



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Tuesday, April 22, 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 Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, April 22, 2025 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

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

Visitors introduced

Speaker: Are there any further visitors for introduction?
Visitors introduced

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards. These highly coveted awards were celebrated on April 17 at the Yukon Arts Centre with a packed night of festivities.

Since the awards' inception, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce has used this occasion to recognize leaders across our economy. The awards have become a symbol representing the best products and services that the city has to offer. Award-winning businesses represent the best that our territory has to offer. Entrepreneurs and Yukoners recognize the value of winning a business excellence award.

Yukoners also know that the collection of local businesses that we have here in the territory are special and worthy of recognition. This diverse set of awards celebrates both small and large businesses as well as innovative methods, sustainable practices, and leadership, with a focus on customer service and commitment to community.

This year's awards saw nominations from all across our economy, including restaurants, development corporations, retailers, firms, and many more unique businesses. There were 59 nominees this year, which is a new high for the event. This demonstrates the impact that many Yukon businesses have on the community and their customers.

I was fortunate to be able to speak at the awards ceremony on Thursday night as we celebrated these contributions. As I said then, when you walk into an establishment and see a business excellence award on display, you know that they were carefully selected and won that award with genuine hard work and dedication to their craft.

I would like to congratulate all the nominees across the Business Excellence Awards, and a special congratulations to all the winners in their respective categories. This includes: the Small Business of the Year Award to IRP Consulting; the Greatest Community Impact Award to Aurora Wellness Group; the Excellence in Service and Work Culture Award to Cultured Fine Cheese; the Business Leader of the Year Award to Wendy Tayler; the winner of the Business of the Year Award, Northerm; and the People's Choice Award to Briar Rose Photography. Congratulations to all on the significant accolade.

I also want to thank the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce and the executive director, Andrei Samson, for once again delivering a fantastic event. Andrei and the executive team — Marcos Castillo; first vice-chair, Richard Eden; second vice-chair, Trevor Mead-Robins; and treasurer, Joel Gaetz — and directors did a fantastic job. You all have done an excellent job on supporting and advocating for Whitehorse businesses. Thank you for your hard work and dedication promoting a vibrant business economy in Whitehorse.

The awards have become highly anticipated as an event each spring and I am glad that we can take this time to celebrate the successes of our territory's business community. As always, I encourage all Yukoners to buy, build, and travel local and to show your support for the businesses that provide us with all of their excellent service, products, and leadership.

Applause

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the 2025 Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards, which took place on April 17.

This year's reception and awards took place at the Yukon Arts Centre, and I have been attending these awards for years and I thought that the chamber's decision to host the events at the Arts Centre made this year a unique one. Instead of the normal sit-down dinner, the format this year allowed everyone to spread around and connect with people. After the conclusion of the awards, the curtain lifted and all of the attendees were welcomed onto the stage for the reception and music. It was all very well done, and I want to give huge kudos to the chamber team for bringing it all together.

Now, for the awards — Business Leader of the Year went to Wendy Tayler of Alkan Air. Wendy has been with Alkan Air for 32 years and counting and has helped to develop Alkan Air into a leader in northern aviation.

The award for Greatest Community Impact went to Aurora Wellness Group, which provides mental health services to Yukoners in person and Canadians over telehealth. The work that this business and so many others working in counselling and psychology services does is so important to our community. It was a pleasure to see them recognized.

Excellence in Service and Work Culture Award went to Cultured Fine Cheese, which came as no surprise to anyone who has visited this store. They always go above and beyond for their customers and the lines sneaking around Horwoods Mall during their busy season is a testament to that.

Small Business of the Year went to IRP Consulting — inspire, reconciliation, potential. Founders Tosh Southwick, Davida Wood, and their small, dedicated team work to promote and support reconciliation across all sectors. Their valued commitment to furthering self-determination and reconciliation is deserving of this year's recognition.

The Yukon Party caucus was proud to support this year's Business of the Year Award, which was given to Northerm, Yukon's manufacturer of doors, windows, and more built to withstand extreme Yukon weather with quality and resilience. Northerm, a 100-percent First Nation-owned business, has been providing quality service throughout the Yukon for 42 years.

The People's Choice Award went to Kaley-lynn Anne Hewitt-MacDougall with Briar Rose Photography. She's a fairly new Yukoner coming from Edmonton. She dove in headfirst to make a huge impact on our community with not only her photography business but her Facebook initiative Yukon Ladies Ask, which brings Yukon women together to answer questions, find resources, provide assistance, hold get-togethers, and so much more.

We would like to recognize all the finalists this year, because each business nominated has impacted our community in many ways. On behalf of me and my colleagues, a huge congratulations to businesses and individuals honoured this year, and our thanks for your top-of-the-line service and community support.

Applause

MLA Tredger: I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Whitehorse's dynamic and vibrant business community. From start-ups to local legends, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards shine a spotlight on the many businesses that help make Whitehorse and the Yukon a great place to live, work, play, and do business.

This event isn't just about the awards; it's also about community. But the awards are pretty special too, so congratulations to 59 businesses that are nominated by their peers and community. What an honour it is to be held up by those around you — your hard work and heart are recognized and celebrated by all of those you impact day in and day out.

A special congratulations to this year's winners: Wendy Tayler of Alkan Air, Northerm, IRP, Aurora Wellness Group, Cultured Fine Cheese, and Briar Rose Photography. Well done, one and all. Thank you for your dedication to community, to your employees, and for the work that you do day in and day out. You truly make a difference.

And finally, we want to thank the dedicated group from Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce that is behind last week's stunning event — congratulations.

Applause

In recognition of 2025 Territorial Skills Competition

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute the 2025 Territorial Skills Competition, which will be held this Thursday, April 24 at the Yukon University Ayamdigut Campus in Whitehorse.

This annual event, led by Skills Canada Yukon, is a vibrant celebration of the incredible talent, ambition, and innovation of Yukon youth in the skilled trades and technology sectors. For nearly three decades, this competition has served as a launch pad for success, offering students and apprentices an opportunity to apply their learning, test their skills, and discover the power of their own potential.

What begins here in the Yukon often leads to national stages, such as this year's Skills Canada National Competition in Regina, and eventually to lifelong careers that help to build and sustain our communities. To the students and apprentices competing, your courage and commitment are inspiring. Whether or not you take home a medal, know that your participation is an achievement. You are showing us what is possible when young people are empowered to lead with creativity, precision, and pride of their craft.

In preparation for this year's competition, Yukon secondary students and post-secondary apprentices have dedicated countless hours to refining their skills. They have embraced new tools, explored unfamiliar techniques, experimented with patterns and recipes, and stepped outside of their comfort zone. Along the way, many have uncovered new interests and deepened their passion for their trade. We are excited to see how you bring all of that hard work to life in your chosen field.

The competitors of today are really the next generation of builders, creators, and problem-solvers. With the guidance of dedicated mentors, educators, and community partners, they are shaping a stronger Yukon one project at a time.

To the volunteers, instructors, employers, families, and sponsors, thank you. Your behind-the-scenes work and ongoing encouragement create a ripple effect that reaches far beyond the competition day. To the team at Skills Canada Yukon, thank you for continuing to create this powerful and inclusive space where our youth are celebrated, supported, and set up to succeed.

I encourage all Yukoners to visit the competition at Yukon U this week and witness first-hand the incredible skills, talent, and promise of our future workforce. Together, we are investing in people, in potential, and in a more resilient, skilled Yukon.

Best of luck to all.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the 2025 Yukon Territorial Skills Competition, which will take place on April 24 this year.

This one-day competition is the path for Yukon students and apprentices to compete in their craft against others to qualify for national- and even international-level skills competitions. It serves as the first step and qualifier for Yukoners to compete at the national competition.

Competitions are held in many different trades in 25 different areas, from building to baking and many, many more. Young Yukoners as well as those breaking into a new career later in life have found valuable skills and profitable careers by

exploring different trades. They learn to make, design, create, beautify, feed, and fix, and every skillset developed helps to provide a much-needed service to our communities.

The Yukon has always been a champion of the trades. The year 1963 marked the opening of the Whitehorse vocational training school, which brought many people north of 60 over the next 25 years to train in their trade of choice. The school later turned into the Yukon Vocational and Technical Training Centre before its transformation into Yukon College and the Yukon University we know today.

Trades are still a major part of the university's offerings, and the Yukon still a very coveted destination for students looking to break into a career in the trades. We would like to recognize all those taking part in this year's Territorial Skills Competition and wish everyone the best of luck for a successful day.

Thank you as always to Skills/Compétences Canada Yukon as well as Yukon University, high school trades departments, Yukon Women in Trades and Technology, and all those working to help build the careers of apprentices across the territory.

Salamat po.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to cheer, encourage, and high five all of those who will be participating in this year's Yukon Territorial Skills Competition that is one day, 17 hours, and 42 minutes away from kickoff.

This year, there is a record-setting 25 competitions happening. With trades and technology fields from A to W, there is literally something for everyone. This exciting event is a celebration of the incredible craftsmanship, innovation, and dedication to excellence that Skills Canada Yukon promotes year-round.

So, to the competitors: Competing is fun and exciting. It's an opportunity to showcase your talents and test your skills against other local youth and apprentices. You will connect with like-minded individuals, mentors, and potential employers who share your passion for your chosen field. Competing locally gets you a chance to compete at this year's Skills/Compétences Canada National Competition in Regina, Saskatchewan against the best skilled youth and apprentices from across Canada.

I can tell you from personal experience that the national competition is eye-opening in the best of ways. Seeing hundreds of competitors from across the country is exhilarating. So, my advice to anyone on the fence about a future in the trades and technology fields is to do it. You will not regret the decision. Doors will be open not just here in Canada but around the world.

To the competitors, volunteers, mentors, and all of those supporting this year's competition, we salute you. Good luck, have fun, and be safe.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter dated April 18, 2025 written to the Department of Education from Whistle Bend Elementary School Council regarding urgent capacity and staffing concerns at Whistle Bend school. The letter is copied to me as the opposition Education critic.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

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 express condolences to those mourning the death of Pope Francis, the first Jesuit pope and the first from the Americas.

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

THAT, notwithstanding Standing Order 2(1), during the 2025 Spring Sitting, the Legislative Assembly shall meet on Wednesday, April 23, 2025 at 10:30 a.m.;

THAT, notwithstanding Standing Order 11(2), on Wednesday, April 23, 2025 prior to the Daily Routine, the Assembly resolve into Committee of the Whole for the purpose of questioning witnesses;

THAT Douglas Janzen, chair of the Yukon Development Corporation Board of Directors, Rod Savoie, chair of the Yukon Energy Corporation Board of Directors, Gary Gazankas, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Development Corporation, and Chris Milner, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Energy Corporation, appear as witnesses until 12:00 p.m. to answer questions regarding the operations of the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; and

THAT following the appearance of the witnesses and the Chair of Committee of the Whole's report to the House, the Assembly shall recess until 1:00 p.m., at which time the House will proceed with the Daily Routine and the Orders of the Day.

