(2) declares its unwavering commitment to vigorously asserting and defending Canadian sovereignty, upholding Canada's right to independently critique foreign policy actions, and protecting our national interests against all challenges.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to continue supporting the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the continuation of contract policing with provinces and territories, including the Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to conduct a review of the *Education Act*.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Fire Marshal's Office funding

Mr. Cathers: Yukoners deserve a fire service that's properly funded, equipped, and respected. Unfortunately, under this Minister of Community Services, that's not what they are getting. For years, fire chiefs have been asking for increased funding. In the past year, the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs has been ringing the alarm bell and requesting a meeting with the minister to make their case directly.

Up until recently, the minister brushed them off to officials. Yesterday, the minister bragged that he had a two-hour meeting with fire chiefs a few days ago, but it's clear that the meeting didn't go well, because yesterday fire chiefs launched a public campaign pointing out how upset and disappointed they are with this Liberal government and with this minister. A question that they want answered is this: Why did this minister and this government ignore their warnings until it became a crisis?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is absolutely correct. On Saturday, I met with fire chiefs for about

two hours to hear directly from them and have a candid conversation about their concerns. Over the course of that time, we did have a very robust conversation. I wouldn't characterize it as the meeting going bad. As a matter of fact, I think the meeting went very well. I was heartened to hear the views of the assembled firefighters and fire chiefs. I think we had a good exchange of information. I did hear from them about the need for more funding. I asked them how much funding they needed; they couldn't tell me exactly what they needed. I said that this is exactly why the fire marshal, who has been in the role for about eight months now, is undergoing a review to see exactly what sort of financial resources the Fire Marshal's Office will need over the coming months and years.

We have a process whereby we assess the stated need and then go through Management Board and eventually to Cabinet to make those decisions, and that's a process that the fire marshal is currently undergoing. We also talked about the need for PPE.

I'll certainly continue this conversation in the moments to come.

Mr. Cathers: Well, I remind the minister that, prior to this weekend, he repeatedly declined meeting requests from fire chiefs.

According to the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs, approximately 80 percent of volunteer firefighters are wearing expired protective gear — 80 percent, Mr. Speaker. They correctly point out that this is an OH&S violation and that the government has failed to act in time to prevent it despite their warnings.

Firefighters should never have to choose between doing their job to protect Yukoners and breaking OH&S regulations. Here is what the fire chiefs say themselves: "For years, we've pushed for proper fire service funding. For years, the government has stalled ... The government is delaying funding while blaming fire chiefs for its own failures."

So, Mr. Speaker, why is this Minister of Community Services blaming fire chiefs for his own failures?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, in my conversation with fire chiefs, I assume the role of labour minister, actually, because I have dual roles in both the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board and Community Services. I asserted and told them forthrightly that PPE is absolutely essential to keep people safe and I absolutely must insist that we get on top of this. The fire marshal and chiefs were assembled. I had spoken to the fire marshal just before this. Two-thirds of the required PPE that the fire service has requested is actually on its way. It's coming here right now. It has been ordered and procured and it's on its way. The other one-third is being assessed and we're almost done. It's going to go out for procurement in the coming weeks, I have been told — very shortly.

So, that is the full complement of PPE that's on its way for the fire service. I told them this on Saturday. I told them that we were working to assess how much money the fire service will need in the future. I thanked them for their service. I was thanked. I had a very good cordial conversation with them, and I was surprised when I saw the social media post on Monday given those conversations.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I remind you that fire chiefs have been asking this government for help for years and asking the minister for many months for the opportunity to meet with him.

According to the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs, the government is now seeking an exemption to allow firefighters to respond in expired gear. This was entirely preventable, Mr. Speaker. If this minister had chosen to meet with fire chiefs when they began asking, he would have been aware of how serious this problem was becoming. Because this minister neglected this file for so long, things have gotten worse.

What message does the Minister of Community Services think that it sends to our volunteer firefighters that the government would rather seek an exemption from OH&S regulations to allow them to respond in expired gear rather than listen and proactively respond to their multiple requests for this Liberal government to take action and increase funding?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I spoke yesterday as well — about — anyway —

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we are not seeking an exception until the new gear arrives. I want the fire service to continue providing the tremendous service they do provide. I have spoken with my officials at CS, and we are working to get the PPE into the territory very, very quickly. It will be here soon, I am told. Two-thirds of it has been ordered, and that will be dispersed to the fire service to make sure they have the proper gear. I asked the fire service why some of the PPE had never been taken out of its wrapping in 10 years, why some of these fire service members were wearing gear for 20 years. I sought information from them to find out why this was happening, and I had a good conversation with them. It went on for two hours, and I learned a lot, and I think they learned a lot. It was a very good exchange of information and, I felt in some cases, very warm conversation.

We deeply appreciate the dedication of the fire chiefs and the critical services they provide to Yukoners. I would like to take the opportunity to remind the opposition that we recently purchased a new truck for the community of Champagne's safety response unit. We have heard a lot of news about that, too. We are making changes; we are hearing the fire chiefs.

Question re: Municipal recycling program

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, yet another important stakeholder group is unhappy with this Minister of Community Services. A few weeks ago, one of the Yukon's recycling processors launched a petition that names the Minister of Community Services and cites what they call his "unfair treatment of Raven ReCentre."

Yesterday, the Minister of Community Services told the Legislature that this was all Raven's fault because: "It is, again, because of ... Raven ReCentre's decision ... to move out of processing."

Well, Mr. Speaker, Raven ReCentre has not actually moved out of processing, so I would like to ask the minister if he actually believes what he said yesterday, that Raven ReCentre is no longer a recycling processor?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, there is an awful lot of misinformation in the public domain about this issue, so I am pleased to have the opportunity to set the record straight this afternoon. On February 21, 2024, the executive director of Raven ReCentre wrote to the Government of Yukon to say that their board of directors had made a decision — and I quote: "... to step out of the refundable arena altogether in 2024."

On April 10, 2024, Raven ReCentre publicly announced that they would no longer accept non-refundable recycling materials but will continue to operate a bottle depot and accept textiles, metals, glass, and e-waste. Mr. Speaker, when recyclables are trucked into Whitehorse from communities for processing, they aren't sorted by whether or not they are refundable or non-refundable. This has been the case for years and years, and we rely on the processor in Whitehorse to do that work. Raven's decision meant that the Government of Yukon had to seek out a different option for processing the territory's recyclable material.

Raven's previous executive director was fully aware that they would not be receiving community materials because of their decision to stop processing non-refundables. This was communicated on May 24, 2024. My office and the Department of Community Services has been in constant communication with Raven ReCentre over the past year and a half regarding their own decisions to change their operations but also to help plan for post-extended producer responsibility regulations.

I am happy to talk more about this.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, despite what the minister said yesterday, Raven ReCentre is, in fact, a recycling processor. Here is a quote from their executive director on their website: "...Raven has repeatedly and clearly expressed our interest in continuing to process community depot materials through numerous meetings, emails, and formal contract negotiations. To suggest we aren't interested in this material based on one outdated email is disingenuous, bordering on bad faith, and contradicts the documented record of our consistent communications with the government."

My question for the minister is: Does this sound like a group that is hoping to move out of processing?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate that Raven ReCentre is concerned about what their operational decisions — the decisions that it took — mean for its bottom line. For many years, their free public drop-off has supported recycling here in Whitehorse and across the territory. It was devastating to the community when it closed.

Although it helped to move EPR forward, moving to another system meant an extra burden on the City of Whitehorse, taxpayers, and the Government of Yukon. It was a price we were happy to pay, Mr. Speaker. Curbside recycling is something that our government firmly believes the City of Whitehorse should have. I think that it is a huge step forward; however, these decisions were not without consequences for Whitehorse residents, businesses, and the municipal and territorial government budgets.

Raven ReCentre acknowledged on May 24 via e-mail that they understood that their decision to not accept non-refundables meant that they would not be getting shipments

from communities, because refundables and non-refundables arrive mixed together. We do not have the mechanisms available to us to pre-sort material coming from communities without increasing the burden on communities or increasing cost to taxpayers.

We have a transfer payment agreement in place with Raven to support their continued processing of paper-safe material and other materials, but because of their decision — Raven's decision — to stop processing non-refundables, we had no choice but to complete a change order for community depot transport drop-off locations.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, now, one of the specific requests that the petition calls for is for the Department of Community Services to inform community depots that they can once again send materials to Raven.

So, can the minister clarify: For rural communities that have recycling depots, if a community wishes to, can they currently send their materials to Raven ReCentre to be processed?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear that Raven exited the field. They decided they were not going to do this anymore. They sent that in writing; they told us this over 18 months of meetings with my officials, with city officials, and everything else. The staff responsible for recycling at the City of Whitehorse and at CS worked diligently and very hard to find alternatives to actually service Whitehorse because of Raven's decision to exit the field, and we did that.

Now there has been a change at Raven, and they have made a change; they have had a change of heart. They want to get back into processing of non-refundables. So, that's fine, and we have told them several times, in writing and in person, that if they want to get back into that processing business, we will certainly accommodate them in October. We will go to tender, and they can bid on a tender to get back into the processing in October when the deal with P&M Recycling expires. So, they have that option open. They can get back into it; it's entirely in their court.

Question re: Connective Support Society and Whitehorse Emergency Shelter

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, last May, this House voted unanimously in support of the NDP's motion to review Connective Support Society's ability to manage all programs, including the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. Last fall, the Minister of Health and Social Services stated that the review was complete and committed to publishing the results of her department's review of Connective by the end of October 2024. We still have not seen this review.

Can the minister explain the reason for this delay? Will she commit to tabling this review?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the coroner's inquest into the deaths of Cassandra Warville, Myranda Aleisha Dawn Tizya-Charlie, Josephine Elizabeth Vanessa Hager, and Darla Skookum at 405 Alexander began back in April 2024 and concluded in the same month, and the jury issued eight recommendations.

I appreciate the questions about a separate review of Connective, but I think that it is important to start here to make sure that there is not a misunderstanding about what the commitment was. In collaboration with Connective, all recommendations from the jury of the inquest were completed by the end of October 2024. It was a timeline included in the recommendations, and the work was done diligently by the Government of Yukon and Connective to meet that deadline.

The procedure to independently review recent and future deaths at 405 Alexander is being established through consultation with the coroner's office. The other recommendations were completed. At the time, a letter was written to the coroner to explain each of the actions taken under those recommendations, and that letter was made public by the coroner, and I believe it is on her website.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, the minister has stated that she was committed to implementing all of the coroner's recommendations from the 2024 coroner's inquest. One of these recommendations is that an independent review be conducted for every death at the shelter. There have now been multiple deaths since last fall.

Can the minister confirm that an independent review has occurred or will occur for each death at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter since the 2024 coroner's inquest, and when will these findings be released?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I think that it is important that the member opposite and all Yukoners understand the coroner's service and the obligation for her, by statute and by virtue of her position, to review all unexplained deaths in the territory. As well, she has, by virtue of statute, independent status. It is her job, in fact, to independently review any activity involving the death of an individual that is unexplained. She does that work very diligently. We support her as we can, at arm's length.

She reports to no one with respect to the work that she does. She works independent of government, and that is laid out in the *Coroners Act*, which we had the honour of bringing to this Legislative Assembly and debating several years ago.

I note that I met with her recently to discuss the investigations — the fact that she is doing investigations, not the terms of the investigations that she is doing — with respect to the unexplained deaths at the location, at 405 Alexander, or other publicly supported buildings, and she continues that work.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, on January 10 of this year, the Department of Health and Social Services received a letter from the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. The letter describes NND's deep concern for their citizens and the continued deaths at the shelter. The First Nation has also recently released a public statement calling on this government to terminate Connective Support Society's role in operating the shelter. They are also calling on this government for immediate action to review all Connective programs fulfilling the remaining recommendations from the coroner's inquest and to provide a comprehensive response outlining the steps that will be taken to address the crisis.

I have here a copy of NND's release for tabling.

Will this government follow through with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun's calls to action?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am well aware of the letter from the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. We were hoping to discuss it further with them at the most recent Yukon Forum. Unfortunately, they were not able to be in attendance. I am also well aware of the notification that came last week and their opinion with respect to the services provided by Connective.

What I can note is that a short-term extension has been put in place with Connective to June 30, 2025 to ensure that stability and long-term sheltering solutions are developed. The short-term extension maintains existing service levels while reinforcing oversight, operational standards, and collaboration to improve shelter operations, safety, and community partnerships. This short-term extension does not maintain the status quo, as it includes stronger oversight, operational improvements, and enhanced accountability measures to improve safety and service delivery.

We look forward to all First Nation governments being invited and attending a summit that will be hosted by Yukon government. We will be working with First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations and community partners to explore long-term sheltering solutions in the territory to develop a sheltering strategy. That summit will be held in the middle of April of this year.

Question re: Shakwak project funding

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in response to a question from the MLA for Kluane about the Shakwak funding, the Minister of Highways and Public Works said this: "... despite multiple attempts to engage with our United States federal counterparts, we have not received clarity yet in terms of a path forward."

Mr. Speaker, that raises a very simple question: If there is no clarity on the funding, will the Yukon government still be going ahead with this project this year?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, Highways and Public Works continues to work collaboratively with the US Federal Highway Administration and the State of Alaska to complete the funding agreements to begin project work in 2025 and continue implementation over the next several years. Road rehabilitation activities will primarily consist of the restoration of the existing pavement surfaces by removing significant cracks, bumps, and other deformations that result from permafrost thawing under the roadway. This is part of a long-term strategy to keep the road between Destruction Bay and Beaver Creek in good repair while emphasizing value for money.

Mr. Speaker, the planned approach allows for improvement to surface condition over the life of the road at a lower overall cost. The project will divide the highway between Destruction Bay and Beaver Creek into six zones and restore approximately 14 kilometres of road within one zone per year. The order of work will be prioritized based on current conditions.

The funding announced is anticipated to repair approximately 90 kilometres of the 222-kilometre section of highway between Destruction Bay and Beaver Creek, addressing the sections most impacted by permafrost.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, the minister said a lot of things there, but it is very unclear, and contractors and Yukoners alike would like a clear answer so we know: If the government hasn't received clarity about this funding, will the project be tendered this year anyway or will it be deferred until the government has sufficient clarity about the future of this funding?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question from the member opposite. I will certainly repeat my response from yesterday, but just for Yukoners listening at home, there obviously is a lot of lack of clarity with respect to many projects with respect to this current administration, and this is one of those projects.

I can advise, as the Premier advised yesterday, that there is ongoing communication between the Premier and the Governor of Alaska and between me and the transportation commissioner. They are certainly supportive of this project. Our view is, if it were discontinued, that would be a poor decision for important infrastructure for North America, for the Yukon, and for Alaska. I believe that Alaska and the Yukon are *ad idem*. However, there may be a decision that will be made by the federal administration; we just don't know.

The recent change to the United States administration and its approach to trade with Canada has raised uncertainty about the finalization of funding agreement between Alaska and the United States. At this time, Mr. Speaker, we do not know how the change in the administration will affect the timing and scope of the project. Despite multiple attempts, as the member opposite advised, to engage with our United States federal counterparts, we have not received clarity yet —

Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, so, then, maybe I'll put the question to the minister this way: If he doesn't have any clarity from the US administration, what will the deadline be for the Yukon government to decide on whether this project will be tendered this year?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to point out for Yukoners listening that, of course, the Yukon government itself has dedicated an above-average amount of resources for the north Klondike Highway, irrespective of whether there is Alaska funding. In the summer of 2024, the department resurfaced over 20 kilometres of north Alaska Highway along the Shakwak corridor between Destruction Bay and Beaver Creek. Operation and maintenance expenses for the Shakwak portion of the highway vary from year to year and average approximately \$4.2 million per year since fiscal 2022-23 capital.