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

THAT this House congratulates the Yukon Selects women's futsal team on the best ever result for the Yukon, finishing fourth at the 2025 Futsal Canadian Championship.

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

THAT officials from the senior management team of Connective Support Society appear as witnesses in Committee of the Whole prior to the end of the 2025 Spring Sitting.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Whistle Bend school

Ms. Clarke: Last week, the Whistle Bend Elementary School Council wrote a letter to the Department of Education about concerns that they have about the size and capacity of the school. According to that letter — quote: “Classrooms are small, general-use areas are crowded, and the school is already feeling the pressure of trying to serve more students than it was designed to accommodate.” They make the case that the school and the school size are not equipped to handle the ongoing growth of the community and are concerned that Whistle Bend families may find themselves unable to access the school in their own neighbourhood.

What is the minister doing to respond to the serious concerns raised by the Whistle Bend Elementary School Council?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise to speak about the growth of our schools. Really, that is what we are talking about in terms of enrolment. The Yukon’s population is increasing and anticipated to continue growing over the next years to come. We are prioritizing work on, of course, long-term capital. We were very happy to open the Whistle Bend Elementary School to help address enrolment growth in the north end of Whitehorse, and the department has previously added portables at Hidden Valley, Selkirk Elementary, and Golden Horn. We are also sadly already having to put portables at the F.H. Collins high school as well. This year, we are planning for two there.

The Department of Education also, of course, works with our other two authorities as we look toward planning for growth and enrolment, and those two other authorities are the Francophone School Board and the First Nation School Board.

Specifically, the letter that is being referenced and that was tabled today — I do not have a copy of it with me today, but I’m always working very closely with the school councils — very much value the work that they do on behalf of all Yukoners in terms of their work.

Ms. Clarke: The Whistle Bend school council says in their letter that they have reviewed the five-year capital plan and have noted that there appears to be no mention of another school plan for the area. They point out that there is a commitment to addressing school growth with modular classrooms; however, they are concerned that there is no space on the current site for modulars.

Is the minister considering adding modular classrooms to Whistle Bend Elementary School, and if so, where will they go?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, we are working to add the much-needed infrastructure for our school community. Last year, we opened the Whistle Bend school. We are also working to build a new school in Burwash Landing — the Kêts’ádañ Kù school. We are planning for the École Whitehorse Elementary School. We continue to plan within our five-year capital plan. Certainly, modulars are one of the tools that are used when we are considering growth in enrolment. People have certainly caught on to the fact that Yukon is a great place to live and to raise their children and in terms of the services that we have.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we certainly did inherit a deficit in infrastructure. In fact, Whistle Bend Elementary School was the first new elementary school to be built in more than two decades. We’re working hard to plan for a second replacement which will replace the École Whitehorse Elementary School, which is located downtown right now. It is planned to be built at the Takhini Educational Land Reserve.

I’m happy to continue to do this good work on behalf of Yukoners.

Ms. Clarke: The letter from last week made a series of specific requests for action from the Yukon government. They urge the government to explore options for additional educational infrastructure within the Whistle Bend community, and they call on the Department of Education to reassess and potentially adjust the school’s catchment area boundaries.

What is the minister’s response to these requests for action from the Whistle Bend school council?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, first, I will just speak a little bit to the importance of the school councils and the work that they do on behalf of Yukoners. I absolutely applaud them for stepping up to be in these important roles that contribute to governance of our schools. I will definitely be working with our department to respond to and work with the school council.

It’s very hard for me to take advice from the Yukon Party when they did not take school infrastructure seriously. They governed for 14 years, Mr. Speaker, and failed to build even one elementary school. So, we’re catching up. We inherited a deficit. We’re also planning and having discussions about a downtown school as well.

Mr. Speaker, they can’t have it both ways; one minute they’re telling me not to build the École Whitehorse Elementary School and the next minute they’re telling me to build more.

So, we need to continue to invest in our school infrastructure, which is what we are doing. We’ve built several schools in our time in government, and we’ll continue to plan in a thoughtful way for Yukoners to meet the needs.

Question re: Whistle Bend school

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, the Whistle Bend Elementary School Council is raising concerns with the capacity and the space at the school. This is in the letter that they wrote to the department last week, but I want to follow up on staffing concerns raised by the Whistle Bend council in their letter from last week.

The letter states — quote: “We would also like to raise a serious concern regarding staffing inequities connected to the Confidence and Supply Agreement (CASA). At present, Whistle Bend School has not been included in the CASA allocation, and as a result, our staffing numbers are significantly lower than those of nearby schools with comparable enrollments.”

So, can the minister tell us why she is breaking the agreements around personnel outlined in the CASA when it comes to Whistle Bend Elementary?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, student enrolment has certainly increased in recent years, and the department is working to ensure consistent service levels in schools as well as effective, targeted support for students with diverse learning needs. While overall enrolment is increasing, some individual schools have decreasing enrolment, which may have reduced some school allocations.

Yukon school staffing levels are reviewed each fall to align with actual student enrolment and the needs of students at each school, and any needed adjustments are then made. As of April 17, 2025, Yukon Education-authority schools were 98.61-percent staffed. The First Nation School Board is responsible for their own human resource services, including recruitment. The department provided schools with their enrolment projections and staff allocation in March 2025. We’re well underway in terms of working with the process to staff up schools.

Again, Mr. Speaker — happy to continue to work with the school council for Whistle Bend. I will definitely be working with the department to respond to the letter that they have sent.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, one of the neighbouring schools that has similar enrolment numbers has been allocated two additional staff members as well as two additional CASA-funded positions. Now the council in their letter says — and I’ll quote again: “This is not an equitable distribution of resources, and it does not support the learning needs of our students.”

So, why has the minister decided to shortchange the Whistle Bend school when it comes to staffing allocations? Is she worried that this clear violation of CASA will mean that the NDP will not support the budget vote next week?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker — happy to continue to work with the school council around the correspondence that the member is referencing. Student enrolment is certainly increasing in recent years, and we work to make sure that staffing is equitable.

In terms of the CASA, there are many accomplishments within the CASA. We’re very happy to work with the New Democratic Party to add extra resources to our schools.

As of March 2025, the department has hired eight school wellness specialists to provide ongoing mental health and system navigation supports. The department is in the final stages of signing a memorandum of understanding with the First Nation School Board so that they may choose their wellness specialists.

There are many accomplishments, Mr. Speaker, and we were happy to be providing additional supports to our schools

over the 2023-24, 2024-25, and, of course, this year as well — again, many accomplishments within the CASA.

Mr. Kent: So, the minister might be very happy about the CASA agreement, but the Whistle Bend school council certainly feels left out when it comes to those staffing numbers. The council also mentions that the school “... currently serves 66 students who are English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, a population that would benefit immensely from the additional support provided by CASA-funded roles and/or increased FTEs.”

They go on to say — and I quote again: “These students deserve access to the same level of targeted support available in other schools.”

Will the minister agree to immediately review the staffing and EA allocation for Whistle Bend to ensure that the school is properly resourced to deal with their current situation, and will she ensure that the commitments under CASA are equally applied to Whistle Bend Elementary School and all other schools that find themselves in a similar situation?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, we were very pleased to open Whistle Bend Elementary School last year. It is a very beautiful state-of-the-art school — huge investment in that infrastructure. We are very thankful to the Whistle Bend — the newest school council in the Yukon for stepping up and helping us along the way for the school to become what it is today.

We will continue to work with them and, again, work for equitable staffing allocation based on formulas. I know that the member opposite knows very well about how staffing is allocated, and it is done by way of a formula. We will continue to work to address the concerns that were raised in the correspondence, which I do not have with me today, Mr. Speaker, but I can guarantee that we will be working closely with them.

I had a meeting a couple of weeks ago — that the Highways and Public Works minister attended with me — with many school councils, including Whistle Bend. We talked about some common issues, and I encouraged councils to please write to me —

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: School traffic management

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the recently released École Whitehorse Elementary School traffic impact study concludes that traffic will operate acceptably when 90 percent of students take the bus. Where Yukoners have questions is with the assumption that 90 percent of students will bus. Right now at Whitehorse schools, there is a busing average of just 50 percent. Between Takhini Elementary and École Whitehorse Elementary, the average is 71 percent, so that is nowhere near the aspirational target.

If the Department of Education doesn’t get the 90 percent that they’re counting on and busing rates stay at 71 percent — the current average of these schools — or, worse yet, drops to the Whitehorse average of 50 percent, then traffic volumes on Range Road will nearly double from the current number.

What is the plan to radically change how students get to schools, and what is the backup plan if this fails?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, we're very pleased to be investing in new education infrastructure. This is one of our replacement school projects that is well underway. Yes, the traffic study was released; it was done within a workshop or community meeting.

I think I'll just, like — maybe I'll just go into some of the actual numbers. So, right now, the École Whitehorse Elementary School has an enrolment of 453 students. The total number of students registered to bus is 356 students. The total number of students not registered to bus is 97. The percentage of students currently using the school bus system is 78.6 percent. There are approximately 12 buses that transport students from École Whitehorse Elementary School. One of the things that we talked about is that those busing routes will certainly be reviewed and looked at. We may be able to reduce the number of buses that go to the school. We also may be able to — working with the school council — have a different start time and a different end time to also alleviate — the Minister of Highways and Public Works can talk about some of the traffic mitigations, but happy to continue to continue to build on this answer.

Ms. White: So, Mr. Speaker, 78 percent isn't 90 percent, and that's part of the issue. Yukon school buses carry a maximum of 48 students. This means that at least 90 more students will need to bus to the two schools to get up to the 90-percent rate, and that means at least three more buses. In reality, it will probably be more than that, because these students will not necessarily all come from the same areas.

We have heard from parents who have often had to scramble to make plans to get kids to school this year because bus routes are cancelled the morning of and without warning. So, this isn't a criticism of those hard-working bus drivers but highlights the vulnerability of the current system. It seems that there aren't enough drivers or buses to manage the current load.

Can the minister explain the department's plan for additional bus drivers and routes to meet this increased demand?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I think that there are a lot of assumptions there in terms of the number of buses that may be required. As I have stated, right now, we have 12 buses, but we would, of course, be looking at the busing routes and, again, continuing to plan to mitigate some of those pressures.

Right now, again, 78.6 percent is a high percentage of students being bused in currently. The other part of this is that we can work with the school council to make it a requirement that we have at least 90 percent of the students registered for busing. We'll work also, absolutely, with Standard Bus, the current contract holder for the busing services, to ensure that they have the capacity and that they have the resources to accommodate our needs, as we do always.

I think that what is notable is that, right now, we have 54 students who live in the Takhini area who go to École Whitehorse Elementary, so as we continue to plan for the school, we'll certainly make those adjustments and continue to do the demographics for the school and the planning — and working with Stats Canada to ensure that we know how many children will attend that school.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, let's imagine for a moment that there is a real plan to get 90 percent of students on buses to school and a concrete plan to get enough buses and drivers to run these routes. This is still a plan that brings 453 more schoolchildren to an already traffic-congested road that currently sees hundreds of vehicles per hour at peak times.

In total, this would mean 600 schoolchildren arriving at two schools, all packed within peak morning traffic hours, and don't forget that the traffic study assumes that the City of Whitehorse will build a separated bike lane and a separated sidewalk to make the road safer. But since the city has no timeline for either of these, it's pretty hard to see how this government can claim that it's part of their safety plan. So, how does this government plan to prioritize the safety of schoolchildren and all other Range Road users with so many unanswered questions around traffic safety?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak on this topic.

With respect to the exciting new Whitehorse Elementary replacement school project, in order to improve safety, the traffic study recommends extended school zones on Range Road and University Drive, new bike lanes and pedestrian crosswalks along Range Road, a detailed parking plan to ensure safe drop-off and pickup areas, and mini-roundabouts at Range Road, Normandy Road and Range Road, and University Drive to slow traffic and improve safety. Mini-roundabouts help to slow down vehicle speeds while keeping traffic moving efficiently. They improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists in order to reduce the risk of violent collisions compared with traditional stop signs or traffic lights.

Stakeholder meetings and public workshops are being organized to share the results and gather community input. Residents will have opportunities to voice their concerns and ask questions about next steps.

As the Minister of Education has indicated, Whitehorse Elementary School in its new location will remain a feeder school for the entire catchment of greater Whitehorse. So, certainly, there will be a significant percentage of students who will be bused into the area, and it will be very similar to the current location.

Question re: Infrastructure funding

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I have some questions about infrastructure projects in Whitehorse. In May of last year, the federal government announced that they were providing up to \$45 million to find a permanent solution to the mudslides that have affected Robert Service Way in recent years. While this is a positive development, we know that there is further funding that is needed to advance this project.

Can the Minister of Community Services confirm how much the City of Whitehorse has requested from the government, and how much money has the government committed to this project?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, as I've said formerly in the House, the City of Whitehorse went to Ottawa and got funding for the escarpment project on its own. We helped with that application, but it was a City of Whitehorse application.

They have received this money from Ottawa, which is great news for the territory. It's a significant investment in the territory.

We're dealing with the City of Whitehorse. I recently had my regular meeting with the Mayor of Whitehorse and some of the staff. We talked about this project. We are helping with investment on a proposal going back to Ottawa asking for more money on this project from the federal government. They were initially looking for 100 percent; I think they got 75-percent funding. There is an issue with this tranche of money that we can't stack it with other funding sources from other governments, but we're working with the City of Whitehorse to ensure that they have the money that they need to do this escarpment project. We're going to continue that partnership with the City of Whitehorse.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, another infrastructure project that many folks in Whitehorse have been following with interest is the need for a new water treatment plant in Whitehorse.

In October of last year, the *Yukon News* reported that Whitehorse's city manager had warned the new council about the difficult fiscal situation they faced. To quote the city manager from that article — quote: "We've essentially drawn down our reserves to the extent that they can be drawn down upon. And there's no more money in reserves to draw down upon to meet our financial pressures..." The article goes on to note that the new water treatment plant is expected to cost \$55 million and there is no confirmed funding for this project.

Can the Minister of Community Services tell us whether or not he has received a request from the city to help, and how much will the Yukon government be committing?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, recently, the Yukon government — my colleagues and I — decided to increase the comprehensive municipal grant more than it has ever seen since it was first brought into being. So, it is going up higher with more money for municipalities than the municipalities have ever seen. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but what are we talking about — listen to what the member opposite is saying. The investment coming from Ottawa — money for a water treatment plant in the neighbourhood of \$70 million, I believe, money for escarpment mitigation, again, tens of millions of dollars coming into the territory from the federal government. We ourselves have taken infrastructure money and invested more than \$600 million across the territory, not to mention the money that the highways minister is spending on a number of other projects: the Teslin bridge and the north Klondike Highway.

The territory has benefited with the most remarkable and most significant historic investment in the territory's infrastructure over the last nine years that it has ever seen, and because of that investment, the economy is booming, people are moving to the territory, we have cranes up throughout the city, it is an amazing time for the territory, and I really do look forward to working with the municipality on the infrastructure projects.

We heard the federal government has plans to invest a lot more. I look forward to hearing more questions from the opposition.

Question re: Forestry industry

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, we know that many individuals in the wood products industry are struggling to find timber. Whether they need fuelwood or sawlogs or need logs for building homes, everyone seems to be having trouble getting access to timber. On October 26, 2016, the Yukon Liberal Party promised in a news release — quote: "Our government's investment will also be supported by a forestry plan for southeast Yukon for commercial harvesting."

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know that, almost nine years later, this promise has not been kept. Can the minister tell us when or if a forestry plan for southeast Yukon will be completed?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I will ask the department to get me the information on the specifics of the plan for the southeast Yukon, but I will note for you and members of the House that, last summer, I had a trip down to Watson Lake. I met with the Liard First Nation and I met with city folks — sorry, the Town of Watson Lake — I met with industry folks, and there was quite a bit of work happening. We did get some new timber harvest plans specifically in place for the area.

I think it is called "Heartland Homes" — I believe that is the one that the Liard First Nation is working with and that we got a supply of timber for — and happy to inquire about a broader area plan and to see what the status of that is.

Question re: Resource Gateway project

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, on April 10, Western Copper and Gold — the company that owns the Casino copper and gold project — issued a press release that provided an update on a number of infrastructure projects that affect the project. One that stood out was in relation to the Yukon Resource Gateway project. The company noted that the decision that was made by the Yukon government to fund work on the Dempster Highway would come at the expense of the Casino access road. This means that the Yukon government is redirecting money that has been identified for this mining access road to the Dempster project.

Can the minister explain why money from the Yukon Resource Gateway funding, which is specifically intended to support roads in areas with mining potential, is being redirected to a project that has little to do with mineral potential or mining activity?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the Resource Gateway project has expanded in terms of what it is attempting to deliver. Some of it is still directed toward mining, and some of it is directed toward broader development for the territory. Yes, there was money that was put toward the Dempster Highway. I hope the members opposite support that. I think that is a good investment. We have met and spoken with the folks from Western Copper.

The remaining dollars — there is still quite a bit of money left in Resource Gateway. Our worry is that we need to get these

agreements working and in place — specifically with First Nations and with the companies as well — to move that money, and our concern was that we have — the money was just identified from one place, but overall, that pot is still robust. What we need to do is get those working agreements in place. I know I met with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation when I was down at Roundup. There was a conversation around roads and around investing in roads. We will continue to do that work, and we are looking forward to those investments by getting those project agreements in place with First Nations.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, back on March 25, my colleague the MLA for Porter Creek North asked the Minister of Highways and Public Works specifically about this decision. She asked which current projects would be affected by this decision, and at the time, the minister was either unwilling or unable to answer that question. Now we see this decision announced not by the Yukon government but by a private company.

This means that Yukoners learned of this decision to redirect money from a fund designed to support the mining industry to a non-mining-related project from an industry press release instead of from the minister or this government. Why did Yukoners need to learn about this decision from an industry press release instead of from the minister himself?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, when the departmental officials met with folks from Western Copper and Gold, what we explained there — and what I have said to the Chamber of Mines — is that there is a lot of flexibility in the dollars that are remaining in the Resource Gateway project, and what we need to do is to get those agreements in place.

Way back when, shortly after we were elected, it was the Premier who went to Ottawa in his capacity as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and we got more flexibility in the agreement period. We got a longer time frame for the Resource Gateway funding. I believe that the Prime Minister came to the Yukon to announce those dollars, and each one of the individual agreements is about making sure that it is supported by the First Nation on whose traditional territory that development work is happening.

There is still a lot of room in the Resource Gateway funds for resource roads supporting our mineral sector, but what we need to do is to get those agreements in place, and we will work with the mining industry, with the First Nations, to support those projects that are supported by the First Nations.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, according to the Yukon government's website, the Yukon Resource Gateway program is meant to support road upgrades for — and I quote: "... existing roads in areas with high mineral potential and active mining in the Yukon."

The decision to redirect money that has been earmarked for the Casino access road to the Dempster Highway appears to be a departure from what the fund was intended for. Now the minister has said that there is now flexibility. So, can he tell us if this is a one-off, or will other non-mining projects be funded with the money from the Yukon Resource Gateway project?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources did indicate, there is a revised

agreement, and it emphasizes roads benefiting both mining and interregional connectivity projects and Arctic security. This is good news for the Dempster Highway. \$45 million is now allocated toward this important Yukon highway to make much-needed improvements and improve regional connectivity. As Canada's only all-season public road crossing to the Arctic Circle, the Dempster Highway is a vital transportation route for residents, businesses, and travellers. This investment will improve year-round reliability, upgrade northern infrastructure, and ensure safer, more efficient travel. By building a more resilient Dempster Highway, we are enhancing a critical corridor that serves multiple sectors, including tourism, the transport of vital supplies, and local communities.

The Government of Yukon will begin working with affected Yukon First Nations to develop project agreements. These agreements outline how we will work collaboratively in terms of structuring procurements to align with the Yukon First Nation procurement policy to ensure that the project benefits their traditional territory.

Beyond improving road conditions, these upgrades will strengthen Arctic security by enhancing critical infrastructure in Canada's north. We also, of course, recognize the importance of Yukon's mining sector, and we remain committed to supporting resource development through strategic infrastructure investments as part of —

Speaker: Order, please.

The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Government House Leader's report on date of appearance of witnesses

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise, pursuant to the order adopted by the House on Wednesday, April 16, 2025, to inform the House that the House Leaders have decided that the date for the appearance of Michelle Grant, senior vice-president, and another senior official from PricewaterhouseCoopers before Committee of the Whole shall be Tuesday, April 29, 2025.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 1270

Clerk: Motion No. 1270, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT, notwithstanding Standing Order 2(1), during the 2025 Spring Sitting, the Legislative Assembly shall meet on Friday, April 25, 2025 from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. or to an earlier adjournment time, if so ordered.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, this motion is about adjusting our Sitting to fulfill the sitting day that was lost due

to the electrical issues a week and a few days ago, so that is what we are doing — looking to do this.