So, anyway, a trip down memory lane — I'm sure the members opposite wish that this project continues and that our discussions with our federal and Alaskan counterparts are positively resolved and that this project does go ahead. However, Yukoners will know that this agreement was allowed to lapse by the Yukon Party government of 2011 to 2016. Our

Premier reengaged with the Governor of Alaska in 2023 and into 2024, and we made progress on this, and we had this agreement in place.

Of course, there is uncertainty and to a certain extent chaos that is occurring in Washington right now, which we will deal with in a responsible and professional —

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: Shakwak project funding

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the chaos that we're concerned about is the chaos coming from the minister of highways.

We have a very clear question. The minister has \$8 million in this budget for a project. We want to know when it's going to be tendered.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As I indicated in my responses to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, these discussions are ongoing, and we certainly hope to have clarity with respect to either our Alaskan counterparts or the federal government soon — recognize that there is importance with respect to certainty. However, what I would say with respect — I indicated that Shakwak has received from YG funds — an above-average per kilometre funding allocation over the course of the last two or three years.

But for Yukon contractors, they will know that there is \$41 million that has been allocated to the general Alaska Highway and north Klondike Highway infrastructure under the national trade corridors funding, and a shout-out to the Yukon contractors who are part of that. There is \$3.3 million provided for road safety improvements throughout the Yukon. As well, there is, of course, the \$50.7 million for bridges, including the substantial investment in the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement, as well as \$64.7 million of capital investment in community infrastructure supporting a variety of projects.

Of course, we wish to have greater certainty. The world would like greater certainty with respect to the US federal administration at this juncture.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the minister is clearly trying to dodge this, reading out briefing notes about bridges and the north Alaska Highway, but the question is very simple: It is whether or not this government will continue with this project even if they don't get certainty from the Americans. There is \$8 million in the budget. Do they plan on spending that regardless of what happens with the Americans?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important — the minister was not just identifying points in briefing notes; what he was identifying are projects that are very important to many Yukoners. Those bridges in their communities, those roads that we are investing in this year, mean good opportunities for the private sector; it means that infrastructure is going to be repaired and the gaps in infrastructure that we found are going to be met. That, for many, will mean a very successful build season for those construction companies. So, that is what the minister was reflecting on: that this capital budget is investing in Yukoners; it is investing in so many pieces of infrastructure that are required — and in all of our communities.

When it comes to this conversation around the funding agreement, we want to watch what's happening with the final decisions at the federal level for as long as we can. We want this to go forward. Of course, we are going to take a look at reassessing. That's the discussion that the minister and I have had. He asked me if I would make sure that I spoke to the governor about this when I talked to him. Of course, I did.

We know the support is still there from the Alaskan side of the table, and I think that the prudent thing to do is make sure that we keep this in motion until we know that either there are funds or there aren't funds. That's what we will do, because we want to see this project built.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I will point out to the Premier that the Shakwak project is also important to Yukon residents and Yukon contractors. They are looking for clarity from this government about whether or not this project will actually be tendered. I understand that there's uncertainty around this from the American side. The question I am asking is: Will this government go ahead with this project regardless of whether or not the Americans are financing it?

They have the \$8 million in their budget. Do they plan to spend it this year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, today is a textbook example of what we are going to see over the next 30-some days when we hear from the Leader of the Official Opposition — that if you somehow are in jeopardy of having the other tens of millions, will you commit today to going forward with the project?

What we heard yesterday was that we were spending too much. I am saying today that we should make a prudent decision based on if the funding is there. What we are hearing from the Leader of the Official Opposition is: No, no; make a decision today to spend \$20 million or \$30 million more that you haven't budgeted for.

This is what we are going to hear every day. One day, it is going to be: You've spent too much. The next day, it's going to be: Spend frivolously.

Like I said, it will be disciplined spending on health, education, housing, and infrastructure. That's what we will do, but please, Yukoners, watch what comes from the other side of the House.

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 — adjourned debate

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 217, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver; adjourned debate, the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I was on my feet yesterday talking about the budget. I left off talking about Canada's track record, stepping up to protect our allies. That's

in the protection of democracy and rights, and I had just mentioned that Canada entered World War I three years before the United States.

On September 3, 1939, England declared war against Germany after they invaded Poland, and one week later, on September 10, 1939, Canada joined that war. Two years later, the day after Pearl Harbor, the USA joined World War II — two years after us.

The USA involvement in the Vietnam War began in the 1950s and they began sending troops on the ground in 1965. Canada did not join the Vietnam War, but in 1973, we sent peacekeeping troops to Vietnam as part of the Paris Peace Accords.

In 2001, one month after 9/11, the US and Canada declared war on the Taliban, and in December, Canadian soldiers were deployed in Afghanistan. The US-led war in Iraq ran from 2003 to 2011. Again, Canada did not join.

So, when I look back at that track record about standing up for our neighbours and standing up for rights, I think that is an amazing track record. For all the Canadians soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice, we are so grateful. Lest we forget.

That is who we are as Canadians and as Yukoners, Mr. Speaker. We stand up for what is right, we pitch in, and we love this land that we call home.

Let's talk about the budget. Budgets map out our future. Yesterday, I said that I was going to keep in mind my newest young constituent. His name is Oscar. He is the Yukon's New Year's baby, and I am going to think about him and neighbours as we talk about where we are trying to move as a territory. That is what budgets do; they map out our future and they help describe who we are as a territory and where we wish to go.

In this budget, we are investing in the Yukon's future. First of all, I just want to mention a few things that don't have to do with my departments — health care. We have an increase to hospital funding. I listened to the Member for Lake Laberge and, honestly, I don't get his math. The increase this year to the budget for the hospitals is up 21 percent, or \$24 million, and the increase to Insured Health is up a whopping 30 percent, which is \$47 million. That is one of those major places where we are putting extra dollars.

Yesterday, we heard of an announcement around our schools to expand and enhance the school food programs across the Yukon. Thank you to the federal government for their investment in that. Thank you to all of the partner organizations that are working on that. That is another way in which we are supporting Yukoners and mapping out our future.

Let me turn for a second to the budgets from my departments or the departments that I have the responsibility for. Let me start talking about energy. In this budget, we have \$53 million over the next five years, and that's to do the work on grid-connect. That's a nation-building project. That's where our grid would start to connect with BC's grid and where we can buy or sell renewable energy from the Yukon.

We also have the winter electrical affordability rebate. I heard from the Member for Whitehorse Centre yesterday asking about ATCO energy. No, this program is to reduce the

price of our bills for Yukoners; it does nothing to the two utilities. It supports Yukoners.

In this budget, as part of the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative program under the Yukon Development Corporation, there is one project I just want to flag, and that is that Ta'an Kwäch'an Council is exploring a potential pump storage energy project. It's in the pre-feasibility stage; I know that they're looking at several sites, but I'm very excited about the work that they are doing.

Also in the budget is support for a solar project in Watson Lake with First Kaska. That's for an over 4.5-megawatt project with 2.5 or north of that around battery — megawatt battery. The overall project price is \$30 million, but we're using \$18 million of infrastructure funding through the Investing in Canada infrastructure plan to offset that cost. That means that, when it goes to rate, it will not be the full impact of that project, and that's great news. I mean, this project stands to produce roughly 70 percent of the electricity in Watson Lake and will save 200,000 to 300,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases. It's a really important project. So, whenever you have a diesel community, this is a great way to offset.

By the way, I think I heard from the Member for Lake Laberge yesterday that he didn't think this was a good investment of dollars. I was surprised to hear that; I look forward to getting into debate about that.

Let me talk about tourism for a second. I heard criticism of our economy from the members opposite. Tourism is knocking it out of the park. I have the 2024 numbers in now. From 2023 to 2024, the spending on tourism increased by 25 percent. That is a huge jump.

Years ago, under the leadership of the Member for Mountainview, tourism hit a new high. In 2019, Yukon tourism hit a new high and that was the threshold. Then the pandemic hit and everything tumbled. Tourism was hit so hard; it has been rebuilding.

We now surpassed the 2019 total spend in the Yukon by 45 percent. If you look at tourism across Canada, in the Yukon, it's the biggest portion of our economy. In the Yukon, it has recovered the fastest, so we're past pre-pandemic levels, and it's doing so well. A big shout-out to all of our operators. This doesn't necessarily mean that net revenue is up that much, because there has been inflation and there are labour challenges, so there are still challenges, but overall, tourism is doing great for our economy.

In particular, I would like to give a shout-out to Air North. They have done these interline agreements with Europe, with Condor, and with WestJet, and the visitations are way up.

A small shout-out — I want to thank everybody in Tourism and Culture who hustled so hard to support our museums and our cultural centres. There is a small increase for those groups, which again goes to support our tourism here. I know that, for French Language Services, we have a great announcement coming up — très bonnes nouvelles — so I will leave that to come out shortly, but it's good news for French Language Services.

For lot numbers, I heard the Minister of Community Services talk about this yesterday. Once again, I heard the

Official Opposition sort of scoff, suggesting that it's not happening.

Can I just table this, please?

This is the lot numbers for the last five years here in the Yukon. This is lot development and release since 2021. What it shows is that, with our forecast for lot release this year, we will be well over 1,000 lots in the past five years, but that is not yet our campaign commitment; it is that we will hit 1,000 lots post-last election, in the five years following it. Of course, that comes up next year, but from our perspective and the investment that's in this budget, if this budget passes, I think it's \$27 million going toward lot development. That is really strong.

By the way, I looked back over time — I looked at the four last years of the Yukon Party government, and over that period of time, they invested much less than \$27 million over four years; this is \$27 million over one year — again, a great investment in the Yukon.

I want to give one small shout out as well to Community Services for one infrastructure project. There is a community well going in at Mount Lorne. I think that is really great.

Okay, let me talk about mining. This is a huge subject. Just first of all in terms of the economy of mining, exploration numbers were up last year over the previous year, so that's good news — although it could always be better, I'm sure — but that is working in the right direction. I said during Question Period last week, I think, that the placer industry had a record year last year in 2024; it did. That's, again, great news. The big issue has been with Eagle Gold and the catastrophic slide that happened there. It's big, of course, from an environmental perspective; it's big from an economic perspective. It's the one thing within our economy that has been a negative. Otherwise, the overall Yukon's economy has been doing tremendously well.

By the way, the Leader of the Official Opposition — I heard him speak in the media recently that he hadn't heard from anyone who knows why we needed to build the safety berm — that's the safety berm between the bottom of the slide and the camp. So, I have now asked — I think we've had three briefings for the opposition members. I will make sure that he gets an invite to the next one so that he can talk to our officials who have relayed to me that the engineers on-site — both the engineers for the mine and the engineers whom we retain — say that there is a risk, has been a risk, continues to be a risk of an additional slide, and we certainly could not put people just below that slide drilling for those groundwater collection wells. It just would not be safe; it couldn't have happened — so, super important.

Look, I think that there are three options for where we can go in the territory with mining. We have one of them here in this budget, but there are choices for Yukoners. With the Yukon Party, I think that what they have said that we should have done is to leave Victoria Gold as a company in place. Mind you, they weren't going to address the environmental risks that we were starting to see. We saw that, when we applied to the court, they stood up and said that they wanted to apply for bankruptcy protection. What would have happened in that option? Well effectively what happens in that moment when you get

bankruptcy protection in place is that the major lenders would be the ones who come forward and get the priority charges on whatever money exists, and you would end up in a different battle around that, but it would basically be the big banks. That's who would get any money or proceeds that are there on-site. Meanwhile, what would be happening is that we would not be addressing the environmental risks that were unfolding, and they would get more dramatic and — our impression has always been — more expensive to address in the long run. So, that is the sort of “let it slide” approach.

Colleagues from the Yukon New Democratic Party — what they have been talking about is doing a slow or sort of no-go to mining. They have called for — certainly within the traditional territory of the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun — holding back on mining, and recently, there was the conversation from the leader about — well, and this mine is near to the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun traditional territory, but I think it is actually in the Ross River traditional territory — it's the tungsten project.

Look, there are critical minerals — let's just talk about them for a second.

Well, let me back up and give the third approach. This is my sense of what I think that we need to do or where we are proposing as a government to go. We need to work with First Nations to develop mining that protects our environment, upholds Indigenous rights, and supports our communities, but I think that mining is important and critical minerals are very important. They are important for the energy transition, and the Yukon has a lot of critical minerals — lead, zinc, copper, tungsten. All of these are critical, and every one of these critical minerals is used for militaries, but they are also used for all sorts of things. Like, if we take tungsten — this mineral is a metal that has a super high melting point, so really, what it does is make everything harder — stronger.

So, tungsten is used in light bulbs, it's used in X-ray machines, it's used in grader blades, and it's used in industrial machinery for manufacturing, for example, in the automobile sector. It's used everywhere and also in the military. Right now, where is tungsten in the world? All of it pretty much is controlled by China. It could be produced here in the Yukon.

The way that we think about it is that all critical minerals that we produce here in Canada should be part of this whole Team Canada approach to decide where those minerals go. Should they go to our military? I would hope so, but they certainly are needed everywhere. If we start cutting off all the critical minerals, what we do is cut off the ability to deal with the energy transition, which ultimately hurts us from an environmental perspective.

Overall, I hope that we have that debate around the importance of critical minerals. But I will say that, of these three perspectives: to go backward in time with mining or to go forward with new mineral legislation, with land use planning, with those sorts of things, which I think is the route to go, and to make sure that we get mining right, to make sure it protects our environment, it supports Indigenous rights, that it helps our communities — and that is the approach that I think we need to take.

Let me come back to the budget one more time. What is the Yukon Party saying about the budget? They haven't risen to speak about it much yet in this Sitting, but I'm sure that we will hear more. The one main thing I've heard is that they think that the budget is too big. I have also heard one other thing in the one response that I've heard from the members opposite, which is that we should spend more on health care. Every year when we get into budget debate, I have heard from the Yukon Party that we are spending too much money. Then they say: Hey, but you need to spend more money.

They tell us that we need to spend it on doctors, on nurses, on hospitals, on roads, on infrastructure, on firefighting, on the RCMP, on educational assistants, and on our communities. So, what I hope is that the media and ultimately the public, when we are in an election, will ask the Yukon Party either: If it is too much spending, if it's too much borrowing, what would you cut? Or: If you want to add, how much would you be adding? But you can't sort of say both things.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: Order, please. The member has the floor. Please be respectful.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

There is one place where I agree with the Yukon Party. They talked about this being an election year, and it is. I am looking forward to that election. I think that elections are so important for us as a country and as a territory. Elections are where we ask Canadians and Yukoners in what direction we should head. I know that the Yukon Party has been saying that we should have an election since the last election, which I personally found disrespectful to the last election. I thought that the election happened and that there was a choice, and what I heard from Yukoners then and still believe to be the case was that they elected a minority government. They said to the minority government: You should find a way to govern without having a majority. That is what has been happening here. In fact, I don't know of a minority government that has gone this far and been around for this amount of time. I will check to see in the records whether that is correct or not, but after our last Sitting in the House last fall, Mr. Speaker, I went to Ottawa for meetings with Yukon First Nations and the federal government, and I took a moment to attend the Parliament to listen in to what was going on. They also are in or were in a minority government, and I couldn't believe what I saw in that House. There was no work happening; there was no business being done. They were not debating budgets; they were not voting on things. It was at a standstill and it was not respectful in any way.