There was lots of debate back and forth about when this should happen. What we are proposing is the morning of this Friday. I look forward to us debating this motion.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, while we recognize that an additional day is required to make up for the electrical failure that cost us a day and about 90 minutes in the House — while this Friday was not our first choice in the discussions with House Leaders, we will be voting in favour of it. I should mention that it wasn't our first choice because we felt that full participation in the Association of Yukon Communities annual general meeting on Friday should take precedence, but having gone back and forth with colleagues, we will support the adjusted Sitting. I should thank AYC as well for adjusting their agenda to accommodate the fact that we had to be here on Friday morning starting at 9:00 and ending at 1:30.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I want to echo both sentiments from my colleagues. I too am regretful not to be able to be at AYC on Friday morning and appreciate that they have changed their agenda. In support of my colleagues from the Liberals who cannot physically be here on May 5, I agree to April 25. I think it's important that we have that additional day and appreciate that this is everybody trying to compromise to come to a place where we can have an extra four and a half hours.

So, although I am not really looking forward to a Friday morning start, I appreciate it. I am more looking forward to my Friday afternoon in Haines Junction and my Saturday at AYC, but I appreciate that this has not been ideal for anyone, including the Clerks and especially Hansard and all support staff. It hasn't been easy, but I appreciate that we'll get the work done on Friday.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 1270 agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I should just mention for colleagues in the House that Motion No. 1272 is the motion for the YDC and YEC witnesses tomorrow.

Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 27(1), I request the unanimous consent of the House to move Motion No. 1272 without one clear day's notice.

Unanimous consent to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 1272

Speaker: The Government House Leader has requested the unanimous consent of the House, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 27(1), to move Motion No. 1272 without one clear day's notice.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 1272

Clerk: Motion No. 1272, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Streicker.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT, notwithstanding Standing Order 2(1), during the 2025 Spring Sitting, the Legislative Assembly shall meet on Wednesday, April 23, 2025 at 10:30 a.m.;

THAT, notwithstanding Standing Order 11(2), on Wednesday, April 23, 2025, prior to the Daily Routine, the Assembly resolve into Committee of the Whole for the purpose of questioning witnesses;

THAT Douglas Janzen, chair of the Yukon Development Corporation Board of Directors, Rod Savoie, chair of the Yukon Energy Corporation Board of Directors, Gary Gazankas, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Development Corporation, and Chris Milner, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Energy Corporation, appear as witnesses until 12:00 p.m. to answer questions regarding the operations of the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation; and

THAT, following the appearance of the witnesses and the Chair of Committee of the Whole's report to the House, the Assembly shall recess until 1:00 p.m., at which time the House will proceed with the Daily Routine and the Orders of the Day.

Motion No. 1272 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 Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 217, entitled *First 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. 217 — *First Appropriation Act 2025-26* — continued

Chair: The matter before Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*.

Department of Economic Development

Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, honorable members, and visitors, I rise today to speak to the Department of Economic Development's operation and maintenance and capital budget for 2025-26 fiscal year.

I would like to first welcome our officials. I would like to welcome our deputy minister, Justin Ferbey, who is here with me today. As well, we have our assistant deputy minister, Emma Sutton. Specifically, I want to thank Emma for all her work over the last while. There have been lots of challenging files, and she has done an exceptional job, so a big thank you to her.

At the Department of Economic Development, our mission is to foster economic growth through sustainable methods that prioritize opportunities for Yukoners. We invest in the territory's people and their industries in addition to promoting them for investment from other sources. This work is always important and is further emphasized during a time when global uncertainties place extra pressure on domestic producers.

There are many projects taking place that support economic growth and diversification and are enabled by this main estimates budget totaling \$27,356,000 for 2025-26, with a capital budget of \$1,013,000. The bulk of this funding is allocated to operation and maintenance in the amount of

\$26,343,000. This includes just under \$6 million to deliver key services through the Innovation, Industry and Business Development branch. Included in this allocation is \$825,000 in funding for the extension of the paid sick leave rebate program, which will continue to empower workers to take time away from work when sick, improving the health of our communities and reducing the risk of sickness to the public and in the workplace.

Additionally, the IIBD budget includes \$1 million dedicated to the recently announced Yukon trade resilience program. This support is being designed to alleviate pressure on Yukon businesses who are directly impacted by and adapting to the US-Canada trade decisions. Outside of those programs, this budget will primarily support the ongoing partnerships that the branch has established to build up a variety of industries.

Among others, the branch has valued partnerships with Tech Yukon, Yukonconstruct, Yukon Venture Angels, and Yukon University to deliver physical spaces, educational programming, and networking opportunities that foster an innovative environment. The IIBD branch leads our government's investment attraction efforts, which support the growth of Yukon businesses, providing opportunities for employment, diversification, and market expansion.

Departmental officials regularly attend trade shows and investment conferences to showcase the Yukon's potential for investors, particularly as a world-class mining jurisdiction. We are committed to attracting responsible investment in our minerals industry to support the socially and environmentally sustainable development of our critical minerals. It goes without saying that 2024 was an extremely challenging year for the industry, and Yukoners deserve a mineral development sector that benefits communities and respects the environment.

Moving on to another area of the department that has been top-of-mind for Yukoners this past year is the budget allocation of just over \$1 million that will enable the Immigration branch to administer its programming this fiscal year. The branch aids foreign nationals and Yukon businesses to advance their shared priorities and ensure that key positions across our economy are filled by qualified newcomers when local or Canadian candidates are not available. This mainly consists of administering the employer-driven Yukon nominee program. The Yukon nominee program helps employers fill crucial positions with foreign nationals who intend to settle in the Yukon and gain permanent residency.

The Yukon's unemployment rate remains among the lowest in Canada. This fact underscores the need for economic immigration programming like YNP. This year, the Immigration branch will be navigating a significant reduction in allocations under the program. The Government of Canada informed us that the 2025 allocations for the nominee program have been reduced by 50 percent, down to 215. This change will impact Yukon businesses, foreign nationals who have brought their skills to the Yukon and hope to make it their home, and the overall labour market in the territory.

Staff are taking on the task of pivoting on how to approach economic immigration to ensure that our limited allocations are

used most effectively. The department is reviewing and improving the program to help ensure that it meets the needs of employees and employers alike and is delivered with integrity, transparency, and accountability, and I thank them for their dedication to this work.

Moving on to how the department supports the Yukon's film and sound industry, Economic Development has identified \$2,296,000 for this fiscal year for the Media Development branch. This budget ask includes their four funding programs that support the production of professional film, television, and digital media projects. These programs were developed based on the needs of Yukon producers and align with the principles from those delivered in similar jurisdictions across Canada.

Between April 1, 2024, and January 10, 2025, the department approved 18 applications totalling just over \$1 million. The 18 projects anticipate spending approximately \$3.9 million in the Yukon, creating local jobs and building capacity while supporting Yukon businesses and contributing to economic diversification.

The Media Development team also administers the performing musicians fund, a comprehensive funding program for Yukon musicians to foster continued growth in this vibrant, creative industry. Between April 1, 2024 and January 10, 2025, the department approved 28 applications, including three established musicians and 25 emerging musicians, for a total contribution of \$226,726.

Madam Chair, not only is this funding essential for the film and sound industries, but again, it matters to Yukoners. People want to see their communities and their values reflected in media, and we recognize this. We need to lift up their voices, especially at this time when Canadians must come together to make ourselves more visible in media, expressing the vivacity and the strength of our cultures and identities. We will continue to provide resources to the territory's creative professionals to share our stories with the world.

Moving on to Regional Economic Development, this branch is often the department's outreach presence across the territory. Their work extends to every corner of the Yukon and is often the first point of contact for people looking to enrich their respective communities. For the 2025-26 fiscal year, the Regional Economic Development branch will be allocated a budget of \$6,390,000. Of the total, just under \$3 million will be directed toward the well-known community development fund.

The community development fund has been utilized across every Yukon municipality for countless projects, providing incalculable benefits to locals. Notable projects from this past year include: \$17,910 to the Junction Arts and Music Society to create the year-round mobile plug-and-play audiovisual booth, increasing the availability of artistic venues in Haines Junction and its surrounding communities; \$71,711 for Biathlon Yukon to widen the outgoing trail by two metres to comply with the requirements for hosting national-level races; and \$25,066 for the Dawson City Museum to purchase specialized equipment for museum staff and the greater community to digitize oversized images, documents, and recordings.

Of course, these are just a few examples of the range of projects enabled by the CDF. By offering the fund, we are supporting communities throughout the Yukon to pursue their goals and meet the unique needs of the region. My hope was that the branch could continue to empower citizens across all of our communities to discover new ways to enrich their lives and we can allow their ideas to flourish.

Also, under the Regional Economic Development branch is just under \$2 million for the economic development fund. The economic development fund is the department's key tool for assisting businesses to increase their operations, expand, or take on new initiatives. Many Yukon businesses have utilized the economic development fund to improve their operations in this past fiscal year, including \$132,000 to Tintina Forest Products, a Yukon First Nation citizen-owned company that received support to purchase equipment that will increase firewood-cutting and -hauling capacity, helping to meet the needs of Dawson City and surrounding communities; \$126,656 to Heritage Homes and Design in Whitehorse, which supported the purchase of specialized equipment for building-levelling services to meet growing demand from Yukon communities, governments, businesses, and private residences; and \$30,000 to Coal Mine Campground and Canteen in Carmacks, which incorporated a warehouse expansion to accommodate the increasing number of customers using the business' diverse services, with the goal of extending operations beyond the traditional summer season. And the 2025-26 budget allocation will continue to provide substantial benefits to Yukon businesses.

Another way we aim to empower Yukoners is through our Labour Market Development branch, which has been allocated about \$5.5 million for this year. This budget supports the priorities of the branch, which are inherently tied to the needs of both employers and individuals who face barriers to meaningful employment. This work is headlined by the Staffing UP and the Building UP programs.

Building UP focuses on services for adult learners, job seekers, and under-represented groups to help them build skills for success, increasing their employability and the likelihood of positive outcomes for them in the labour force. Staffing UP assists employers with capacity issues, including recruitment, training, and retention. In addition to this program, the branch took on a new initiative last year. To address the health care vacancies, we launched the foreign credential recognition navigation service, supporting internationally educated health professionals to pursue pathways to have their credentials recognized to work in health care in the Yukon. This work is ongoing and will provide many benefits to those health professionals while helping us address the significant need for staff in health care.

The staff in the Labour Market Development branch have helped so many people find their place in the workforce. These efforts, again, make all the difference for those either struggling to discover meaningful employment and, of course, this budget allocation will allow our staff to continue helping those in need. Also included in the operations budget, the assistant deputy minister's office will be allocated \$1.3 million, which includes

\$861,000 for the aforementioned foreign credential recognition navigation service.

The final portion of the operation and maintenance budget is just under \$4 million for Corporate Services. This includes the Deputy Minister's Office; Finance and Information Management; Human Resources; and Policy Planning and Communications. Again, these are all critical components of any government department, and they lead many long-term initiatives at Economic Development. This includes the policy team leading the coordination of our government's trade policy, including: response to tariffs instituted by the United States; participation in the Committee on Internal Trade and working horizontally across government to address barriers on internal trade; and ongoing negotiations to secure mineral export through the port of Skagway. The staff of Corporate Services are committed to implementing the mandate for the Department of Economic Development. So, together, these teams work to ensure the department serves clients and the territory efficiently, transparently, and responsibly.

Madam Chair, the Department of Economic Development provides so much value to the territory, from supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs to providing resources and expertise to community organizations and leaders. This request of \$26,343,000 for O&M and a capital budget of \$1,013,000 reflects this importance.

I want to take the time to thank everyone at the department and our partners for their commitment to a shared vision of building up an economy that works for Yukoners and allows people to innovate and to bring their ideas to market in a supportive environment.

I look forward to discussing the budget and the opportunity to speak more about the great work taking place in the Department of Economic Development.

Ms. Van Bibber: Thank you to the minister for those opening remarks. I too would like to welcome the deputy minister — and I believe he said the assistant deputy minister — to the House today.

I will start right off with one of the last things mentioned, which was the Skagway marine development. In the five-year capital plan for 2026-27, there is \$20 million to \$25 million budgeted for the Skagway marine development. Since then, of course, we know that the trade war is in full force, created by the US Trump administration, and that has generated so much uncertainty.

So, is the Yukon government still committed to this project, and is there any news on the goings-on with the administration?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, the department is still very focused on putting a substantial agreement in place that can give the potential for access to tidewater. I think that, from what we hear from many companies, the tidewater access is incredibly important.

There are other avenues that companies can investigate, which would be shipping out of northern British Columbia. But, really, the costs associated with that can really challenge the feasibility of a project in the Yukon. There have been conversations over the years about a solution in Haines, Alaska.

We have seen that start and stop. But the bulk of our work has really been focused on Skagway.

As you can see from the capital budget, it has been pushed out a bit. It gives us some space to get an agreement in place that is going to work for Yukoners. We went through a process already with the borough of Skagway where there was an RFP. They ended up cancelling the tender process previously. We have gone back to the table with them to say that we want to have a better sense of how this procurement will work and what the opportunities are there.

I'm not in a position to speak to it, but I think that there are a number of private sector entities that are also just trying to understand if there is a way for them to come up with a solution in Skagway.

Based on that discussion or the theme around the US-Canada relations, I think that we have been quite pleased to see a number of members of the borough council speak very positively about the relationship between Canada and the United States but, more importantly, between Skagway and the Yukon. I had an opportunity to share in a conversation with *The Wall Street Journal* with Orion Hanson, who is one of their council members and has been a long-time friend of the Yukon — and really talking about the importance and the historical importance between our communities.

I think it's important to note that — we're thinking that, this year alone, Skagway is probably going to have approximately 1.3 million visitors who are going to come into Skagway on cruise ships. As most Yukoners know and the member opposite — following both the tourism file and the Economic Development file — knows, there is a tremendous number of individuals whom we are seeing plan trips into the Yukon from Skagway. So, that economic relationship continues to be incredibly important to what we see here, and we're also being made aware that some cruise ship companies are now extending some of their trips into different locations to benefit Yukon businesses.

Our team is still working at the officials level with the harbour master — the equivalent of the CAO for Skagway — and we want to get to a place where we feel comfortable with the procurement process and the planning that they are doing. But it is important that we continue that conversation.

For many of these things that I will be asked today — you are going to focus on the things that you can control. This is a process that we can work with, but our hope is that this will continue to be a great relationship and that the current state of affairs between the administration in the US does not curtail that. That being said, our teams are always looking at: What if...? I think that the other challenging situation would be to have to find tidewater somewhere much farther away.

To the member opposite, yes, we are continuing to work on this. We want to, throughout the next couple of months, get to a place where we have a strong process locked in and we can get a proper contractor to do the work that's required in Skagway.

Ms. Van Bibber: The last time we spoke about this, the minister had committed about \$44.7 million to invest in this port. It was going to be a project that we neither owned nor

controlled. Neither the Municipality of Skagway nor the State of Alaska was investing in this project.

Has that changed at all? If so, how much of that \$44.7 million have we spent to date?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The projected cost on this is still \$44.7 million. I will find the dollars that we have spent to date — \$739,000 — so, pretty much the same amount that we talked about the last time, but \$740,000. A lot of that has been toward legal. We have two different firms that we are using. We have legal advice that's coming in Canada, but we also have a firm base in the US because, of course, this activity is happening there.

We are still looking at the same structure. The only thing that has changed — but this is still active — is the fact that AIDEA, which is Alaska's economic development organization, has been in more active conversations with us.

My hope is that they are going to see value, potentially, in some solution in Alaska. They had moved away. They were, of course, the lease holder at the previous ore dock for 50 years. Having them come back — we have had officials, at least on one occasion, fly from Juneau to come up and meet with us here in Whitehorse. That seems to be a good sign.

We have kept the same budget, but if there are other opportunities for partnership or investment from the state, those are all things that we are very open to as this conversation continues to evolve.

Ms. Van Bibber: This project was removed from the five-year capital plan in the spring of 2024, and now it's back in, starting in 2026 with an investment of \$40 million to \$51 million.

Can the minister explain why it was removed and now it is replaced? Is it just the anticipation of working with the state and the borough and that is why this money was allocated at that time?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Some of it hearkens to that, but I believe that we were sitting down — we had gone through a process and we had work to be done. I don't think that we were in a position, after that first cancelled tender — to be in a position at that point, so we felt: Let's take some time to get this right. Let's understand what the best possible deal for Yukoners is. We knew that we had a little bit of space, because there wasn't as much pressure for anybody to export through that area. Now, of course, there is a lot more interest from different parties that are building or owning projects in the Yukon. Those are all reasons for us to take a bit of time to do some work.

I will share some details that officials have just handed me as well — some of the current status of the project — and it will probably give a sense of the work that has been going on for the last year.

The Government of Yukon and the Municipality of Skagway signed the non-binding term sheet on September 7, 2023, and that outlined the general terms for a proposed export cooperation agreement. Negotiations toward a binding agreement — this is the work that we are continuing to do. Government of Yukon officials met with their counterparts in Skagway on November 1, 2024 to share the Yukon's latest

draft of the export cooperation agreement and then again at Roundup in Vancouver in January 2025.

The Government of Yukon has a liaison who sits on Skagway's municipal Ports and Harbors Advisory Board in an observer capacity. Skagway has expressed that it will need to better understand the project's potential impacts for the community.

So, there are other things that are happening, too. There has been collaboration on a traffic study that is being done by Western Copper and the borough. I just met with the leadership of Western Copper last week. They feel that is going well. That was something that was requested by the community to understand what the future tempo would be for trucks and vehicles coming into Skagway. Of course, we are continuing to look at that and to hear from industry. Skagway is trying to balance this with the increase in tourism traffic.

Those are all things that we're doing. I think this is all really important work, which was part of the reason for just spacing out going back to tender at this point. So, I know that Western Copper is doing their work. I know that the potential reopening of Minto has led to conversations between that syndicate and the folks in Skagway. We have continued to have conversations.

This question may come up, but I'll jump to it. We had talked about doing feasibility on rail as well as a department. We went directly to White Pass. They had had offered up, at points, some of their teams of engineers to look at: What is the capacity that is required? What are some of the things that we can help you with? But we're also, I believe, now looking at, with some of the folks in the mining sector, even doing some extra work around feasibility.

Now, two parts to that — and it all factors into what happens down there — are: What can you use? Can you "retrofit" — I'll use that broadly — cars that run on that or how that rail is used to transport some type of goods? Or can you just use a small portion of that rail, more within the borough, to move goods? Because this is as much about making sure that there is a safe way to take ore, transport it to a ship, and have it go out through tidewater but also understanding that you're trying to mitigate any congestion that could occur within the community. I think that those are all things that we're trying to balance as we go through.

Ms. Van Bibber: Now, the capital plan budgets \$20 million to \$25 million for the 2026-27 year. Is this all for the planning stage of the project? If not, where in the budget is there money for planning and design? I would imagine that it was part of the \$740,000 that was previously spent, but is there more to do to make sure that the design is adequate?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: A portion of that \$740,000 was for some design work but also for the legal work that we needed and the legal advice on putting the agreement together. But I just spoke to officials. We're happy to come back with a legislative return specifically around the breakdown on the capital expenditure to be able to share that with the member opposite.

Ms. Van Bibber: The paid sick leave program was recently extended for one year for — I believe you said

\$825,000. Can the minister give us an update on the response to that program? Is it anticipated that the whole amount will be used?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The paid sick leave rebate program supports eligible Yukon workers, employees, and those self-employed who earn less than the average private sector wage of \$33.94. So, it's everything below. I am sure that the member opposite can imagine, as a former entrepreneur, that it's nice when you're sick to have some supports there for 40 hours, and it provides that. The program provides 40 hours of leave per 12-month period and includes all illnesses. Injuries are not covered, because that is under the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board's act.

To give you a sense of what the numbers look like, as of March 2025, for the 2024-25 year, 923 people from 127 businesses have been approved for \$538,925 in rebates. Employees earned an average of \$22.84 an hour and received an average paid sick leave of around \$545.14 through that program. The average length of paid sick leave per employee was just over 23 hours. I think that is also important. People are using this program, they have the 40 hours, but just over 23 hours is the amount that has been used. Remaining claims for 2024-25 are just being processed now — through April.

Since the start of the program in April 2023, it has provided rebates to over 170 employers who in turn provided sick leave to more than 1,100 unique employees. Approximately six percent of applications were deemed ineligible. So, for the most part, what we see coming in looks pretty strong. I will leave it at that statistically, but hopefully that gives a good sense that it has been really sought after.

I will say, before we go to subsequent questions, that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business — and I know that the opposition quotes their survey work in some of their statements from time to time — when I met with them, this was one program that they said: Keep this program in place. Make sure that you continue to do your work — when you eliminated the small business tax, that's something, of course, that they always come to us and say: Please keep that the way it is. And, of course, that is something that we always believed was important to do. Secondly, they said: This is a good program. We heard that from their CEO shortly after we launched this program a couple of years back.