So, I think it is important that we have an election. I think it's important that we respect the outcome of elections, and I think it is important that we find a way to disagree and do that respectfully. I think that the elections coming up — we are going to have a federal election, we are going to have a territorial election, and I think the Council of Yukon First Nations has an election as well. I think that what we need to do is to focus on our strengths. I am not interested in the politics

of hate. The way I look at it is: I will always seek to build bridges.

I know that we are going to talk more about the United States and I will reiterate what I said yesterday. Americans are our friends and neighbours, but the choices that this President is making are not good for us and are not good for our American friends and neighbours, but if these are the choices that they are going to make, then we are going to need to focus on the strength of Canada. If this President of the United States is not interested in building bridges in the way that I am describing it, if his idea is to put up roadblocks, then we should be building bridges across Canada and building bridges to the rest of the world.

I also think that if there are political candidates here in Canada or in the Yukon who want to call our home "broken", we should simply redouble our efforts. I so believe in the politics of respect and inclusion — inclusion, not isolation; respect, not power. It doesn't mean that we are going to agree with each other. I get that.

Earlier, I talked about mining, and I can see that we have clear differences of perspective on what that looks like, but I will share my views respectfully in this House at all times. I think that our strength lies in our diversity — our ethnic diversity, our religious diversity, our gender and political diversity. I have never been afraid of difference. I always think that it makes you better, the rounder your world is. I think that our strength lies in this land, in First Nation languages, in First Nation cultures, in self-determination, in reconciliation.

I think that our strength lies in la langue française here in the Yukon and in Canada.

I think that our strength lies in our independent media. I can't believe that we're back into an argument about CBC, but I think that this is one of our strengths as a country.

I think that one of our strengths as a country and as a territory has been putting the economy and the environment together, not seeing them as separate — seeing that the way to a strong economy is to protect and support our environment.

I think that our strength lies in tourism and in responsible mining and in growing the private sector.

I think that, most importantly, our strength lies in our people — in Team Canada and Team Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to get to rise and speak on behalf of the constituents of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes — I often say "beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes" — and I hope that the choices that we take here today and in the future of this Assembly will always think about — I think that *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* had it right. It talked about this idea about the past and the parts of it that are so important to us — our culture and our elders — but looking forward for our children and for when they have kids and the world that they want to create. I'm so proud of this territory.

I know there are things always that we need to improve and fix, but I believe in this place. I think it is a wonderful place to call home, and it is a privilege to get to rise and speak about our budget.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to stand today to address the Legislative Assembly and all Yukoners in response to Bill No. 217, *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*.

Today, I rise not just as Premier but as a proud Yukoner. Reflecting on the budget that our government has tabled, I'm reminded that budgets are more than numbers; they reflect the values, the priorities, and the vision for the future that Yukoners have shared with us. Every decision that our government makes is made with the best interests of all Yukoners in mind and in support of our beautiful territory. I want to express my deep gratitude to all Yukoners. We are here not only because of you but for you.

I would like to thank the residents of Porter Creek South. For the past nine years, it has been one of my greatest joys to represent every constituent in this riding. Your trust and support have been an honour and I remain fully dedicated to serving you and representing your interests with integrity and determination.

During my time as your MLA, we have worked together to address the needs and priorities of Porter Creek South. I am proud of the progress we've made. Thank you for allowing me into your homes. Thank you for reaching out with your feedback or ideas. Thank you for allowing me to serve you over the past nine years. Your engagement and feedback have been invaluable in shaping the direction of our work.

As the MLA for Porter Creek South, I am incredibly proud to have been part of the historic effort to protect Chàsan Chùà, also known as McIntyre Creek, on behalf of all Yukoners, especially my constituents. Being involved in the efforts to preserve this land for future generations is both an honour and a responsibility. We have worked tirelessly to introduce measures that will protect this vital area. This past April, the signing of the memorandum of understanding with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, City of Whitehorse, and Parks Canada was an important step forward in advancing this cause. The public engagement process has been invaluable, and nearly 900 survey responses, community meetings, and discussions have shaped the future of this land.

The City of Whitehorse's Whitehorse 2040 plan has provided a thoughtful foundation for this protection, and I am committed to ensuring that this area is managed responsibly for the benefit of everyone in the Yukon for generations to come. This is truly a milestone in our shared commitment to preserving what matters most to Yukoners.

Yukon is a land of unparalleled beauty and opportunity. From McIntyre Creek to the rugged peaks of Kluane to the vibrant communities that make up our territory, we are stewards of a land that inspires awe and envy across the globe. More than that, we are stewards of a vision — a vision where Yukoners continue to thrive. Over the years, we have built one of the strongest economies in Canada, leading with the lowest unemployment rate and remarkable GDP growth. From navigating the financial demands of the pandemic to tackling the rising costs of health care, housing, and essential services, we have consistently made strategic investments that support Yukoners, foster economic growth, and future-proof our infrastructure.

Amid challenges like wildfire response, upgrades to aging infrastructure, or urgent environmental remediation at the Eagle Gold mine, we have stayed true to our commitment to fiscal responsibility while strategically planning for long-term prosperity. We are building a stronger, more sustainable, and more competitive Yukon for the future. This includes forward-thinking investments like the replacement of the Nisutlin Bay bridge, the modernization of the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, and the ongoing expansion of our digital and energy infrastructure. These are not just projects; they are key pillars in positioning the Yukon for success, ensuring that we are connected, resilient, and primed for future growth.

Our government is deeply committed to working with Yukon business and First Nation governments. By working hand-in-hand with Yukon First Nations, municipalities, businesses, and all Yukoners, we are ensuring that our economy remains strong and our communities thrive. With a sound fiscal approach, we are shaping a Yukon that can withstand today's challenges and seize tomorrow's opportunities. The growth in placer gold production, a strong labour market, and a continued expansion of key sectors like tourism, agriculture, and renewable energy all demonstrate the adaptability and the resilience of our economy.

Thanks to the work that our government has done over the past nine years, we are strategically positioned to navigate challenges, including the announcement of US tariffs. These tariffs are — as I have said in the House previously — unjust, unfair, and frankly un-American. For Canadians, this is more than a financial issue, and as former Prime Minister of Canada Jean Chrétien stated so eloquently over the weekend, there is more than money at stake here. As Canadians, we love our country and our independence. We love who we are, because we are unique in the world.

Mr. Speaker, that is a love worth fighting for, and that is what we're willing to do. We are standing shoulder to shoulder with all Yukoners, standing up for the territory and the country that has been so good to us. I rose in the House last week to update Yukoners on the direct action we are taking and will continue to take in response to these tariffs. What I will repeat here today is that Canada will never be the 51st state.

Looking ahead, our government remains unwavering in our commitment to ensuring that the economic growth we have achieved continues, businesses are supported, and all Yukoners have access to meaningful, well-paying jobs. Through strategic investments in infrastructure, workforce development, and economic diversification, we are shaping a Yukon that is prosperous, resilient, and poised for the future.

The 2025-26 five-year capital plan reflects this vision, with \$340 million dedicated to housing and land development, including significant residential projects in Dawson City and Whitehorse. Additionally, we are making record investments in workers, start-ups, small businesses, and communities, fostering a thriving economy that benefits all Yukoners. These investments in our economic future are investments in the prosperity of each person, ensuring that everyone has the resources and opportunities that they need to succeed.

We recognize that small businesses are the backbone of our economy and the lifeblood of our communities. Their growth and success are vital to building a strong, sustainable Yukon for generations to come. That is why we are maintaining the small business tax rate at zero percent, enabling entrepreneurs to reinvest in their businesses, create jobs, and contribute to our local economy. In addition, we continue to hold the lowest fuel tax rate in the country, putting money directly back into the pockets of Yukoners and supporting their everyday financial well-being. Supporting local businesses is a key to strengthening our economy, and our government is committed to leading by example.

Our government is proud to announce that this budget includes a significant investment of \$825,000 in the extension of the paid sick-leave program for Yukoners. This innovative paid sick-leave rebate program provides crucial support to employers and self-employed individuals, covering up to 40 hours of sick leave. In its first year, the program has already benefited 170 Yukon employers and over 1,100 workers, demonstrating its immediate impact. This program helps to create a more equitable workplace for all. We are leading the way in setting a national example of what it means to create an economy that works for everyone.

Another way we are working to expand and strengthen Yukon's economy and support local businesses is through our work on food security. We remain steadfast in our support of the agricultural sector. Local grocers, farmers, and producers are answering the call, and we are proud to stand with them. To further strengthen this vital sector, our government is investing nearly \$2 million in farm resiliency and sustainable agriculture, ensuring that more Yukon-grown products make their way to our tables and contribute to the prosperity of our communities. This investment is about investing in our future, ensuring that Yukoners have access to local, nutritious food, and enhancing our food security for years to come.

By supporting our local farmers and producers, we are building a more self-reliant, sustainable Yukon — one where our communities thrive and our agricultural sector continues to grow.

Innovation is key to the Yukon's future, and our government is committed to driving innovation and sustainability across all sectors, recognizing the vital role of self-sufficiency and local resilience in the north. In November 2023, we launched our new innovation strategy designed to help business ideas thrive. By partnering with governments and industry, we are building a robust innovation ecosystem through initiatives such as the Canada Digital Adoption Program, First Nations coding training, and collaborations with Yukon University, Yukonstruct, Tech Yukon, and Yukon Venture Angels.

In addition, we are investing nearly \$1,700,000 in local media production and artists while continuing our support through the performing musicians fund to help Yukon musicians build sustainable, successful careers. The performing musicians fund also supported 28 applicants, allocating \$226,000 to emerging and established musicians. These investments show that our economy is evolving, and we

are making strategic investments in key industries that will position the Yukon for long-term success.

Our government remains committed to building a stronger, more resilient Yukon by making strategic investments in infrastructure. The completion of the 800-kilometre Dempster fibre line has been a game-changer for northern telecommunications, connecting businesses and residents in ways we have never seen before. We are doing the work to ensure Yukoners have the tools they need to thrive in today's digital economy.

Additionally, the ongoing work to replace the Nisutlin Bay bridge and the upgrades at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport are ensuring that our transportation networks are robust, facilitating the movement of goods, services, and visitors who fuel our economy. By making these large capital investments, we are supporting economic growth and building a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future for all Yukoners.

Our strength, stability, and security are intrinsically linked to our Arctic. Arctic security is not just a matter of defence; it's the foundation of ensuring that Yukon remains prosperous and safe for generations to come. For years, territorial leaders, including myself, have called for a modern and capable military presence to protect Canada's north in the face of global uncertainty. These calls are finally being heard.

From the modernization of the North American Aerospace Defense Command, NORAD, to the federal government's bold defence policy update and Canada's commitment to accelerating timelines to meet NATO's two-percent defence spending target, we are finally aligning ambition with the realities of our northern homeland. The opportunities at hand present billions in investment — investments that will boost Canada's businesses, elevate our global standing, and reinforce our international commitments.

Yukon must be at the table ensuring that these investments serve not only national security interests but also our communities and economy. I'm excited to see the efforts of Yukon's Arctic Security Advisory Council, which has been instrumental in outlining the risks we face in identifying how we can capitalize on the opportunities these changes bring.

These investments aren't just about securing our borders; they're about binding the infrastructure and capacity to meet the security challenges of tomorrow while also creating jobs and economic growth in our communities. Our government is also taking steps to ensure Yukon's leadership in this critical sector. We've initiated the creation of the Canadian Institute for Arctic Security, supported by a grant from the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency. With an investment of \$373,000 through March of 2026, this initiative will lay the foundation for the first-ever institute of its kind in northern Canada. It will become a hub for research, strategy, innovation, guiding policy, Arctic security, and ensuring that the Yukon is at the forefront of shaping both national and international defence policies.

I'm so pleased that, later this month, the institute will be holding its first public conference — Conference Zero —

bringing together policy experts, people with lived experience, and northerners to discuss this important issue.

Yukon's role in Arctic security is not just as a participant; it is as a leader. We stand at the intersection of crucial defence initiatives and we are poised to leverage this moment to ensure that the investments being made translate into real, tangible benefits for Yukoners, our economy, and our future. Together, we will send a clear message that the Arctic is ours to protect, ours to strengthen, and ours to lead. With the right vision, the right investments, and the right partnerships, Yukon will continue to stand as a cornerstone of Canadian sovereignty and security for generations to come.

Our government recognizes that access to safe, affordable housing is a cornerstone of a strong, resilient economy. Today, I am proud to share the steps that we are taking to ensure that more Yukoners have access to safe, stable, and affordable housing. To tackle housing affordability head-on, we are collaborating with the private sector through forward-thinking initiatives like the developer-build loan program and the housing initiatives fund, which will see over \$4 million invested this fiscal year alone to build new homes across the territory. We are also introducing a new support program to replace the home ownership loan program as well as a \$2-million investment in permanent affordable housing.

For renters, we are ensuring that low- and moderate-income Yukoners, individuals experiencing gender-based violence, and those seeking safe housing have the support they need. Over \$5.6 million is being allocated to rent supplements and subsidies, giving more Yukoners access to stable and affordable housing options. At the same time, we continue to invest in key housing projects, including the Ryder and Korbo apartment building replacements through the northern carve-out.

In addition, we are investing in initiatives like the home repair program, the low-income heat pump program, and good energy rebates, totalling \$5.3 million. These programs empower Yukoners to make energy-efficient improvements to their homes, saving money while reducing emissions.

We are laying the groundwork for a strong and vibrant Yukon by ensuring that housing continues to be a priority both today and in the years to come. To meet the Yukon's growing demand, the Yukon Housing Corporation has made a bold move: expanding our housing stock with the acquisition of three multi-unit buildings at 190 Olive May Way in Whistle Bend. This strategic \$6,300,000 investment provides 18 two-bedroom units at an exceptional value of \$350,000 per unit. This marks a significant milestone, being the first turnkey purchase of its kind for the corporation, enabling us to quickly address immediate housing needs without the long wait times typically associated with new construction, aligning with the key recommendations from the 2022 Auditor General's report on housing. We are proud of the steps that we are taking to improve housing affordability and accessibility.

Our goal is to provide not only housing but essential support services to help individuals to build positive life outcomes, furthering our commitment to long-term stability. Our government is proudly standing alongside Indigenous

partners who are leading the way in housing innovation and affordability. A shining example of our government's strong partnerships with Indigenous-led organizations is the exceptional work of the Da Daghay Development Corporation.

This budget item invests \$10 million in the Indigenous-led Winter Crossing housing initiative, a transformative project that is redefining "affordable housing" in the Yukon. Winter Crossing, a 105-unit development, stands as the largest affordable housing build in our territory's history. The investment reflects our unwavering commitment to supporting Indigenous-driven solutions and ensuring that more Yukoners have access to safe, affordable, and energy-efficient homes.

With the addition of Winter Crossing to the existing River Bend housing complex, Da Daghay Development Corporation has become one of the largest private landlords in the Yukon, delivering quality, sustainable housing that meets the needs of our growing population. Their leadership extends beyond Whitehorse as they collaborate with the Kluane First Nation to address housing needs in Burwash Landing ahead of construction of the highly anticipated Kêts'ádañ Ku School, which the Minister of Education highlighted in her response.

Yukon Housing Corporation is investing \$1,330,000 into staff housing in Burwash Landing, including the development of a duplex next year. We are proud to partner with Kluane First Nation, which has identified lots 45 and 46 spanning six acres in the Copper Joe subdivision, located just five kilometres from the future school site. To further demonstrate our commitment to this important project for the 2024-25 fiscal year, we have advanced a pre-development transfer payment agreement valued at approximately \$152,000 for Kluane First Nation. This funding will support crucial activities such as site surveying, utilities connections, additional design work, and other pre-development tasks, ensuring that these lots are shovel ready for the 2025-26 construction season.