We have said that it's important. We have a lot of different business organizations that want different types of programs and supports. You can tell by this one — we're projecting that we will use all of those dollars that are in place. We think that it's something that's working quite well.

But to be very open, it's a program — we haven't heard a lot of people challenge the success of it. We have heard people say that they're glad it's in place and it's working really well. It's usually when things are not going well with a program that you tend to hear lots about it. This one is very well-used, and I think that if it wasn't in place, you would hear from people who are currently using it. It's helping with their ability to balance their family life and their job.

One last point that I'll share: Part of this was also in response — our work with the NDP. There was also a lot of

discussion about this, but I heard directly from the hospitality industry. So, people have come into the House and said: The hospitality industry needs to make — there are many challenges. They have to be able to retain their staff. We heard for a period of time that they were losing staff to other levels of government or to different types of work — maybe more remote, higher-paying work. This was something that we thought was a great tool for hospitality and the tourism sector where retention could be more difficult — to be able to say: In partnership with the Yukon government, we can also provide you with some sick leave benefits. So, if you have younger children and you need to take that time, there is something here. You're still going to be able to manage your bills and you're going to be able to take this work on. I think that for lots of folks who have worked in that sector, having something like this now is really advantageous if that is the work that you're passionate about and love, but maybe you don't always see the same level of benefits as other sectors.

Ms. Van Bibber: I'm going to talk about a subject that everybody loves to talk about: red tape. Red tape holds up business, holds up production, and holds up the economy. We often talk about reducing red tape for businesses.

Can the minister update us on what their government is doing, if anything, to reduce red tape to help businesses?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will speak specifically to the Department of Economic Development. I think that all of our colleagues can touch on a number of different areas. For us, one of the most innovative and successful things that we have been able to do was — our own staff, our own leaders inside the Department of Economic Development, coming in and saying: Let's make sure that we can have local businesses that want to get access to supports from Economic Development come and meet with us directly. Let's get all of the services across government into that room, and let's break down these silos that happen so that people don't have a clear understanding of the many different ways that they can access business.

One of the newer things that has been done is the annual Funders Meet and Greet. It connects individuals, businesses, and other organizations with programs. In February 2024, the event involved 37 organizations, enabling the public to connect with numerous Government of Yukon departments and branches, federal government departments, the Council of Yukon First Nations, the City of Whitehorse, Yukon University — among many NGOs that provide funding for Yukoners.

Ongoing delivery and review across department programs is something that we continue to do. The conversations that we have had — last year, I know that we had challenges with permitting with the city. It was the City of Whitehorse, but I know that our ministers, even in that case, were standing up to say: If there is capacity required — and I think we are always willing to make sure, if we can, to provide different capacity supports.

Internally, I have asked — and I know that our team has — as we go through the remaining months of the mandate: We still need to continue to be striving for improvements, so how can we make life easier?

We have this really significant growth in housing right now. We had almost a 300-percent increase last month over the same month the year before. I looked at the numbers today and they are still increasing — 121 percent over last year whereas the national average, I think, is seven percent.

With big building booms comes extra pressure on departments like Community Services. They have a number of folks in there who have to go out and do inspection.

So, those are the conversations that I'm having through the Deputy Minister of Economic Development, who is the Deputy Minister of Executive Council, to say: Look, let's figure out ways to support folks in those areas to make things more efficient both for the client and for us to get out and to do that work.

When it comes to the mining sector, I can tell you that one of the things that we've done is we continue to provide more funding, because it's our responsibility, to Water Board. We continue to have more conversations — active, myself and the chair, understanding what they need. We have just supplied more dollars for some of their policy work. That may sound mundane inside the House, but really, it's understanding how they can better work with Energy, Mines and Resources and how we can make sure that we have strong, accountable processes but that there's no duplication in the work that they're doing.

I think that those are some of the things that are happening through Executive Council concerning mining.

The biggest piece of this is going to be that we're in a really significant time, and they will probably — the member opposite will probably have some questions for me about this, but we're moving toward eliminating interprovincial trade barriers like we've never seen before. I think that's going to be this monumental shift that's about to happen. We'll see what happens at the federal election. I don't have clarity around what others — whether it be the Conservative Party or the NDP at the federal level — what their vision is about this pace that they want to reduce in interprovincial trade barriers, but at the last Council of the Federation meeting, the commitment at that table was July 2, and you've heard that publicly.

So, depending on what happens next week, we'll all be here in the House; by the time we walk in on April 29, we'll know, and that will give us a pretty straight line about what will happen with provincial trade barriers.

We're looking at some of the biggest reductions in red tape in history. So, what's our role? We have to play a role in making sure that we're at that table and that we're reducing our barriers. I know that the Minister of Finance — our previous Premier — has been leading the work at that table on labour mobility. Last week, he was in meetings again on the trade file.

So, these are all things that we think are going to be really significant to reduce red tape not just at a national level but at a jurisdictional level.

Also, looking at officials — I can come back; I don't have a big briefing on it but a portal work for permits — an easier way for folks to come in and do the permitting. Hopefully, that gives you a sense of some of the bigger industry things that are

happening in the private sector — both the construction and the mining sector.

I don't have anything specific to touch on when it comes to this around tourism, although I have had folks in the tourism sector who are constantly building out their infrastructure who say: Give us ideas about ways to streamline the permitting process when it comes to building new infrastructure — which they are constantly investing in. I think that, over and above that, what is the positioning and posture of the Yukon government? How do we want to play a role to engage in the economy of our country? Are we going to embrace this time period to reduce barriers, to have the confidence across our economy, and to actually seize those new markets — first to some of the protective nature that has been what we have seen historically?

Ms. Van Bibber: We have asked quite a few questions on the northern food programs and the procurement process of government to buy from those northern food producers, whether it is eggs, beef, vegetables, and anything that is locally sourced.

What needs to change to get more Yukon product on that procurement list and actually begin buying locally to support the businesses here at home and to support those local growers and producers?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that is also an agriculture question. I think that it is an Energy, Mines and Resources question when it is about supporting agricultural growers. There is an economic devolution lens to it, but I think back to having the responsibility for agriculture, and I think about the CAP program, the Canadian agricultural partnership, and that ability for folks to apply to that and how they can expand their business. A group of peers is also part of the decision-making in that. I also think that there is an opportunity through the agricultural strategy.

Look, we have a role in Economic Development to play in making sure that there is the best opportunity for Yukon growers to either sell within to government or to sell locally. There are a couple of parts to that. One of the things that we did — the Member for Lake Laberge, myself, and maybe a couple of other folks were at the G-P anniversary.

What we talked to them about was making sure that you go to either the EDF program or the trade resiliency program. We're just finalizing the application process and saying, in that case, that this is a good thing. I want to commend them. G-P has done so much good groundwork. What they are essentially doing is — all of these folks who are out there producing who may not have their own transportation or distribution network — a local company has now come in and said to come and see them and that they can ensure that the ordering and distribution process of their product is done in a seamless manner.

Whereas, if you and I were out growing carrots, we would have to figure out — we would be growing our carrots, picking them, and then we have to sell them, and every — whatever — Friday morning, we would have to get in our truck to drive into town to deliver the carrots, whereas G-P has taken care of all of that front end, and they are a Yukon company who has just celebrated their anniversary, and they are also a second-

generation group of folks who have this great ability to understand small business.

What we have said is that this is a great example — go toward a company like G-P; they will make sure that they get your products in the window. Those are folks whom we can support and help build out their database. They have a pretty good database already, and Highways and Public Works, which has been brought up, has put a marketplace together. Many of those organizations in the marketplace — there has been good conversation between highways and G-P to say: Hey, we can just mirror that marketplace. That is what the folks share with me from G-P: We can get those products.

I think that this is a really good way, because we've talked about this for years. It's not like the political will is not there. The political will has always been here to say that we want people to buy local products. I think that, even among the deputy ministers, the assistant deputy ministers, and many folks, we have all sat down over the years. This has happened in successive governments. It happened under the folks who my colleagues are part of, and it has happened over the last 10 years. The challenge is that it has really come down to who is ordering the food. If you have chefs out there who are ordering for 10 people, depending on the institution, or they are ordering for 300 people, what they tend to do is — what is going to be the simplest way is to meet their budget goals, to meet the nutritional goals, and be able to produce this product, put it out, and have it prepared for the clients?

We have to make the decision-making as simple as possible when it comes to the work for those folks. In some cases, they can go to one of these other companies that have been very successful winning contracts for the last 20 or 30 years, and when they do that, the food — whatever — the protein that they're identifying is going to be easier to prepare, easier to get out the door — those are the types of things that can happen — are easier to put on the table and less preparation or you make it easier for folks to buy local and have the ability to go through a digital electronic platform to do their ordering. G-P has just come up with that model.

I think that we're figuring out ways to combat that and mitigate the challenges that we have seen in the past. I know that, for us at Economic Development, we have said to individuals: Please come to us so that we can help you to expand the vendors who are on your platform. Of course, we have a process — we go through and we analyze the applications, but these are things that we — that makes — they're common sense; it's about Yukon small businesses getting the best impact and ability to have their businesses get supported within a market here but also build the foundation within their company through that revenue source to be able to expand their markets outside of the Yukon.

Ms. Van Bibber: I think, you know, we all voice: Buy local, buy local. But as we know, the Government of Yukon is one of the biggest buyers of food. So, you know, whether it's the schools, retirement homes, hospitals — the list goes on. Will the government make this a priority and see how this can be incorporated in a more meaningful way? Individually, I can go to the store and buy local carrots and potatoes, but it's a

small amount given to — and I'm sure that you can make a deal with some of these local growers that will make it beneficial.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: You're right. I guess that what we have undertaken is — as we move toward July 2 — so, there are a lot of moving pieces here — we're committed to reducing barriers around internal trade. With that being said, some of the provisions that we have been able to carve out around internal trade and the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* have been advantageous to Yukoners.

So, one of the things that we've been able to do as we get ready to hopefully pass this budget is to commit to buying some of these local products. One of the things is that we got folks together from Health and Social Services, Justice, Economic Development, and Highways and Public Works to say: We really think that it's important — the biggest buyers of food are Education, Justice, and Health and Social Services.

I know that the leadership at that level got together and said: One of the things that we can do that would be really important is to use one of those exceptions to purchase \$1 million worth — or up to \$1 million worth — of local food products.

I know that they are sitting down with officials to look at that. I think that if that could be used more than once to meet what our institutions need for food and also make sure that it is spent locally, that would be good. There has been at least one syndicate of local producers that we all know well that has tried at times before to compete for the larger food contract that happens. I think that they did very well, but I don't think that they were successful. I think it's important in the interim to spend where you can locally in big portions for the hospital, schools, and all those things that are those big buyers — I agree with you completely — and at the same time get ready so that when those big contracts come along, you can have a collective of Yukon companies win those contracts. I think that this is incredibly important.