The Yukon government is committed to providing accessible staff housing to attract and retain employees, supporting vibrant and healthy communities across the Yukon. Through a long-term land lease agreement, new staff housing units will be built to support the community's growth and ensure that essential services have the workforce that they need.

The Yukon Housing Corporation is developing a new support program to replace the home ownership loan program this spring. This will provide targeted assistance, ensuring that more Yukoners can achieve the dream of home ownership. At the same time, we are making strategic investments to help homeowners maintain and improve their properties. By investing \$1 million into the home repair loan program and another \$1 million into home ownership supports for the 2025-26 year, we are strengthening housing affordability and ensuring that Yukoners can own, maintain, and improve their homes for generations to come.

As our government has demonstrated, long-term housing availability requires strategic land development. That is why we are advancing major projects across the Yukon. In Whitehorse, development is moving forward with Whistle Bend phases 12 and 13 as well as planning for the new Range Point subdivision. In Dawson City, we are ensuring continued

housing access with the Dredge Pond II subdivision, keeping pace with the growing demand for residential lots. These efforts are already driving real results.

In 2024, building construction investment hit a record-breaking \$610 million, demonstrating strong confidence in our growing economy. Yukon residential construction is leading the way both with new builds and renovations, increasing housing supply across the territory. Our government is making bold investments to ensure that every Yukoner has access to safe, affordable, and stable housing.

At the same time, we are prioritizing the renewal of existing housing stock with \$3 million dedicated to the renovation and rehabilitation of Yukon Housing units. These upgrades will improve living conditions, extend the lifespan of affordable housing, and ensure that more Yukoners have access to quality homes. The government has shown its commitment to housing with concrete action.

In rural Yukon, we have completed new residential land developments, including the Dhäl Gähy, which is the Mountain Ridge subdivision in Haines Junction, and the Frances Avenue extension in Watson Lake. In Whitehorse, the completion of Whistle Bend phase 9 adds nearly 100 new residential lots, meeting demand in our fastest growing neighbourhood. These projects along with new housing initiatives in Watson Lake, Old Crow, and Whitehorse demonstrate our commitment to addressing the housing shortage with practical, lasting solutions.

Beyond housing, non-residential investment continues to thrive, with major commercial developments, such as the new Northwestel headquarters, boosting economic growth and creating local jobs. These investments reflect our government's unwavering commitment to strengthening the economy while ensuring that Yukoners have the housing and opportunities they need to build their futures.

Our government continues to take proactive measures to address the growing concerns around community safety. We are working collaboratively to build safe, more involved communities for all.

We are fully committed to addressing the rising concerns about property crime — particularly in downtown Whitehorse. We are funding the Safebiz pilot program in partnership with the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce. This program provides small local businesses with security assessments, training, and advice. The success of this program in its first year demonstrates the power of collaboration and we are excited to announce plans for its continued growth in year 2.

We also recognize that investing in law enforcement is essential to maintaining safety. That's why we have continued to prioritize funding for the RCMP, investing \$5,700,000 this year to increase the number of RCMP officers in the Whitehorse detachment and staff and an additional permanent safer communities and neighbourhoods investigator. We continue to invest in law enforcement and ensure that they are supported in addressing the challenges we face.

Health care is a significant priority for Yukoners, which this government has reflected in our government's record-breaking investment of \$692 million in this year's budget. We

are committed to ensuring that every Yukoner has access to high-quality, reliable, and timely health care services, whether that service is delivered in their communities, in Whitehorse, or Outside. These investments reflect our unwavering commitment to building a healthier, safer, and more resilient Yukon. I look forward to my colleague the Minister of Health and Social Services continuing to share details about the record-breaking investments to health care that we have committed to in this budget.

This is a budget, as well, focused on building a brighter future for our territory. Young people are that future. The investments in this budget reflect our commitment to providing meaningful support to youth, serving organizations that are doing extraordinary work to empower and uplift young people throughout the Yukon. We are proud to provide over \$1,200,000 annually to operating funding for five key organizations: BYTE — Empowering Youth Society; Boys and Girls Club of Yukon; the Heart of Riverdale community centre; the Youth of Today Society; and the Association franco-yukonnaise.

These targeted investments in youth mental health and wellness have allocated \$424,000 each year since 2023 for youth-focused initiatives. The youth investment fund, which has provided over \$74,000 in funding for 19 community projects in November 2024, demonstrates our ongoing commitment to empowering youth to take action in their own communities. I want to thank every person who dedicates themselves to making Yukon a place where young people can thrive.

Our government has been engaging in conversations with Elections Yukon to run a plebiscite alongside the territorial election this year. This plebiscite will give all Yukoners a chance to have their say around changes to Yukon's electoral system. We are happy to see money in the budget for Elections Yukon in both the supplementary budget in 2024-25 — \$80,000 — and the 2025-26 budget — \$218,000 — and look forward to hearing from Yukoners on this important issue.

In conclusion, the future of the Yukon is one built on strategic investments, collaboration, and leadership. From strengthening our infrastructure vital to advancing health care, workforce development, and Arctic security, we are laying the foundation for long-term prosperity. We are also making record-breaking investments in health care, energy, and capital projects; enhancing the quality of life for Yukoners; supporting businesses; and preparing our workforce for the challenges ahead.

As we look ahead, I encourage my colleagues across the floor to carefully consider the impact of this budget. This is a budget that sets us on a path to a stronger, more secure, and more prosperous Yukon. A vote against it would be a vote against the future of our communities, our people, and the growth of our territory. We must work together for the benefit of all Yukoners, because if we fail to invest in their future now, we will be depriving future generations of the opportunities they deserve.

The path ahead is clear. With determination, vision, and unity, we will ensure that the Yukon remains a cornerstone of

Canadian sovereignty, security, and prosperity for generations to come.

Ms. Blake: Thank you, Acting Speaker, for the privilege to respond to this budget. I continue to maintain connections and build relationships across many communities in our territory. I have the privilege of sitting with people and hearing their stories and their experiences. In my role, my goal is to bring those stories and experiences to this Legislature. In their stories, I hear the needs of not only themselves but also of their families and communities.

I continue to hear of Yukoners who are not getting their needs met, who are not able to access the services they need, and who are struggling to make ends meet. In particular, I see the struggle that our youth face and the lack of supports that they have available to them. I also see the resilience of these youths as they go about supporting each other despite their hardships. I am thankful to the young people who trust me, are vulnerable in sharing their stories with me, and who continue to teach me so much. As I go about my work, I also see the strength of community and people who are always there to help, even when they are struggling.

In my riding of Vuntut Gwitchin, I come from a community that is located north above the Arctic Circle. We are caretakers of the north Yukon where our people live primarily off the land with very limited resources. The strength that we continue to have in our community is our culture, our language, our traditional way of life, and our deep connection to the land and animals that provide what we need. We also have many challenges that are faced in the community.

In my riding of Vuntut Gwitchin, we see many challenges, particularly within the education system with our young people who are going through the education system with high needs, but having encountered limited supports within the school. We are seeing younger children between grade 7 and 12 leaving school early without graduating grade 12 and struggling with literacy and numeracy and not figuring out where their path will lead after that.

We struggle with high rates of addiction from one end of our community to the other, which is also prominent across many communities in the Yukon. Drugs and alcohol have taken a deep toll in the community of Old Crow. We see the impacts on our families, on our children, and on the youth of today. That is not something that is new to any community across the territory. The history and the impacts of residential schools continue to be alive and well from one end of my community to the other, but yet our people continue to do what they can through each day to show up, support each other, and be there for themselves.

A critical step in addressing these challenges is listening — listening to the people when they tell us what is not working, what is broken, and what needs to be done; it is listening to experts when they tell us solutions; it is listening even when it is hard. We need to do more to address the substance use health emergency, as we are losing too many of our community members to this crisis. One person is one too many.

We need to wrap supports around these community members and listen to people with lived and living experiences. This means harm-reduction programming, treatment access where and when they need it, and access to after-care supports. One of the biggest challenges that I continue to hear about repeatedly since my return from treatment is the lack of access to after-care support and the lack of access to after-care support for housing for people who are exiting treatment and coming home to the same environment where they struggled to cope previously. That is a huge issue for many people across our territory, particularly in rural communities. We need to make sure that people in rural communities have access to health care that provides them with dignity, compassion, and care. This means being able to access the supports that they need in their communities when they need them.

We also need to provide support to those who support us. We need better mental health supports for those working on the front lines, including educators, nurses, social workers, and so many other front-line positions out there. These folks carry so much, and we cannot continue to lose good people to burnout and vicarious trauma. We must provide supports so that they can keep supporting us.

So many Yukoners tell me about how they lack a family doctor and how that means that they are only addressing health issues when it is an emergency. We need to prioritize preventive health care so that we can keep our community safe and healthy. This means looking at innovative solutions to ensure that all Yukoners have access to primary health care.

I would like to end by expressing my gratitude to those who have trusted me to share their stories. It is an honour to carry their stories and be trusted to advocate on their behalf. I want to thank those who have shared solutions with me, who have helped me to imagine a better path forward for all Yukoners across our territory.

Thank you to the young people who have continued to share with me and teach me. I'm grateful to the elders who share their wisdom and teachings with me and remind me who I am, of my roots and my responsibility, while also disciplining me and holding me accountable.

Mahsi' cho.

Ms. White: It's a pleasure to rise today in this, the response to the 2025-26 budget. At times, it's a bit of a surprise for me, because the first time I would have done this would have been to a fall budget in 2011. At that point in time, the budget that was tabled in 2012, I think, was like \$1.2 billion. I remember, at the very beginning, learning through the budgeting process and looking at documents and adding an additional three zeroes and trying to get my head around what that meant. To think that, in all that time, we have seen a growth — that we have gone from \$1.2 billion to over \$2 billion — I understand that we have population growth and we've had some changes, but that's an incredible amount of money — a stunning amount of money.

And with that money comes a great responsibility, and it comes with all sorts of expectations. Again, a budget is about priorities, and a budget is about things. I have a whole prepared

speech that I'm probably not going to give, despite the efforts that were put forward to help with that. I thank my colleagues and support staff for that, but what I think I want to talk about is — I think I want to talk about the art of the possible.

In 2021, we've heard about election campaigns. Yesterday, the Minister of Education said that, if I had problems with Catholic school funding, it should have been in my 2021 platform or I should have included it in the confidence and supply agreement. Well, I mean, it's a perspective, for sure, but what was included in the 2021 platforms were a whole bunch of things that we, the NDP, were told weren't possible.

We were told that a public dental plan was never going to happen — couldn't happen. It was impossible here.

I'm super proud to say that collectively — and I thank the Minister of Finance from when he was Premier — the public dental plan is — if I got hit by a bus today, I could go out knowing that the public dental plan is my legacy; it is our legacy. I will definitely look both ways before I cross the street.

But that was the art of the possible. You know, I was told it wasn't possible; I was told that wasn't something that we could do, but I fundamentally believe in the importance of people.

I had to listen to so many stories. I had done so much casework about people who needed preventive dental support before it got to the emergency. For me, I couldn't not include it in the 2021 election campaign, because it was so important. I was told during the campaign that it wasn't possible, and I have to say there were some tough negotiations, and I am super proud. I think it was January 4 when people could start applying for that program — that is something that we should all be proud of here.

The Yukon dental program was the precursor to the federal dental program, and I am just going to brag a bit here. The Yukon program far exceeds the federal program. It far exceeds the support for people. Dentists have been very clear that the Yukon dental program is far, far superior. It's easier to navigate; it's better; it has more coverage; it is more encompassing; it is very good. But the very fact that the work we did here in the Yukon was the precursor to a federal program so Canadians from coast to coast to coast, for the first time, have had access to dental supports in a way that they hadn't before is pretty incredible.

I think about what my own responsibility is here and what my own commitment is. I appreciated the words from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources when he talked about that a minority government doesn't typically go like this, and it's true. I will say that it is a lot of work. I will say that it is so much work. I tell people all the time that I am living what I think electoral reform or democratic reform should look like, and I will also say that it is a lot of work.

It is a lot of work, because I could go off my notes about all the things I don't like in the budget and I could focus on all the things I am unhappy about, but the reality is that the budget is still funding priorities that the Yukon NDP put forward — priorities that I think are really important. By the end of this fiscal year, there will have been 60 additional educational assistants and learning assistance teachers put into Yukon

schools because of that agreement. Across the territory, it means more support staff in schools. That is something that I am proud of.

I got to go with the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin, and we were at the opening day of the new medical walk-in clinic. It was so cool to be standing in a space where I knew people were going to be able to get a doctor's appointment the day of — and if not the day of, very soon to that — and it wasn't the emergency room. It was so cool to be talking to the nurse practitioner and the front desk person and all the staff there who were really excited about this. It's one of the reasons why, when the Yukon Medical Association talks about a government-opened medical unit — like a family practice — it is because so many doctors don't want to be in the business of doing business; they want to be in the business of doctoring. I don't think you go to medical school for that length of time to do paperwork. You go to medical school so you can support people. You go to medical school so you can do doctor things.

So, when I listen to the YMA and I see a — they have told me what their proposed solutions are or ways to get around it — a medical clinic, I think, is a great idea, and I think that is something that we should all collectively be focused on. I think that is something — but I tell you, I was super proud when I went to the opening of that walk-in clinic.

You know, just last year, to have fertility treatments included in medical travel — that's a really big deal, and it's a really big deal for Yukoners who want to start or grow families. It was a huge support — just that initial support to be able to get Outside for those medical appointments. To be able to access the per diem — that's a big deal. And I'm excited that there is an *Income Tax Act* coming that is going to create a refundable tax rebate for fertility and surrogacy expenses. I think that's a really big deal. I'm not going to lie: I wanted it to be \$16,000 like Manitoba, but I am pleased that it has gone from the \$8,000 to \$10,000. I think that we should be happy about that, you know, and I think there is room for growth. So, I will leave it there — I think there is room for growth.

For a lot of years, including when I worked in Corrections, I started to develop this understanding that alcohol addiction, alcohol consumption — it's not a justice issue; it's a health issue. Some of the folks who have the most — or who are the most affected — adversely affected — by that health issue could really use a managed alcohol program — a compassionate and dignified way at looking at support. I remember when the Anti-Poverty Coalition — their "voices" program — actually did a video showing of the Shepherds of Good Hope in Ottawa, their managed alcohol program. Then they held a panel discussion of people with lived experience, and they talked about what a managed alcohol program could do for Yukon. I was so stoked, because when they were doing that presentation, I had already included it in, I think, the first iteration — second iteration — of the confidence and supply agreement, so I knew it was coming.

So, a managed alcohol program in the territory — right now, it's residential, which means that people are going to live in there, but it means that people are going to be supported in a dignified way. It's a harm-reduction tool, right? When you

drink non-consumable alcohol — if you drink mouthwash or hand sanitizer, it has terrible health effects, but when you have that addiction, when you have that need, you know, sometimes there is not that reason, right? And you have to — you know, it's also about living, right? — making sure that you don't go into the DTs.

But I think that there is growth for the managed alcohol program going forward, because I think that, if I look to the experience that I got to see first-hand in Vancouver at the Drinker's Lounge, which is a community-run program — and again, it is all about harm reduction. Talking to some of the clients who access that program and talking to the staff who participate in that program, I was like: Oh, that is like the next step here. Because it supports people in a dignified way, but it also changes that “seeking” behaviour — that behaviour that is hard to see. Whether it is someone asking you for change or someone being acutely intoxicated in a spot where they are not safe, it helps to address those things. So, I think that is like an opportunity.

But, I am super proud that the Yukon NDP, through the confidence and supply agreement, got the establishment of a managed alcohol program.

You know, I look back to the 2021 agreement, and I am going to say right now that the safe supply of opioids has never fully rolled out in a way that I am super jazzed about, but it is a start, and it is about harm reduction, right? “Safe supply” means that it is less likely to lead to death. The other side of that coin is the supervised consumption site that opened in Whitehorse. There was lots of fear around that to start — there was lots of fear. I was really proud when I got to be there on the opening day. I am not going to lie to you: I had a lot of tears off in the back, in the back row, outside. It was snowing, and it was really beautiful out, and I couldn't believe that we had finally gotten to this point where we were going to meet people with dignity. We were going to meet them with love, and we were going to say: Okay, we don't want you to die, so let's figure this out together — and I am super proud of that, and that was driven by the Yukon NDP.

When we talk about the changes in education — you know, we talk about this creation of positions, and we have heard from the Yukon Party that there is too much government spending and we hear from the Liberals about that government spending — well, I am going to tell you that I am really impressed, and I am really pleased that the wellness counsellor position is going on and we have seen a new addition this year for the First Nation counsellor position. Those are important positions. I think that having people to support students and families and communities in schools — I think that is really important. It is also really exciting to hear every year from the youth organizations that have been part of the million dollars for mental health outcomes for youth and the programs that they are running.

Whether it's the Boys and Girls Club of Yukon or whether it's the Heart of Riverdale or others, to have them say that this is what the funding did, this is what we were able to do, and this is how many youth we were able to support — I'm proud of that, right? Honestly, I think we all do better when we have

things to do. I know that, as a young person here, Tim Hortons used to be the place we used to go after dark — or the pool hall. That's where we used to hang out. The other alternative was that I could have gone to bush parties. Sometimes, I did go to bush parties, but at a certain point in time, I made the decision that's not what I wanted to do.

I think about affordability issues and I think about the adjustment to the Yukon child benefit rate to the consumer price index and how it's now tied to adjustments to the Whitehorse consumer price index going forward. This year, there's another increase. It's about supporting people and supporting families.

I think about how important the \$100 per month increase for social assistance recipients has been. I am going to point out here that I am a little bit salty that the review on social assistance hasn't been completed and we haven't seen permanent changes, because my feeling is that, when that comes back, it's going to show that it's far more than \$100 that people need. It's going to say that, reflective of the reality of what people's situations are, it's far more than the \$100 that we have used as the top up, but until we see that and get that, the \$100 is a temporary measure, and it's not one that I am upset about. I would have liked it to have been higher, but I am realistic.

I think about the paid sick leave. I think about how important that is. It's so important that it has been extended again by the government. I think about how important it is that, when you're sick, you should be able to be sick. Two weeks ago, I was so sick that if I had come into the office for three days, everybody around me would have been gone — everybody would have gone down. If we had been in the building and in the hallways in shared spaces, I could have taken out the entire building. I would have been the “outbreak monkey”, if anyone is familiar with that movie. It all starts with the monkey, and it goes very poorly. I didn't want to be that monkey in this building, but I have the privilege of being able to take time off when I'm sick. Because of this program that the Yukon NDP fought for — that my colleague for Whitehorse Centre sat on the committee for — knowing that Yukoners have access to 10 days of paid sick leave means that people can be sick, and they don't have to worry about their bills.

I appreciate the changes that have been made to be able to support businesses that have looked to doing this on their own. Some incredible businesses stepped forward before this was implemented and started their own five days of paid sick leave, which was amazing.

There was some initial confusion, and I'm glad that it got resolved by the Department of Community Services so that those people can still access five days and then they can access their employers' five days and they still have the time. I think that's really important. I also want to fully thank them, because it's a big deal. Kilrich building supplies — they cared and they created a sick leave program of their own.

I'm really happy about the rent increases being tied to inflation. It has been really important. It has really laid an ability for people to be able to anticipate what comes into the future. I was also told that this was impossible. I had spent an

entire five years dealing with the Yukon Party that told me that it was all about the market, it was trickle-down, and it would all sort itself out.

I think it's really important about the no-cause evictions. I think it's important that, when we talk about it, there is still the ability for people to be evicted for bad behaviour. But no more can a person be evicted so the next person gets charged more and I think that's really important.

When I think about all these things, I think about the fact that it's the art of the possibility. We were told that it wasn't possible, we were told that it was unlikely, and we were told that we were aiming too far, and it just goes to show that when you have to work together, sometimes the impossible becomes the possible — sometimes it becomes possible.

When I look to this budget, I do have questions. I do; I have so many questions.

When we talk about the Eagle mine and the Victoria Gold disaster — and I have to say that I don't have all the portfolios anymore. I am relieved that I don't have 50 percent of them; I only have a third of them now. I went to the Department of Environment briefing, and I have to say that when I found out that the amount of money from the supplementary budget — I guess \$1.2 million in the supplementary and then there's additional money in the main budget — and it's for wildlife monitoring and water testing around the Eagle mine — so, just over \$2 million. I said: "Well, is this money recoverable? Is this, like, the money that is going out through EMR?" They said that, no, it's not recoverable.

So, it's \$2 million to deal with a mess from big mining that could go toward health care, could go toward housing, could go toward education, and could go toward affordability programs, but instead, it's going toward oversight at the Eagle mine disaster. That is disappointing to me, because all of the money right now that's going toward the Eagle mine — \$118 million this time in EMR. It's recoverable. Fingers crossed in the future — right?

I was told in this House that I didn't have to worry — that the Wolverine mine was going to sell. We were told it was going to sell. We were told by the now Premier that it was going to sell. It didn't sell, and Yukoners are still paying to clean it up and will continue to pay to clean it up. It needs a new water treatment facility this year.

That site still lives. It still lives with me. I worked at the Yukon Zinc site before it went into production. We were in wall tents next to the lake. I was the cook and my cookshack and the dries — the dries are funny, because dries aren't actually dry. It's the only place sometimes where you have access to water. It's where the shower facilities are. But I remember talking to the miners when they said that no ground was ever harder to work in than at the Wolverine mine, so it wasn't a surprise to me when it didn't sell. I think the surprise to me is knowing that I and every other Yukoner are going to pay for it until it's cleaned up now because we blasted through the money. There wasn't enough collected. It's a legacy of the Yukon Party.

In reality, it's not going to be the only mine that Yukon has to pay up when there wasn't enough money. I think there is

going to be a shortfall with the Minto mine. I hope not, but it didn't sound good.

I think about the questions that I was asking last year about the Michelle Creek court case. YESAB had come forward with a recommendation. The Yukon government said: Well, we want clarification. We want clarification around the YESAB recommendation on the exploration project, so we are going to take YESAB to court. We are going to seek clarification through the court. I said at the time: To me, it feels like the Yukon government is asking the court to do what they themselves don't want to say out loud.

It's interesting, because the court decision just came back on March 5. I am reading from a CBC article: "The Yukon Supreme Court has tossed the territorial government's case against the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board over the board's recommendation against a proposed exploration project in the Peel watershed.

"In a newly-published decision, Chief Justice Suzanne Duncan dismissed the government's petition against the board, commonly referred to as YESAB, on procedural grounds, writing that the recommendation at the centre of the case was 'not amenable to judicial review' because it wasn't binding."

I will quote again: "[YESAB's] report and recommendation does not affect the legal rights of any person, impose legal obligations on any person, or cause prejudicial effects on any person, because no decision has been made," Duncan's ruling reads in part.

"The administrative process has not yet concluded: the ... recommendation is not a decision."

So, I am curious about the cost of that. Between 2011 and 2016, YESAB made 80 decisions about quartz mining claims that the Yukon Party rejected outright. YESAB makes recommendations. It is a recommendation body. A government can accept, reject, or modify those recommendations. They can make that decision. The Liberals were able to make a decision about Michelle Creek because YESAB made a recommendation, but instead, they chose to take YESAB to court. How much did that cost? What is the cost of this? What is the cost of being told that, actually, it wasn't binding, that it was just a recommendation? I am curious.

I listened with interest to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources about my stance — or the Yukon NDP's stance — on mining, and I think he misunderstands. When I said that I supported Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, I still support the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. I support the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation when they are talking about Mount Nansen. I support any First Nation when they're talking about mining on their lands. I support the Ross River Dena Council when they are talking about Kudz Ze Kayah, because I fundamentally believe that the nations should be involved in decisions.

So, I do have questions and concerns about the Mactung mine. When the headline says: "Canada and the U.S. Department of Defence invest \$35M in the Yukon's Mactung mine" — this is also from a CBC article. I am just going to go down, because I thought that this was really important: "Canada's contribution of up to \$12.9 million is set to go toward 'pre-development' activities — design, studies and data

collection ... But in its own news release, the U.S. Department of Defence said it would provide \$15.8 million US (approximately \$22.1 million Cdn)." So, they are providing more money than the Canadian government and it's the Department of Defense.

I think it is important to note that the US said — and I'm quoting: "In its news release Friday, the U.S. Department of Defense said its most common use is for industrial products like drill bits and machine parts. It's also used in the production of military-grade steel, aerospace components and vehicle armour, said the release." It goes on to say that the country has a strained diplomatic relationship with China, the world's largest producer of tungsten. I am quoting again: "'Tungsten is used in a diverse set of DoD systems and is essential to national security,' she said in the department's Dec. 13 news release. 'The United States is overly reliant on overseas sources of tungsten and a secure North American supply for this commodity will mitigate one of our most critical material risks.'"

Now, my concern is that the United States has threatened us with invasion. They have said that the economic tariffs are supposed to bring us to our knees. There has been talk about redrawing our borders, yet this Liberal government is comfortable with the \$22.1-million investment from the US Department of Defense into a tungsten mine.

My colleagues today from the Yukon Party asked a really honest and good question, which is: You have \$8 million for the Shakwak project road reconstruction in your budget. If you can't get that money back from the States, are you still going to spend it? We didn't get a clear answer there, but we did get told that I was wrong to be concerned about the US Department of Defense investment in the Mactung mine. We did hear that.

Something that has been brought forward by residents of the Bear Creek subdivision in Haines Junction is the concern around a proposed land treatment facility at the Macintosh gravel pit. I have to tell you that I have so much respect for the people who live there, because in the past couple of weeks, they have done the best letter-writing campaign that you could possibly imagine. It is interesting, because they all say that they are not opposed to a land treatment facility. They are not opposed to the economic opportunity for the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. What they are opposed to is an industrial land treatment facility a stone's throw away from their houses. They have highlighted environmental concerns like water tables and they have highlighted concerns about the permeation of the groundwater and what that could look like. They are concerned about their wells. They highlighted a lot of really good concerns. The thing that I will point out is that YESAB — the recommendation body — made a recommendation that, with restrictions, it could go forward. But the government has the ability to say: Actually, no, we heard from residents. We understand their concerns and we agree that it could go in a different location. It could go in a location that removes any of that conflict between residents and industrialization.

So, I'm hoping — I'm hoping that the ministers who make that decision — I'm hoping that they heard from those folks out

in Haines Junction. I'm hoping that they listened to the information that they were given, because it was really important, and it really meant a lot to them. They wrote letters and talked about how they felt about it, and they had well-researched papers, and they highlighted the concerns, and I think that it is all valid. I'm hoping that the Liberal government hears those concerns and makes, you know — changes that recommendation — they make a suggestion for it to go somewhere else.

You know, I thought it was really interesting yesterday when the Minister of Community Services was talking about his two-hour meeting with firefighters on the weekend. Part of the reason why — I'm curious about it, because it makes me wonder why he didn't listen sooner, because if you had that conversation with the firefighters sooner, then maybe they wouldn't have come out with their recent press information, right? Like, we just have to look at the budget to know that the Fire Marshal's Office budget is lower than previous years. You know, from the perspective of folks I have talked to, they say it almost feels like political retribution because they raised the issue of funding publicly months ago.

You know, Raven Recycling — now Raven ReCentre — for 10 years, they told the territory that we needed to move to a more sustainable form of recycling, because recycling wasn't free. Just after I got elected, I was involved in those — I was going to their presentations. They were presenting at City Hall; they were presenting to the public. They said that the only way for things to go on in recycling was that there had to be a sustainable funding stream, and it couldn't just be diversion credits. They were pitching curbside collection years ago.

So, for the same minister to, you know — who just recently had a conversation with firefighters — say what was said today in Question Period in the way that it was said, like it was Raven's fault — the sheer audacity of shutting down the public drop-off, the nerve of saying that Yukon needed to do better when it came to recycling and pushing government there — let's be clear: This would not have happened without Raven. We would not be talking about extended producer responsibility; we would not be talking about that program starting this fall; we would not be in a spot where we were funding curbside collection, which I think is important; but again, it feels like retribution.

Fire marshals are concerned. They spoke out; their budget is less. I think that's not good. Whether it's a perceived or an actual conflict, the point is that it's a perceived conflict. We can see it. You know, it's going to be up to the minister to tell us during debate if it is — if it's more than that.

I think back to the meeting that I was at a couple weeks ago — well, not a couple weeks ago — it was last week; you know how time is; it kind of bends — at Holy Family Elementary School. I was listening to the teachers talk at the school council meeting. They talked about the importance of addressing the 2023 professional development day that the Catholic schools hosted, and they talked about how they still hurt from that.

So, in 2023, professional development day, the Catholic PD committee worked really hard on this day, and it started

with a Mass. This is important to know. The Mass that they had to attend was not optional. It was not an optional thing. It wasn't like: You can meet us for a coffee if you like before the meetings get started. It was a required thing.

They went to a Mass where the bishop said transphobic and homophobic things, and 40 educators stood up and left the Mass; they left. And there was a superintendent of schools there. What made it worse was that, after that, the bishop went to where their meeting was being held, and teachers who were upset were told that they had to let him sit there by the superintendent. Then they wrote letters, and they said that they were concerned. They said they wanted to talk about it. They said they wanted to be heard about it.

I want to tell you right now, to be perfectly frank, that I actually thought it was going to get dealt with in 2024, which is one of the reasons why I am talking about it now in 2025. I really thought it was going to get addressed by the Department of Education. I really thought there was going to be an opportunity for educators to say how upset they were and how hurt they were. I really thought they were going to be able to tell the Department of Education — and hear back from the Department of Education — about how the Department of Education was going to support them, going forward.

When I was at the school council meeting last week and I heard from educators that it had not happened, I was so disappointed. I was so disappointed, because that relationship is broken.

When teachers at school council meetings are dealing with homophobic slurs — they are employees of the Department of Education, of the Yukon government, and they have protections. The SOGI policy, the sexual orientation and gender identity policy, extends to them. They should have an expectation to be able to go into their workplaces and not face that discrimination. And when they did, when they asked for support, they got letters back saying: Absolutely, SOGI applies to those spaces. And they said: Okay, but how are you enforcing this? How are you making sure that I can go to these meetings and not face this discrimination?

The reality is that we have questions — the NDP — we have questions in every department. We have questions about policies and direction decisions. You know, I want to talk about the old Macaulay Lodge site, and ultimately, I am going to talk with my colleague about it, and then my colleague — the MLA for Whitehorse Centre — is going to talk about it. How did a place that was supposed to be for affordable housing turn into what is being advertised for sale right now? How did it go from being affordable housing to \$3,000 a month in rent? How is that affordable? That is certainly not the housing projects that are being built in Whistle Bend with that affordability lens. It's not the same.