It's a mind-set and methodology that we should be using for a number of things; it's food; it's technology — we have had companies that have done really well in technology. Our class 1 notification for mining was built by a local company that then took that expertise and went elsewhere. That is what you see happening in other jurisdictions across Canada and the United States where these locally grown companies grow because government is in a position to use its buying power to support them. I couldn't agree more.

So, we do have a pretty significant procurement chunk — about \$1 million — that is going to be able to go at the start of the budget. I know that this will encourage you to vote on this budget with me, but those are some things that we can do in the short term come the spring.

Ms. Van Bibber: Let's not get carried away.

The Yukon nominee program has been in the news with concerning problems for a few years. The Auditor General of Canada wrote a management letter in January for the government with some recommendations. Specifically, the minister had indicated earlier in the Sitting that the department would be able to provide an update on those recommendations that decision-making about the program should be removed

from a single individual and handled by a so-called objective, impartial, disinterested third party.

Can the minister outline what actions the department has taken to implement this recommendation outlined in that letter?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We had an exchange on this particular item. I remember that exchange that we had. We had a change policy. I stated that the ADM, the assistant deputy minister, has the final sign-off on those applications. That is actually what it was previously. It has always been the ADM; the assistant deputy minister always has the final sign-off. That is the way that it has been over the last decade or longer, but I do understand that there are a number of recommendations that were put in place that we can speak to as we go through these questions.

Ms. Van Bibber: Can the minister elaborate on any changes that the department has made to the decision-making about the immigration program in response to that particular recommendation?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am going to touch on two things. Officials are just sharing some information. I will go into two sections: what we are doing right now and then some of the upcoming work that responds to the OAG recommendations.

One of the comments that has come from the team, me, and others is that the Yukon immigration programs are at a crossroads, with a rapidly changing immigration landscape in Canada resulting in a need for the department to review the program and the way that it operates.

Let me say something profound. One of the pieces that you may ask me about and that is in OAG report is: Is this the actual program that we should even be using for the labour market needs of the Yukon?

That's a pretty profound statement, because I think that if you went out and sat down with the business community, they would all say that this is paramount toward the success of the economy and is paramount toward the fluid operations of their businesses, but there is a bigger conversation that has been tabled here by the OAG.

With that being said, we're still operating under the pretense that this is something that we need to make sure is working to the best of its ability both for the clients who are using it — and when I say "clients", I mean the employees — and the employers — so making sure that all of that is working the way it should.

Part of this was immediate actions that speak to the issues identified by the OAG, so working collaboratively with industry associations to develop priorities for the 2025 intake to help ensure that the program targets areas of significant pressure and Yukon labour market.

I want to thank the chambers that had put their time in to sit down with our officials for the back-and-forth to give us a sense of what they felt was important for us to be able to share with them, the changes in the program, and the needs that we were trying to meet — exploring procedural improvements for the 2025 application intake that can streamline processing and improve service standards, working with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to ensure that Yukon employers have access to information about the range of

immigration streams that are administered by the federal government which may help to address business needs in light of the nominee program allocation reduction.

I'll give one example on that one. I spent a lot of time over the years talking to the tourism sector — specifically in Dawson City. You heard it directly from the folks there saying: A temporary foreign worker program would really be helpful for us. In 2015, that was cancelled by IRCC. A seasonally based tourism sector — not to say that they haven't done great work on the shoulder seasons and winter tourism, but when you really need an influx of folks, that's a good program. We could not get support to have that program within our delivery, but IRCC does have that program. A lot of places in Canada support their local businesses or direct their local businesses to use that. That's what I mean by saying to just make sure that folks know that there are other programs besides the Yukon nominee program that are available.

High-skilled labour is another streamlined program that IRCC delivers, so there are a number of different things.

As part of our comprehensive program and policy review — so, our goals for this upcoming year that we're working on are: ensure that the program's design provides sufficient flexibility to adapt to changing priorities, allocations, and labour market needs; develop operational guidance that provides clarity both within the department and for our clients and making it clear where there is discretion when reviewing applications and where there is not; make sure that our processes are fair and transparent and that our clients have access to the information they need; evaluate and ensure that the resources that our government currently commits to the immigration program are meeting both the needs of our businesses and foreign nationals seeking to make the Yukon their home; and review our compliance monitoring system to ensure that we are appropriately actioning complaints and proactively checking in with employers and foreign workers, which is part of our tripartite agreements that we have with our workers and employers.

Again, our first step in advancing the work will be to invigorate the Yukon partnerships and immigration committee, which we now have really significant buy-in from. We're going to have business and industry sectors and non-profits sit with government officials within that platform. Some of the observations of the OAG reflect concerns that have been identified in other jurisdictions as well, and I think that this is important to know. As we go to the table — whether it's at the Premier's table or the Economic Development minister's — many of the trends and pressures that we are seeing are things that are being seen across the country. Again, we will explore what we can learn from other provincial and territorial governments as they operate their nominee programs and ensure that delivery of the programs is consistent with national standards.

That will hopefully give a sense of some of the things — maybe I'll just touch on this last piece about this sole discretion question. I'm going to read this into the record. Decision-making for the Yukon nominee program follows many steps. Applications are first assessed by an immigration officer

followed by a review of a second immigration officer to confirm the assessment and recommendation. Just let me confirm with officials — now we also have an expression of interest. So, we have an expression of interest that we've just gone out with — so, first, expression of interest, then immigration officer, and then second immigration officer to confirm assessment and recommendation.

Then the application assessment is considered by the director before making a final recommendation to the assistant deputy minister for issuance of a nomination certificate. The issue, again, limits the decision-making authority. So, there are multiple steps there in place and, of course, these are some of the things that we'll make sure that we share with the OIG, understanding that the OIG came in, gave a letter of recommendation, but there will be further conversation with them.

Ms. Van Bibber: Now, earlier this year, the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or IRCC, informed the government that there would be a 50-percent reduction in allocations for this year. With this announcement, the Yukon government immediately paused all applications. What did this mean for the applications that were pending, and were the pending applicants prioritized when the intake resumed?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: A number of pieces that are important to share around folks who had previously applied for our program — the first thing is that — just being identified by officials. In every one of those cases, our officials are reaching out directly to each one of those individuals to give them an understanding of the status of their application — first thing.

The second thing is that most individuals who are applying are looking for that ability, of course, to work here and go through the nominee program, but they're also looking to — in some cases, they have a future goal of permanent residency. First and foremost, what we're trying to do is to ensure that some of these individuals who are looking to be here who have some sort of a work status — so, that could be a student visa; it could be a work visa but not through the nominee program.

We have negotiated with Canada. Manitoba did it around the same time. We are the first two jurisdictions to do it. We went back and said: Look, if you're going to reduce the number of nominee positions we have, we have these great folks who are living in the Yukon; they have a home in the Yukon; they are part of a working environment here already, and without disrupting that, is there a way for us to continue to have those folks work? So, we have gotten an extension of two years, which has given us an opportunity for those individuals to stay and work. I just want to say that has been part of — a really important part of the work that our team has been doing.

The rest of those folks — we're contacting them, because in each and every case, the criteria to some extent has shifted. We needed, number one, to make sure that they can hopefully stay and work in the Yukon until they have an opportunity to go down a particular pathway they're looking at, but we have shifted, because we know that there are lots of folks who have come — I will give you an example — and then gone to Yukon University from all over the place. They finish; they are

international students. They come, they finish, and they graduate. We feel because we, as a government, are providing funding for Yukon University to exist and deliver programs, those individuals come and get expertise. In some cases, they're working in, say, mining; they have gone through a program and they're like: I really want to stay here; I've gone to university in the Yukon, and I want to be able to be prioritized. It doesn't matter where they came from, but they are brand-new graduates who have made their home here. So, that's one of the areas that we prioritized.

Health and Social Services is the other area that we have prioritized. We have lots of folks who we want to see come, whether it's nurses or other health care professionals, and we're still looking very fondly on — I want to make sure I touch this —

We also have, I'll just say, some preferred waiting when it comes to rural Yukon where it's much harder in our communities, sometimes, to find folks for the labour force. We can disseminate that a bit, but there, it's really through — there's a lottery portion that we're doing that gives a carve-out for rural. I want to be very explicit: Some of those people who applied before may not be at the front of the line during this process now, but we will be contacting them. We will be looking to figure out how we can extend their work permits, and in some cases, depending on the area in which they're working, they may be up in the prioritization, but it's really on a case-by-case basis based on those folks.

Ms. Van Bibber: Yes, that explains a bit of prioritizing certain applications. As the reduction has gone, I think the government has decided to take 125 applicants at a time. Then, will there be two intake periods, or is it all happening right now as it is opened?

How does the plan move along? I think you just mentioned rural Yukon, so is there going to be a certain allocation for rural Yukon or a majority for Whitehorse? Are you going to flip a coin, or how are we doing this?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First piece — we're going to do all of the allocations all at once, so it won't be 125, 125. It's the 215. Here's the intake approach for applications carried over from 2024 and community applications received before January 23, 2025 that align with the identified priorities. First, from the expression of interest intake — which is part of what we have also put out for new interest — those who align with the priorities will be invited to apply for the Yukon nominee program. Any nominations that remain and the remaining slots will be filled randomly with a proportion of 15 percent being allocated toward rural Yukon communities. We are trying to make sure that we can do that, make sure that we are understanding the challenges of the labour market there. Out of the 215, we took 10 of the nominations for health care. We did have a bit of pushback. Folks in the business community — because we hadn't used that process before. We hadn't used the Yukon nominee program for health care. Some of the folks in the business community are in areas that have high labour —

Again, we sat down and we had to make that decision. You have to have all the tools available to you, so we have carved out those 10 spots for health care.

Ms. Van Bibber: I have just one last question on this topic for the minister. How many applications are in your backlog that you are considering prioritizing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to make sure that I am answering this question accurately. If the question was based on how many applications were in that backlog — 170.

Ms. Van Bibber: In his pre-statement, the minister mentioned foreign credential advancements and that it is still being worked on. What is being worked on? Is it rules and policies? How to fast-track this advancement? When is the government thinking that this might come to fruition?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Sorry if I was misunderstood. This program is in motion; it started last year. This year, I can share with you that we currently have 89 individuals who have been engaged by the department through the navigation service. The first step: How can we help you? What are your background credentials? Are you a registered nurse? Maybe it has mostly been the nursing field, but it could be others areas of health care professionals — lab tech, radiology, you name it. Of those 89, for 26 individuals, we have developed action plans, and they have received funding — primarily internationally educated nurses as well as dentists and physiotherapists. So, a total of \$111,000 has been invested as of April 10, 2025.