So, we have questions; we have suggestions. I'm looking forward to bringing some of those ideas forward. I think — I don't know — I go through spits and bouts. Sometimes, I'm really angry and I just want to criticize, but really, more than anything, I want us to talk about solutions. I understand that there are different solutions and different ideas on how to move things forward, but the reality is that not going forward with a

plan doesn't make any sense for me. Not going forward without building relationships doesn't make sense to me. Not going forward — yes — in a way that seems to answer the needs of people doesn't make sense to me.

I look forward to budget debate. I look forward to moving out of the responses to the budget. I look forward to getting into Committee of the Whole at some point, and I thank the House for their time.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you, I want to thank everyone who has risen over the past few days to speak to second reading of this bill. I want to thank them for their comments and questions and also the issues that they have brought up. Some are new; some are recurring priorities of our colleagues, and this is good. This is healthy, and this is right. This is why we are here: to speak on behalf of our constituents and represent their needs and also the needs of the parties as well.

It is a bit disappointing that some members in the Chamber do not rise to speak to the budget and do not articulate their voice and their perspective on behalf of their constituents, because their constituents certainly do have viewpoints, priorities, and needs, and this must be said in the Chamber.

We have definitely come a long way since my days in the opposition. I remember those first five years in here. I don't think that anybody would have dreamt of not responding to the second reading of a major budget, but that is, I guess, how it is. I do know how important it is that we do speak to the budget. So, to Yukoners whose MLAs do not speak on behalf of this, I hope that you hear your priorities articulated by those who do speak and by the government. We certainly, on our side, are aiming to speak for you when we rise and when we speak to all Yukoners.

As I often do when I rise in the Chamber, I do want to extend my gratitude. I want to thank the remarkable public servants in the Department of Finance who have once again done a tremendous amount of work on this budget. Thank you as well to all of the remarkable public servants who do not work in the Department of Finance but work in support and have done a lot of tremendous work making the budget happen, from the variance reporting onward. The conversations are ongoing for the complete year for the budget we are in, the budget that Public Accounts will present, and the budget that you are designing. There are lots of teams and departments who work on that day in and day out. I just want to say that Yukoners are so fortunate to have those public servants working so hard for us. We are very grateful and I am very grateful, so thank you to the public service.

I also want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for my constituents in Dawson City and everyone who lives in the riding of Klondike. Thank you for continuing to entrust me with the privilege of being your voice. It has been an honour,

for sure, which I have had since 2011. A lot of my colleagues in this House are from the class of 2011.

To be able to speak for and to advocate for our communities is extremely important, and it's an honour and a privilege.

I have held a lot of different roles over those years. I think, though, that the honour of getting to represent your neighbours, your elders, your friends, your family, your role models — that is truly unmatched out of any other title that we get the honour of holding in this esteemed House.

Mr. Speaker, as we look at this budget and the second reading for it, I am pleased to reiterate that the Government of Yukon is committed to supporting Yukoners and communities while considering how to most effectively allocate financial resources. This budget addresses the needs of Yukoners with significant investments in health care and significant investments in education and in housing. It fulfills our commitment to making lives more affordable for Yukoners while investing in the programs and infrastructure that the territory needs to thrive.

Budget 2025-26 reflects our commitment to keeping life affordable for Yukoners with: over \$47.3 million for funding for early learning and childcare programs, including the universal childcare program; \$3.8 million for a new winter electrical affordability rebate; \$4.8 million for the national school food program; funding for free transit initiatives; and increases in the legislative grants, such as social assistance, post-secondary grants, and homeowners grants.

This budget also includes a record-setting \$57.6 million capital investment in the Yukon Housing Corporation for the construction of new affordable housing units, continued tenancy support, and programs responding to housing needs for Yukoners. So many other investments have been made, too. I am very proud of them. This year, when designing and writing the budget speech with my colleagues, we decided that just saying the numbers is one thing, but having the ministers, in their response in their time in the Legislative Assembly, talk about the value of those dollars — that was really important to us this year — to make sure that we didn't just talk about the numbers, but we talk about the departments' efforts in getting that money out to Yukoners. It's one thing to announce, like I just did, the \$57.6 million in capital investment in the Yukon Housing Corporation; it's another thing to hear the Premier, whose department that is, reflect and expand upon it. That is extremely important, because I believe that numbers are just numbers sometimes, and there is an awful lot of blood, sweat, and tears that go behind those numbers.

I know that my colleagues are very proud of the work that their departments are doing — the investments that they themselves have brought forward so that we can best invest in Yukoners and in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, the Yukon is such a dynamic and growing territory. This budget responds to the pressures of the rising population and challenges from the impacts of climate change and environmental emergencies while continuing to diversify our economy.

We are investing in housing and other programs to enhance affordability. We are supporting economic growth by strengthening businesses and critical infrastructure while prioritizing the safety and well-being of families and communities. We're supporting Yukoners. It's the foundation of all that we strive to do here. This is why we choose to ask Yukoners for our mandate to sit in these chairs.

I won't go on much further than that, but I again do want to thank those who have put some time and effort into the second reading. I'm very proud to be part of a government that builds, that invests, and that cares so deeply about the supports necessary for Yukon.

Also, in this 35th Legislative Assembly, I want to thank the New Democrats for joining us in this fight and for their commitment to our combined priorities.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Deputy Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 217 agreed to

Bill No. 218: Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26 — Second Reading

Deputy Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 218, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Silver: I rise today to speak in support of Bill No. 218, otherwise known as the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26*. If passed, this bill will provide spending authority for the first two months of the fiscal year.

As with previous years, this funding will ensure that the government has the necessary appropriations to fund the programs and services that Yukoners expect and rely upon as members debate the main estimates in this Assembly.

The 2025-26 interim supply bill will grant spending authority to departments for the months of April and May while this process is underway. The total value of the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26* is approximately \$566 million. That includes \$459.5 million in operation and maintenance spending and there is \$101.5 million in capital spending.

Mr. Speaker, the main estimates for 2025-26 show a government continuing to invest in critical areas for the territory, including affordability for Yukoners and territory-wide growth, which includes supports for the business community, advancements in reconciliation, and investments in community safety and well-being. It also shows continuing progress on key priorities for this government, including advancing work on our commitments outlined in *Our Clean Future*.

This interim supply bill supports governments as we begin work toward these initiatives in 2025-26. It provides critical operation funding in order to allow departments to meet their financial obligations at the start of the fiscal year. The bill ensures that government services continue and that employees, Yukon businesses, and government contractors continue to get paid until the 2025-26 main estimates receive assent.

As in previous years, the majority of the funding includes one-sixth of the forecast budget as well as large payments due early in the fiscal year, such as the comprehensive municipal grants, the Yukon Hospital Corporation funding agreement, the Yukon University funding agreement, social assistance payments, funding for universal childcare expenses, and funding for the court-appointed receiver of the Victoria Gold Corporation to continue necessary remediation work at the Eagle Gold mine site.

The Yukon's comprehensive municipal grants are paid out on April 1 of each year. This bill ensures that organizations, corporations, and levels of government have the money that they need to fund their operations. It also includes the first installment necessary for the operations of Yukon schools as well as funds for fire management to support potential needs for fire suppression and flood response.

There are also funds for land development to allow for early construction to begin and funds for early payments in the year for contracts, such as the RCMP and 911 contracts. Because of the large one-time payments, the total amount included as part of the interim supply bill is closer to a quarter of the government's total budget for the fiscal year. So, while some of the numbers reflect more than a sixth of the

government's budget, I will explain in further detail how these figures are determined during Committee of the Whole.

The *First Appropriation Act 2025-26* provides spending authority for the full year.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief in my comments. This vote is a confidence vote and, as with all confidence votes for this Liberal government, the Yukon Party Official Opposition will be voting against it. Over 70 percent of Yukoners want an election now and this Liberal government has lost the confidence of Yukoners.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I think about the Yukon Party poll that maybe we are referencing with the 70 percent of Yukoners. I would note that the Yukon NDP had the strongest amount of growth in that. Looking at those numbers, it looks like we could have a really exciting minority government going forward as well where we could work together to achieve really important things.

But what I will say is that when we talk about interim supply bills, it's about making sure that government continues to operate. It's about making sure that the hospital has access to funding. It's about making sure that schools are open, that their doors are open, that teachers are being paid, and that folks on the highways crews are able to clear snow. It's about the day-to-day running of government.

I appreciate — well, actually, I don't appreciate — I don't. The reality is that I don't necessarily appreciate the position of my colleagues, but I do really appreciate the work that is done by the public service across the territory to make sure that people have access to what they need, that they have the supports they need, and that they can do the incredible work that they do, so the Yukon NDP will be voting in support of the interim supply bill.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close the debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the comments from the Leader of the Third Party, and I will give a shout-out as well that, even outside of the CASA, I believe that the Leader of the Third Party voted in favour of a budget regardless of what poli-sci would tell you if you went to school for poli-sci. It does have to do with intent, and it does have to do with all of the things that we talked about. I do appreciate the fact that we will hopefully have the ability to move forward on this extremely important funding for those extremely important government initiatives for their two months of the budget but also those bigger payments that are very, very important for other governments, including the comprehensive municipal grant.

Much appreciated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Deputy Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 218 agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 218, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

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

Chair: The matter before Committee is general debate on Bill No. 218, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, I am pleased to rise in Committee of the Whole to speak to Bill No. 218, otherwise known as the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26*. If passed, this bill will provide spending authority for the first two months of the fiscal year.

Members will be familiar with this bill, as it includes funding that will ensure that the government has the necessary appropriations to fund the programs and services that Yukoners expect and rely upon as we debate the main estimates.

As with previous years, the 2025-26 interim supply bill will grant spending authorities to departments for the months of April and May while this process is underway. The total value of the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26* is \$566 million, or 24 percent of the total government budget. This includes \$459.5 million in operation and maintenance spending, and there is \$101.5 million in capital spending.

This interim supply bill provides critical operational funding in order to allow departments to meet their fiscal financial obligations at the start of the fiscal year. The bill will ensure that the government services continue and that employees and Yukon businesses and government contractors continue to get paid until the 2025-26 main estimates are passed.

The majority of the funding includes the regular one-sixth of the forecast budget as well as large payments due early in the fiscal year for items such as the comprehensive municipal grants, the Yukon Hospital Corporation funding agreement, the Yukon University funding agreement, expenses for universal childcare needed at the start of the fiscal year, and funding for the court-appointed receiver of the Victoria Gold Corporation to continue necessary remediation work at the Eagle Gold mine site.

The Yukon's comprehensive municipal grants are paid out on April 1 of each year. This bill will ensure that the organizations, corporations, and other levels of government have the money they need to fund their operations. This bill also includes funding that will allow government to advance work on fire and flood management should it be required early in the fiscal year, funding to meet commitments to the RCMP and the government's 911 contract, and several transfer payment agreements across multiple departments.

Additionally, included in the *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26* are funds for various commitments and transfer payment agreements in the Department of Tourism and Culture as well as the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. It also includes funding for Yukon schools for the first two months of the fiscal year. To better inform members on these items, I will provide an overview of what specifically is included in this bill from a number of perspectives.

I did mention the legislated grants. This year's interim supply bill includes \$49.6 million in that area, the largest of

which includes \$29.5 million for the comprehensive municipal grants; \$11.8 million for grants in lieu of property taxes for municipalities; \$4.4 million for social assistance payments; and \$1.2 million for post-secondary student grants, childcare subsidies, student accommodations, and transportation. There is also \$586,000 for Yukon seniors income supplement payment and \$1 million for medical travel subsidies.

Beyond these grants, funding agreements to the Yukon Hospital Corporation and Yukon University make up \$54 million and \$7.8 million respectively; funding for the court-appointed receiver of the Victoria Gold Corporation is \$55 million to ensure that resources are available to support necessary environmental protection during the spring freshet period in April and May.

Non-governmental organizations also depend on these payments to continue their operations without interruption. Under Health and Social Services, this bill will include one-quarter of the grants and transfer payment agreements with NGOs — non-governmental organizations — worth \$16 million. Higher amounts to the Department of Justice reflect early payments in the year for contracts, including \$11 million for the RCMP and 911 contracts, which I mentioned previously. Finally, higher amounts in the Department of Education reflect early funds necessary for universal childcare as well as resources needed to meet agreements, purchases, and contracts in Yukon schools at the start of the fiscal year. These requirements make up approximately \$10 million and \$12 million respectively. Also, within the Department of Education are funds necessary to meet commitments under the government's busing contracts, and that totals \$4.6 million.

In capital, \$101.5 million will be used to ensure the delivery of major capital infrastructure projects, ensuring that they progress as planned to take full advantage of the summer construction season. This funding will support both new and ongoing capital projects as they advance through the first two periods of the fiscal year.

The interim supply bill will also enable capital transfer payments to recipients who meet spring construction milestones and facilitate the procurement of major equipment deliveries expected early in the fiscal year. This is just a snapshot of some of the more significant items that are included in the interim supply bill and that may fall outside of the one-sixth allocation. As in previous years, the remaining amounts are largely operational and otherwise fall under a standard two-month distribution of funds.

The *First Appropriation Act 2025-26* provides spending authority for the full year. With that being said, passing this interim supply bill helps to ensure that services are still provided to Yukoners while we have thorough discussion in this House on the mains.

Thank you very much for your time; I appreciate it.

Mr. Cathers: Madam Chair, it will not likely come as a surprise that we will be focusing questions on the budget itself rather than asking them at the interim supply stage, so I will turn over the floor to the Third Party.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, we are most interested in questions on the mains, so with that, we have no questions for the interim supply bill.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 218, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26*? Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause 1.

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses, schedules, the preamble, and the title of Bill No. 218, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses, schedules, the preamble, and the title of Bill No. 218 read and agreed to

Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses, schedules, the preamble, and the title of Bill No. 218, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.
*Clauses 1 and 2 and Schedules A and B agreed to
On Preamble*

Preamble agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 218, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that the Chair report Bill No. 218, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 218, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2025-26*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

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

Deputy Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 216, *Third Appropriation Act 2024-25*, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Silver: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to begin debate on the third appropriation act for 2024-25. Bill No. 216 represents the *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

As members are aware, supplementary estimates reflect adjustments to the mains that are approved by the Legislative Assembly each spring. These adjustments provide the flexibility to allocate additional funding or reallocate existing funding to address emerging priorities, unexpected expenses, or shifts in program needs that arise after the main budget has been approved.

Frequently, this funding supports critical responses to emergencies such as wildfires, floods, or environmental disasters that demand immediate and substantial financial resources beyond what was originally anticipated. This process allows us to adapt and to change circumstances while remaining aligned with the goals and priorities of the government.

The Yukon faces a complex array of challenges, with the ongoing response to the Eagle Gold heap leach failure from June 2024 being a primary concern. There are also continued pressures on housing, health care, and infrastructure.

These supplementary estimates demonstrate progress on the pressing priorities while maintaining Yukon's strong fiscal position. Our approach helps to ensure that families and communities remain safe and healthy, that our economies experience broad-based growth, that the environment is protected, and that prosperity and reconciliation advance together.

Mr. Speaker, the *Third Appropriation Act 2024-25* proposes an increase of \$114.3 million in new operation and maintenance spending alongside a \$15.8 million increase for capital projects.

This increase in operation and maintenance spending is offset by \$7.9 million in new recoveries for O&M projects and \$3.8 million in new capital recoveries, totalling \$11.7 million in additional recoveries.

These supplementary estimates also reflect a \$7.8 million increase in revenues compared to the figures presented in the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*.

As a result of these changes, our adjustment forecast projects a surplus of \$57.6 million, which is a decrease from the \$75.4 million forecast in the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*.

The additional \$55 million in funding for the Victoria Gold receivership is provided as a loan, which offsets the impact of these expenditures on the budgetary surplus.

Finally, year-end net debt is forecasted at \$608 million in these supplementary estimates, an increase from the \$530 million included in the *Supplementary Estimates No. 1*. This increase continues to be driven by investments in infrastructure, which will continue to benefit Yukoners for generations to come, as well as to fund ongoing emerging pressures throughout the year.

Despite the increase to the net debt, spending adjustments have been made in a deliberate and responsible manner. I would like to outline how the proposed increases in operation and maintenance and capital spending will directly support Yukoners and address the critical needs of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, as mentioned, the proposed operation and maintenance budget includes \$114.3 million in new spending and \$7.9 million in new recoveries. The largest increase in operation and maintenance is in the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. The Government of Yukon remains actively engaged in addressing the situation at Eagle Gold mine following the heap leach failure in June 2024. We continue to treat the response as a government priority, which reflects the urgency of this situation.

Our priorities are to ensure the health and well-being of Yukoners and to protect the environment. The receiver has been in control of the mine site since August to remediate and respond to the associated impacts from the heap leach failure. To support this work, the Government of Yukon has committed to provide up to an additional \$55 million in loan advances to the receiver to support emergency response work taking place from December 2024 through to the end of March 2025. These funds are recoverable through security bonds posted by Victoria Gold, as required by their licences. The Government of Yukon has made a demand and received \$55 million under that security to date. The total that we have agreed to loan, up to \$105 million in support of the emergency response, is for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources will see a \$3.1 million reduction across several program areas, which offsets costs associated with the Eagle Gold mine emergency response and loan advances to the receiver. As part of this advance, the government secured a court-ordered priority charge, providing the government with a priority for any funds received from the mine in the future.

There is also a notable increase in O&M spending in the Department of Health and Social Services. Mr. Speaker, ensuring a sustainable, effective, and efficient health care system remains one of our government's more significant responsibilities. Today, we face escalating costs in the delivery of quality health care services, a challenge driven by increased demand, the rising cost of medical technologies, workforce pressures, and the need to maintain and modernize infrastructure. To address these pressures, we are directing

additional funds through the supplementary estimates to strengthen health care delivery across the territory. This funding will support critical areas, such as front-line health services, emergency medical services, long-term care and home care services, as well as the upkeep of vital health infrastructure.

Our approach is forward thinking. By investing now, we are strengthening the system today while building the groundwork for a more resilient, efficient, and accessible health care system for the future. This is not just about meeting current needs; it's about ensuring that every Yukoner can rely on a health care system that grows and adapts alongside of our community.

Mr. Speaker, through these supplementary estimates, our government is proposing an additional \$28.1 million for the Department of Health and Social Services. These funds will support health care and social services as well as vital programs, such as social assistance, the pioneer utility grant, Family and Children's Services, Housing First programs, and shelter funding.

The Department of Education is pivotal to the Yukon's future, helping to develop and grow our next generation of leaders. The Department of Education's essential role in meeting the evolving needs of students and educators has led to a proposed O&M increase of \$17.5 million in these supplementary estimates. Now, this funding not only supports our youth but also lays the foundation for the Yukon's lasting prosperity. A significant portion of this funding — just over \$9 million — is dedicated to a new collective agreement ratified in January with the Yukon Association of Education Professionals. This reflects our deep respect for educators and the essential role they play in inspiring and guiding Yukon's students.

We are also directing funds toward initiatives that enrich the education experience. By supporting the recruitment of educational assistants, learning assistance teachers, and mental health and wellness counsellors, we are fostering an inclusive, supportive learning environment that meets the diverse needs of each student. As well, substantial funding has been allocated to continue supporting the transfer payment agreement with the First Nation School Board, which provides student-centred education rooted in Yukon First Nation world views. This is a meaningful step forward in our ongoing work toward reconciliation.

Through the *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*, our investment in education demonstrates a clear and unwavering commitment to creating opportunities where every student can thrive. It is a powerful recognition of the government's critical role in shaping a Yukon where everyone feels they belong and can call home.

Finally, the supplementary estimates propose strategic investments to other key departments to address urgent needs and to support important initiatives. The Department of Highways and Public Works will receive \$8.4 million to maintain service levels and ensure the safe and reliable operations of Yukon's transportation infrastructure and government-owned buildings. It will help cover rising utility

costs and sustain key services for roads and highways following floods, fires, and washouts earlier this year as well as other critical infrastructure that supports the territory's transportation network.

The Department of Justice is being allocated \$3.8 million as part of these estimates to support public safety, the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*, and other initiatives, while the Department of Community Services will benefit from \$2.7 million to modernize solid-waste management and drive other critical projects, including curbside recycling. \$2.1 million is designated for the Department of Environment to support the response to the Eagle Gold heap leach failure, including wildlife and water monitoring as well as planned initiatives for protected areas, wetlands, and other initiatives.

In addition to the increases in operation and maintenance spending, the *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* includes \$7.9 million in new recoveries. This includes a \$2.4-million rebate from the Yukon Workers' Safety and Compensation Board, resulting in a surplus in the compensation fund in recent years. The Department of Community Services will also see \$1.6 million in recovery for wildfire crews deployed to assist with wildfire response efforts in Alberta and British Columbia, demonstrating the Yukon's commitment to supporting neighbouring jurisdictions during times of crises. Additionally, the Department of Justice will receive \$1.1 million in funding to advance the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*, reinforcing the Yukon's efforts to build safer and more inclusive communities.

The capital budget is set to increase by \$15.7 million to advance a variety of critical projects across the territory. This includes a \$10 million increase for land development initiatives led by the Department of Community Services. This will ensure that the department can continue to advance land development projects in Whitehorse, Haines Junction, and Watson Lake, which have experienced higher than expected productivity in the construction sector this fiscal year.

In addition, the Department of Highways and Public Works is proposed to receive \$11.7 million to support the Nisutlin Bay bridge project. As a critical transportation link to the territory, the Nisutlin Bay bridge stands as one of Yukon's most significant infrastructure projects to date. Its development promises lasting economic benefits for the territory, local businesses, and the community of Teslin. The Department of Highways and Public Works remains committed to completing the new Nisutlin Bay bridge in 2025-26.

An additional \$2.9 million is allocated to complete the mental wellness unit at Whitehorse General Hospital. This new space will offer a holistic healing environment tailored to meet the evolving mental health needs of Yukoners, providing vital supports for individuals and families across the territory.

As well, \$2.8 million is proposed for continued upgrades to the north Klondike Highway. Construction was accelerated due to favourable construction conditions in the summer of 2024, moving the project ahead of schedule. These upgrades will improve safety, reliability, and long-term resilience for one of the Yukon's key transportation routes. These increases are

partially offset by capital reductions that reflect updated project timelines on a series of projects, including the Burwash school and Whitehorse school replacements.

We are also seeing some recoveries on the capital side, totalling \$3.8 million. This includes an increase of \$2.1 million in recoveries from the federal government's national trade corridors fund to support upgrades to the north Klondike Highway, along with \$4.2 million in capital recoveries to support construction of the mental wellness unit at Whitehorse General Hospital.

Before I conclude, I would like to highlight the changes in revenue included in these supplementary estimates. We are projecting a \$7.7 million increase, bringing total revenues to \$1.69 billion. This growth is primarily driven by an estimated \$4.2 million increase in personal income tax revenue, \$2.1 million in fuel tax revenues, and a rise of just over \$800,000 in the Canadian health transfer. Finally, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is set to receive just over \$3 million in interest revenue from approved loan advances to the receiver now overseeing Victoria Gold.

Mr. Speaker, the figures presented in the supplementary estimates are not insignificant, yet the initiatives that they support are essential to ensuring the health, resilience, and prosperity of our territory. The government remains steadfast in its commitment to responsible financial stewardship even as we adapt to emerging challenges and evolving pressures. Every decision that we make is guided by the needs and aspirations of Yukoners. We are focused on strengthening families and communities, driving sustainable territory-wide economic growth, advancing meaningful reconciliation, protecting our environment, and making lives more affordable for all. The targeted investments reflected in these estimates are designed to address immediate needs while laying the groundwork for long-term growth.

At the same time, thoughtful reductions in certain areas demonstrate our commitment to efficiency and accountability while ensuring that we deliver high-quality services without overextending our resources. This careful balance reflects our responsibility to manage public funds with precision while keeping sight of other broad impacts on Yukon's future. Despite global uncertainty and unexpected pressures, we are proud to maintain a strong surplus and continue to hold one of the lowest net-debt-to-GDP ratios in the country. This speaks to the strength of our financial management and our proactive approach to strengthening Yukon's economy.

A balanced budget is more than a financial benchmark; it's a buffer against future challenges and a platform for strategic investments in areas critical to our collective well-being. Our ability to navigate these fiscal realities underscores our government's commitment to stability, resilience, and long-term prosperity for all Yukoners. It is a clear reflection of sound fiscal management and our commitment to making responsible decisions that will benefit generations to come.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I will not speak for long at this point. We will save comments and questions for other stages of debate on this appropriation act for the fiscal year that

is just wrapping up as well as for the main estimates for the upcoming fiscal year.

I would note that we are concerned by the increase in spending by this Liberal government. We are concerned by the increase in net debt and that spending has reached over \$2 billion.

The Premier may like to claim that it is disciplined, but in fact, that is not the case. The Liberals are running up the credit card and unfortunately squandering some of the fiscal capacity that the Yukon may need to respond to challenges in our increasingly uncertain world, including those that may result from the trade war with the United States.

This is a confidence vote, and as with all confidence votes, the Yukon Party Official Opposition will be voting against this Liberal government and in favour of an election. Over 70 percent of Yukoners want an election now, and this Liberal government has lost the confidence of Yukoners.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I feel like I'm living maybe in the movie *Groundhog Day*. You know, if you say it enough, it becomes the truth. If it becomes the truth, then it moves forward. Although I appreciate the consistency of the message from my colleague for Lake Laberge, I'm actually more interested in having conversations on the departments. So, we have nothing for general debate, and I look forward to those department debates.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have one of those departments that has a lot in this supplementary budget. In fact, it has the most of any department. I'm not proud of that number. I am very proud of the work of the department, and I'm going to talk about a few things that are going on.

First of all, everyone involved in the Eagle mine, whether it's the miners on-site, the receiver, all the contractors who are there doing all the work to try to deal with remediation — certainly, when I've talked with Chief Hope from the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, she has always talked about the tremendous amount of work that the folks at NND are doing — the technical folks, the governance folks, and everyone. In my own experience, I have watched the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources really try to shore up the weight of the Eagle mine slide both literally and figuratively, and I just want to acknowledge their work.

I am going to talk about lots of things that are happening in the department, because I think that sometimes they get overshadowed, but, of course, the main reason that there is this \$51.8 million in the supplementary budget has to do with the Eagle slide and our response to that.

For folks, I would say that the receiver will be making another submission to the courts sometime this spring. I am not sure if I know the date yet, but that is on its way, and that is part of the court requirement that they report back about the progress on that remediation.

Let me take some time and just talk about the work in Energy, Mines and Resources since the last time that we were in this House. With respect to our Energy branch and the work that they are doing on energy and addressing climate change,

as of December of last year, they had 10 renewable energy projects signed — energy purchase agreements — under the independent power production policy. Four solar projects are active, and they comprise just under three megawatts of installed generation capacity. As of that same time, the goal around solar under *Our Clean Future* of having seven megawatts of installed renewable electricity capacity through the microgen program was achieved and surpassed seven years ahead of schedule.

As of December of last year, in terms of actions under *Our Clean Future* — and I know that they are working on all of them — they had completed or surpassed over a third of the climate actions originally announced in the 2020 plan.

As of January of this year, we had a new regulation in place under the *Public Utilities Act* that now allows for Yukon's private sector to offer electric vehicle charging services and collect user fees on the electricity sold to the public. I think that the team is coming this spring; they are waiting for a couple of technology upgrades to that system. They are letting me know that it is happening sometime this spring.

Late last year, we announced 42 new actions under *Our Clean Future*, and of those 42 actions, 35 of them are related to the Energy branch and being led. So, they're doing a lot of the work and just a shout-out to that group for all the work that they're doing.

On Mineral Resources and Geosciences, I'll just start off by saying thank you to the Geological Survey for their work in support of geosciences and also Roundup. They have been doing a lot of work, as always. In 2024, the numbers that I have now for quartz and placer exploration projects — we received 449 class 1 notifications, issued 45 decision documents, and authorized eight new exploration programs.

In 2024, we continued to stimulate new discoveries through the Yukon mineral exploration program, spending \$1.4 million to support 43 mineral exploration projects that are expected to spend more than \$3.7 million on exploration this coming season in the territory. That program, for as long as I've watched it, has done a good job of leveraging funds. That's always a success of that program.

In May of last year — I'm now going back, but I know that — whatever it was, I'll check the date. I don't think it was May of last year; maybe it was the year before. But when the Minto mine operator informed us they would be abandoning the site, the team successfully mobilized the resources necessary to ensure the environment was protected. Throughout this past year, we continue to work with the Selkirk First Nation on reclamation of that site but also on the possibility of them restarting that site. Just as a reminder, it is on settlement land, so that dialogue is ongoing.

Last year, we did a lot of work on new minerals legislation and that work has been ongoing early this year. We are back out engaging with — last year, we published the “what we heard” document and continue to work governments to government. Early in this calendar year, the team working on that legislation began engagement again with industry and with other environmental not-for-profits. Yes — I am still looking forward to the work on the framework.

With respect to the team at Forest Management, in May 2024, we extended the timber harvesting incentive program for another year — through this fiscal year, and we invested \$34,000 through this program to support 19 timber harvest businesses and their work to provide fuelwood and biomass material to Yukoners. As most of the harvesting occurs during the last quarter of the year, we anticipate spending through this program to increase dramatically by the end of the fiscal.

We also launched a one-year forestry support program with three tiers of funding. Just a start-up number — like, just under \$1,000 or \$750 — \$7,500 and \$15,000 is available for commercial timber harvesters and retailers. So far, we have awarded more than \$150,000 to 36 timber harvest and fuelwood retail businesses to promote efficient and safe operations.

As of January of this year, we permitted 44,000 cubic metres of timber to 37 operators in Quill Creek as part of the Quill Creek timber harvest plan. We built a fuel break to expand the time that operators can harvest in this area, and there are harvest opportunities for all types of timber harvesters.

With respect to land use planning, last year, we issued 84 development permits and processed nine rezoning applications. Late in the year — I think it was during the last Sitting — we submitted our response to the commission's recommended Dawson regional land use plan. We remain in close contact with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as that now moves into its final iteration. We have continued to work with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Teslin Tlingit Council, Kluane First Nation, and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations toward initiating regional land use planning.

With the Land Management branch, we released 82 single-family lots through the lottery system and four multi-family lots and 33 townhouse lots in 2024. This includes both 117 newly developed lots and two lots available from previous lotteries. I am going to talk a little bit more about the material that I tabled earlier today. We asked the departments of Community Services and of Energy, Mines and Resources to go through the lot development and release information. We asked them to give us when lots are released, not just when they are developed, so that they are out there available to the public. We asked them to put it into calendar years, because that's how we think Yukoners will use those lots much more than in fiscal years. We asked them not to double-count if something came back over the counter. For example, if there was a lot that was originally received through a lottery system but then the individuals decided not to proceed, we didn't count that again.

As of last year, counting from the beginning of 2021 to the end of last year, 854 lots had been released. That includes, for example, 5th and Rogers, which counts as one — just one lot — but it is in that mix of lots. Predominantly, of course, that will be Whistle Bend, but we have lots happening across the territory. In terms of other communities — Carmacks, Dawson, Faro, Haines Junction, Mayo, Ross River, Teslin, Watson Lake, and the periphery of Whitehorse — we have quite a few lots coming on this year. The projection that they are giving us is more than 250 lots this year — closer to 280. They are still

finalizing some of those numbers, but they will include phases of Whistle Bend — phases 9, 12, and 13 — as well as quite a bit of community lot development this year, with the heavy focus on Haines Junction and Watson Lake.

Also, the Community Services folks have been supporting First Nation lot development. Sometimes, it is joint work — for example, around Range Road. This year, we anticipate that Kwanlin Dün will get 31 lots out. I think that their goal is a total of about 100, but this year it will be 31. At the same time, in the Range Point development, there is an adjoining City of Whitehorse section there, so we will do that development directly. That will be another 30-some lots being added to the overall inventory. It really is moving ahead.

As I noted earlier in my comments, we can see that, once we get the release out this year, we will be well over 1,000 lots — that's over the past five years — but it's not quite the platform commitment, because we have to move ahead of the election. In January 2021, there were 245 lots released in Whistle Bend, so we need to start the clock from there, but the clock runs until 2026. Again, there is significant investment in land development, including — as the Minister of Finance just noted — in the supplementary budget to work on lot development.

What I didn't say earlier — but it happened in 2024 — is that we had a lot of public land lotteries in communities, so we had Carmacks, Dawson, Destruction Bay, Faro, Haines Junction, Mayo, and Watson Lake. We had a few industrial lots released in the communities as well. We did a land sale agreement with Da Daghay Development Corporation for another affordable housing project in Whistle Bend. I heard the question from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King about the Macaulay Lodge lot and I sent a note to the department to ask about that lot. I look forward to Committee of the Whole debate to answer questions about that.

We have continued to be supportive of the work that is happening in development of the 5th and Rogers parcel. We also did engagement around successor legislation for public lands.

I think I have said before and I will say again that when I have talked to First Nations, they have said to us: Yes, let's keep moving on the successor lands legislation, but let's keep the priority and the focus on new minerals legislation — which we support.

The other thing that I will note with the land management group is that we got the resource road regulations out, and I have now had several conversations with industry and with nations about moving forward under those new regulations. I am encouraged by those conversations and I think that there will be good progress in front of us.

The Premier talked about agriculture in his remarks to the main budget. I just would note that, under the sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership, last year we got \$1 million in funding for over 50 local projects out. Overall, that is looking like \$9.25 million over five years, which is a 25-percent increase from previous allocations.

We dealt with some flood recovery funding around agriculture. I know that we got several new abattoirs up and running last year, but I know that there is still a lot of pressure

around abattoirs and still more to come on agriculture. I will say that the agriculture ministers have been meeting quite frequently since the issues with tariffs have arisen with the US, because a lot of our provinces have a lot of food that goes across the border in both directions.

The other thing that we have noted is that the more we can promote local food production and supply, the less reliant we will be on external influences. So, just as we are working to reduce trade barriers across Canada, I also just want to thank our local producers and encourage us all to buy local wherever possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will stop there and am looking forward to further debate.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to provide an important update on the steps that we are taking to advance and enhance our health and social services systems and respond to the issues and priorities of Yukoners. I think that it is important to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous work of everyone at the Department of Health and Social Services, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and health and social professionals across the system. I would particularly like to acknowledge the hard work of our front-line health care staff. They all work such difficult and demanding jobs and long hours to help keep Yukoners healthy and well. Each day, our efforts and theirs are ensuring that Yukoners have access to essential services and programs.

The Department of Health and Social Services second supplementary O&M budget for 2024-25 comes to a total of \$674.8 million. That represents an increase of \$4.3 million over the first supplementary estimate. We are also presenting a revised capital estimate of \$15.4 million, which is an increase of \$2.3 million compared to the first supplementary estimate, but this an opportunity for me to outline some of those costs. This includes more capital funding for the mental wellness unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital — as we look forward to that opening in June of this year — as well as increased capital maintenance funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

The increase of \$28.1 million in O&M funding will support the department in meeting the rising costs associated with meeting the needs of our growing and aging population. With that comes more complex medical problems and services required. Our government is providing additional funding of \$13 million — just under that — to Insured Health Services in this supplemental budget. We are doing so to respond to the growth in areas such as chronic disease and disability benefits, medical travel, physician claims, and out-of-territory hospital claims. Some of these costs are related to our programs to make medical care more accessible.

The medical travel subsidy increases each year with inflation and, in 2024-25, it was \$174 for overnight trips and \$88 for same-day travel or for companion travel.

These figures are more than double what the medical travel subsidy was in 2020. We were also pleased to add travel for fertility treatment and surrogacy to medical travel last November, allowing Yukoners to grow their families when and how they wish.

In the coming months, you will begin to see new health care cards arrive in your mailbox. We are modernizing the cards that Yukoners use to access services. These new cards are more secure, convenient, and inclusive. We are expanding — I should note that there are funds in this supplementary budget to address those costs.

We are expanding our commitments to land-based healing. This supplementary budget includes an increase of \$262,000 for Shāwthān Nāzhī: Healing With The Land Society for their programs. This means more treatment for intergenerational trauma, for grief, for families, and for holistic First Nation healing programs. In response to the ongoing substance use health emergency, we have allotted a further \$1.3 million for life-saving Naloxone kits. We are providing \$579,000 for the Canadian Mental Health Association, Yukon Division, and this allows them to continue to offer counselling appointments with extended hours for walk-in and phone-based appointments.

The supplemental estimates include increases for legislated grants that make life more affordable for low-income Yukoners. There is an increase of \$3.5 million for social assistance. In addition to basic social assistance, we offer the supplementary allowance, social work supports, connection to employment and training programs, and approval-based prescription drug coverage. These costs will be covered by the increase in the supplementary budget.

There is also an increase of \$300,000 for the pioneer utility grant, and this fund goes toward helping seniors with the costs of heating their homes, a program that we support and seniors appreciate.

Our government is working with our partners to address the staff shortages that are experienced across the health care sector both here and across the country. These challenges of health care staff remain a Canadian challenge — actually a worldwide challenge — but here in the territory, we are working with our *Health Human Resources Strategy*.

Back in December 2023, the *Health Human Resources Strategy* was released. It includes 25 actions under the topics of retain, recruit, plan, innovate, and learn. The focus of this strategy is to make the Yukon the most cherished and sought-after place for health care professionals to work. It is an opportunity for the Yukon to have a unique solution to this difficult problem. It is an opportunity for us to have brought partners to the room, to the table, to discuss and to develop this *Health Human Resources Strategy*. They are all partners in their own right. We have spoken to — and brought to the team — medical professionals, nurses, unions, departments across government, the Hospital Corporation, the medical associations, the nurses associations, individuals with lived experience, including the Yukon University as well, and all aspects of great thinkers in the territory to help and to craft solutions that can help us address these issues.

In addition to system-wide efforts to recruit and retain health care professionals, we are providing an additional \$2 million for more staffing at Emergency Medical Services. We are adding staff to both ground and air ambulances, and this will help ensure that Yukoners continue to receive the fastest

possible excellent care and assistance when they are faced with a medical emergency.

We have worked in close partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to advance our shared priorities. We are united in our focus on ensuring that Yukoners have access to the services and the programs that they require. In the second supplementary estimates for 2024-25, we are providing an increase of \$1.5 million in O&M funding and \$3.7 million in capital funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation for hospital services. This increase has enabled the Yukon Hospital Corporation to replace equipment as well as to respond to staffing and operational needs.

Once again, with respect to the Department of Health and Social Services, I want to thank everyone and all our health system partners for the work that you do each and every day to support Yukoners. This is not an easy task. It's not an easy task in normal times — whatever those are, I don't think they exist anymore — maybe before COVID, but even then, there were challenges to all of our health care services. As our population grows older, as our population continues to grow, as health care services become more complex and diverse, the work that they do each and every day is certainly complex and challenging, but the work that they do each and every day to support Yukoners must be acknowledged. Yukon, like all jurisdictions in Canada, faces many challenges when it comes to health care delivery. We continue to work together across the system to bring more stability and capacity.

The second supplementary estimate for 2024-25 with respect to Health and Social Services reflects our government's ongoing commitment to Yukoners. I had the opportunity to speak to some media today, and I spoke about how, in particular with respect to the questions they were asking me, this is a file that doesn't sit on the shelf for a day or two or even a week or two. This is something that we work on every single day, and the challenges with health care and our health human resources is something that is addressed absolutely every day by the people who have dedicated themselves to health and social services and providing those kinds of services to Yukoners, so it makes us all extremely proud.

I would like to address some of the Justice expenditures that are in this supplementary budget.

Throughout the fiscal year, the Department of Justice and our partners have worked diligently to support a justice system that is responsive to the needs of Yukoners. In this fiscal outlook, it is a responsible approach. This is reflected in the second supplementary budget. This is actually also an opportunity where I'll have some relatively small expenditures, but I think it's important for Yukoners to know that every penny — every dollar — is accounted for, and in fact, the opportunity for us to report on that or provide details with respect to that is, I think, a good one and we should take it.

Through a continued strategic investment in our future, we are looking forward to building a healthy, vibrant, safe, and sustainable Yukon. The supplementary budget that I will speak about today is designed to do that and to meet those challenges.

There are just a couple of capital things that I would like to mention. There is \$10,000 requested by the coroner's service

which is granted here in this supplementary budget and, if passed, will be to support the purchase of six stretchers with specialized equipment to be placed in communities outside of Whitehorse who host community coroners. This will assist them with appropriate and respectful transportation of deceased individuals in communities.

Another capital expenditure is at Whitehorse Correctional Centre's building security and communication system upgrades. That project will replace and update the building's security and communication systems that have reached the end or near the end of their operational lifespan.

In July of 2023, moving to O&M, the governments of Yukon and Canada signed an agreement to advance the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. I spoke a little bit about this yesterday, because it continues in the 2025-26 budget. That agreement will bring \$16.4 million over four years to 16 initiatives that are designed to prevent violence in the territory and to support survivors of this horrible crime. To this end, we allocated a one-time funding increase of \$497,000 to carry forward unspent funds received from Women and Gender Equity in Canada.

The Government of Yukon has allocated an increase of \$100,000 to support the Council of Yukon First Nations' continued implementation of their community impact statement program. This is a focus by the Council of Yukon First Nations — a community impact statement is permitted by the *Criminal Code of Canada*, and this is a program wherein written reports are developed that describe the far-reaching harm or loss and impact that an offence might have had or caused to a community, and this statement is provided to the court during sentencing hearings. I think that it is an incredibly important development. It has been allowed for many years, enabled by the *Criminal Code*.

It has not been used terribly extensively and I think it will be one that brings important information about the community impact — the impacts on community — of these kinds of offences and can be considered by the court during disposition of a matter.

There is an increased allocation of \$170,000 for IT equipment and network licensing programs to increase technology costs with respect to the program — if I can just note the program that helps assist these reports. The purchase of equipment under this allocation will allow the Department of Justice to resume the normal replacement schedule that was disrupted by COVID-19 of some required licensing and network upgrades.

We've also allocated an increase of \$240,000 to cover additional expenses due to the increased costs of law library materials. The law library provides an essential service to the Yukon public and resident lawyers needing access to the legal resources.

The law library offers specialized online resources that may be otherwise inaccessible for most individuals, even sole practitioners or small law firms, due to the costs and certainly to members of the public due to the costs. Equivalent services are available for the public and legal community in other

Canadian jurisdictions, but the law library is unique in the territory.

Yukon University students also rely heavily on the law library's specialized resources for academic research. The Yukon population is increasing and this has contributed to more matters coming before the court, and the Territorial Court relies on deputy judges from other jurisdictions to ensure that court matters proceed as scheduled and within timelines that are established by the Supreme Court of Canada and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Unlike other jurisdictions, the Yukon has not seen serious charges delayed because of delays in court proceedings, which is great. Timely resolution of criminal charges increases the public safety and confidence in the administration of justice. For this, we have allocated a one-time increase of \$400,000 in 2024-25.

More accused people are choosing to be tried by the Supreme Court Judge and jury and this has required an increase of that budget of some \$50,000 for the purposes of summoning jurors and expenses related to space and contracting staff.

We've also allocated a one-time increase of \$250,000 for outside contracts of legal counsel. Litigation and legislative drafting and other matters require specialized legal expertise on occasion within the department that may not be available within the Department of Justice for matters of workload or expertise, so we have noted that there is an additional cost there.

The Yukon Public Legal Education Association, which serves the public here in the territory very well, has been allocated a one-time increase of \$100,000 to support the objectives of the access-to-justice agreement. That funding is 50-percent recoverable from the Government of Canada, and the total funding for this year of that program is \$163,000.

There is an increase in coroner's cases that has meant that we have allocated an extra \$225,000. The cost of the coroner's inquest back in 2024-25 was \$200,000 more than the initial allocation provided, so that is taken care of here in this supplementary budget.

I look forward to being able to answer more questions about the supplementary budget and the expenses there. I would like to thank the individuals who work so hard, both at the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Services, not only to prepare these budgets and to work with us as we go through that process but those who deliver programs each and every day that support Yukoners.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak to the Department of Education supplementary budget in second reading for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

The budget reflects the government's ongoing commitment to strengthening Yukon's education system, ensuring that it is inclusive, responsive, and well-supported for students, educators, and families across the territory.

Through this supplementary budget, we continue to advance strategic investments in student learning, teacher supports, and school wellness while addressing the realities of project timelines and infrastructure needs.

I will start with the school authorities — investing in schools is investing in our future. Every dollar that we dedicate to school authorities is a commitment to ensuring that Yukon schools have the resources and supports that educators need to thrive in safe, inclusive, and culturally appropriate learning environments.

The largest portion of this supplementary budget is directed toward supporting school authorities, with a total increase of \$18,636,000. This includes \$9,327,000 to address forced growth in personnel costs following the ratification of the Yukon Association of Education Professionals collective agreement in January 2025. This agreement, covering the period from July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2027, ensures fair wages for Yukon educators and strengthens the ability to recruit and retain skilled professionals.

We are also increasing the funding for the First Nation School Board, with an additional \$4,780,000 allocated under a newly negotiated two-year funding agreement. This ensures continued investment in student success and reflects our commitment to self-determination in First Nation education in the Yukon.

An additional \$2,400,000 is allocated for one-time personnel cost pressures particularly related to maternity and paternity leave as well as reduced vacancies within Yukon schools. As per the *Education Act*, vacancy slippage within the First Nation School Board remains under their jurisdiction.

To further support students, we are allocating just over \$1 million for additional educational assistants and learning assistance teachers, prioritizing students' needs across the Yukon schools. This represents one of the several increases under the confidence and supply agreement.

Other key increases include \$750,000 to address rising utility costs in Yukon schools.

There is \$120,000 under the French bilateral agreement with Canada Heritage to enhance French language and programming, fully recoverable with no net impact on government spending.

There is \$380,000 in internal budget transfers, including additional funding for biomass heating systems at the Teslin school and at the Elijah Smith Elementary School and expanding school wellness specialist services —

Speaker: Order, please.

The time being 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

Debate on second reading of Bill No. 216 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.