It is a real sort of concierge service, because everybody is in an incredibly different place. What we are trying to do is meet with the individual and understand what their credential is, how they can be part of the Yukon health care ecosystem, and then go through a process of case-managing to understand where the bridging has to be done — if they have to take more tests. We have had one nurse practitioner who had to go to Calgary to do testing. Pretty expensive, but then you are in a position to have somebody who is committed to that community, who wants to serve and can do a lot of services, based on that, with really high credentials. In that case, I think undergrad and master's in nursing but still had to do some extra work. Those are things in some cases.

A lot of folks who are coming from the Philippines or from India — highly qualified, need to get bridging done, have made the Yukon their home — so, really, meeting with anybody who wants to be committed to our health care program. It is well underway.

I will flag — we're going to see if this is applicable to some of the recruitment efforts underway when it comes to doctors. We have been having some very successful conversations — we'll see — with a very short runway of recruitment. Part of that work will be to see if this program can help with some of the bridging. Of course, we have talked a bit — we have had one doctor internationally go through the Nova Scotia registry wondering if this program can also be used. We are going to continue to maximize the use of these dollars for folks across — for internationally trained health care professionals.

Ms. Van Bibber: I thank the minister for that answer.

With respect to the trade mission to Asia that took place in 2023, there has been little to no public info or follow-up from the government on how the mission has benefited us in the territory to date. According to a news release from the Government of Yukon on September 8, 2023, the purpose of

the mission was to address health human resource challenges, promote innovation in collaboration in critical minerals and technology sectors, hopefully increase business investment in the Yukon, and also expand tourism.

Have there been successful results on business investment in the Yukon as a result of this trip, and can the minister please provide some examples?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Look, I think that what's important is to note that the member opposite probably has a pretty good sense of the situation that occurred at the time. I think that understanding that our team was in — part of the trip — put in a very difficult position that nobody could have accounted for at the time. I always feel that this question — I know that, as critic, you have to answer, but I always find that this one is a little bit of what I would say is kind of a dirty question, because it's — yes, it is; it absolutely is. It's a little bit — because there is more to it. What anybody who is asking this question would say — first is: Your team who was there on a trip that every other province and territory has made, even since then, to these particular jurisdictions — whether it be Japan or India, Saskatchewan, Ontario — we were caught in a situation, which I got grilled in this House about the preparation that we did. We sat down with all of the right officials to make sure that we could do it, but there are some members in the House who had great joy in grinding on this one, which I thought was — lacked a lot of class.

With that being said, what has happened? The Japan portion of the trip has been a great continued relationship when it comes, first, to tourism. With tourism, of course, we signed a bilateral agreement. Between the initiatives in tourism, you have seen those numbers continue to increase when it comes to tourism. Mitsubishi has continued on the mining side as a great company in Japan which continued to look at the Yukon and be invested in the Yukon. I spoke to Western Copper's CEO last week and said there's renewed commitment. In that particular case, it has been strong.

Some of the work around research — I believe that there is always going to be interest from some of the officials from Japan. I know that there were invites that just came not too long ago for this year. There are folks leaving from the Yukon to go over to Japan more on the artistic side — some of our cultural diplomats, but there will be continued work.

When it comes to India, in that particular case, there are two or three different areas that I think are important. First, we know that there was an absolute chill that has happened in the relationship between Canada and India, but I also think that what you are seeing right now is that the country is thinking, because of the current geopolitical situation we are in, about how you maybe open up those relationships, understanding the sensitivity that has happened.

What you saw lately was the former Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, go over to Raisina, which is the biggest conference that they host, as one of the keynote speakers to talk about the importance of the relationship between Canada and India. You have seen a number of officials from different jurisdictions, probably most notably Saskatchewan with Premier Moe, talking about the incredible

trade that happens, and then you will also see interest in opening up those markets on oil and gas.

For us, there are a couple of areas. One is health folks — one meeting on the last day, which was with Apollo Health. That's an area that they have investigated. We will see if that leads to any lines of business. We have opened up the area that we went to on that trip in the first couple of days, which was Kerala. We had a call in the last couple of weeks — we have somebody there who is available to recruit, and it's really about general practitioners and doctors. I think that is the first thing I would say. Now that you're seeing some of this openness between the countries to have the beginning of positive dialogue, I think that we are trying to step back to where we were before that situation or that period in time in September, so I think that is a key area.

The second thing is that we did meet with somebody who wanted to look at bringing tourism into the Yukon. That was one of the meetings that we had. That individual contacted just us, because of the change in relationship, is flying to the Yukon in three weeks' time — in Washington, DC, for meetings and then flying here to talk about how they meet with our Tourism department and how can they can have a bilateral agreement on tourism.

I think, in those cases, things that we are starting to see shortly now after the fact that — pretty difficult, strained relationship since September of that year.

Lastly, I would say, around the mining side, we are still open to going back — that was probably the one area — going back to those discussions. Our teams usually meet at PDAC. It challenges every asset that was discussed by the Indian geological survey leadership. It was already owned by somebody, so partially, what we have been doing is we have gone to those publicly traded companies and said: Look, there is interest there, but it is national geological survey that is interested in your project.

I think the difference when it comes to mining in the Yukon is a lot of people are interested in all of the critical resources.

So, yes to health care recruitment. Yes to business development and tourism happening now — not so much on the mining side. There was at least one avenue that I believe — Health and Social Services around Apollo Health, which has offices in Seattle as well, as one area to look at.

I think you will probably see, depending on what happens, an avenue for recruitment for the hospitality sector that will have come from that trip as well.

Ms. Van Bibber: See, that wasn't so difficult. I don't think it was a dirty question. I think anybody who does a major trade mission and is supposed to bring back a report to this House is quite — I think we are quite valid in asking.

I have one interesting one to end with. We have noticed two government contracts that were issued to the same individual on the same day by the same project manager for the same amount, same project.

My colleague the Member for Copperbelt South asked for clarification of these direct awards at the budgeting briefing and in a follow-up e-mail, but we have yet to hear back. Is the

minister able to provide any more information about these contracts?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Two contracts — I think they were \$41,000. One was cancelled. There was only one given that day, so there weren't actually two contracts; it was just one given and one was repealed to one person.

Ms. Van Bibber: I thank the minister and I thank the staff for being here.

Ms. White: Thank you, Madam Chair; welcome to the officials. I thank my colleague from Porter Creek North who asked a whole lot of questions across many spectrums of things, and I appreciate that.

I just wanted to jump straight in. I appreciated that the minister shared the information about the paid sick leave. I believe it was 923 people had been covered by 127 businesses — I think this was last year — to the tune of \$528,000. I wanted to know what — so, understanding that the paid sick leave program has been extended for the year, are there plans going forward beyond this fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We think it's a great program. We think it's a program that should continue on. We've asked our officials to be able to do some work, but more importantly, what we've asked — when we met with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business — is for them to have a sense from their members. Part of that work is just to give us a sense of what value they see. Can there be improvements done to the program? How should it be delivered?

I think it will be a significant part of discussions moving forward. We think that it serves a lot of folks and it's a great program. It's something that I would see funded going into the future, but also, if there are opportunities for us to make some adjustments to it before we look at a multi-year funding opportunity, that's something that is important to do.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. The Yukon NDP believe that paid sick leave is critical.

I reference all the time, back in the day, having had a coffee shop with a very small staff, it was better for me to have people be sick than for them to come in and take out my entire staff, which then meant that we couldn't be open at all. So, here we are almost 15, 16 years beyond that, and knowing that people can be sick is an important aspect.

I wanted to ask some questions around work permits. Are any work permits ever issued for less than a year, and if so, are those workers eligible for Yukon health care after a three-month waiting period?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I don't know; we don't issue any work permits; it is all done through the federal level. It is information that we could find out, but that is not something in our jurisdiction.

Ms. White: I guess I will ask the Minister of Health and Social Services the question about Yukon health care.

I appreciate the questions about the Yukon nominee program, and, of course, the minister is talking about the different aspects of that. One of the challenges was that there were a lot of folks who got caught up in the system. For example, people had applied and they had been accepted initially, and they were working their way through the process.

One of the challenges was that — what I had heard from folks who had applied — they were really having a hard time finding updates or understanding where they were in the process. I know that the minister has mentioned that the department is reaching out individually to those individuals, but can he let me know what the expectation is for someone who has applied previously — let's say before the pause was put on — as far as information-sharing around their applications?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Our department right now is making sure that we reach out to those 170 individuals — each and every one of them — to give them an update and status report on their application.

Ms. White: Has there been a metric or a system put in place within the department that says, for example, that this is the timeline when the person should be first contacted or first hear back? One of the challenges that I have heard from folks and businesses who have applied to the nominee programs is that, once the application goes in, it is a void and they don't know what is happening. Is there any kind of metric that has been set up within the department, for example, to communicate information back out and timelines to do those things?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have definitely changed the way we approach it, because the service standards are not aligned with the process that's in place. We have a new process; we're doing this intake of expression of interest, which is part of it, and then we're in a position where they are still going to be looking at prioritization. To be fair, the overall service standards are all things that now we are again going back to and we are looking at what our touch points will be.

More importantly, for anybody who is waiting to hear, please — officials are urging me to say: Please have that individual reach out to the department so that there can be a conversation and we can help and support those individuals. They may not get information that they are happy getting because of what challenges we have been tasked with, but we will definitely get them up to speed about where their application is at the time.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that and, of course, the department for being supportive.

I think, in some cases, people don't necessarily expect an answer as to — for example, a yes or no or something specific. They just want to know that someone understands that they're waiting and that they're stuck in this horrible kind of in-between as they wait for those next steps.

I appreciate that there was an action done so that folks were able to have their work permits extended. For folks who accepted the temporary support program for the work permit extensions, are they going to be shifted to a temporary foreign worker status, or will they stay on the temporary support program for work permit extensions?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The group of individuals who got the work extensions — and that was previous to that May 15 or 16 date — part of our commitment is that they all then get access to the nominee program.

Another important statistic is that 85 percent of the individuals who are allowed in our nominee program have to

be from within Canada. So, we only have that small percentage that can come from outside of the country. So, partially, it's prioritizing the folks who have been extended plus the folks who are here already.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*.

Is there any further debate?

Ms. White: Just before the break, we were talking about folks with temporary work permit extensions. One of the concerns that I've heard from people who have been kind of engaged in this process for a number of years is, for example, around their International English Language Testing System, which is mandatory for all immigrants to prove their skill in language. The certificate is typically valid for two years from the date of issue or, for the World Education Services, which is a body that is authorized by the RCC to assess the educational credentials of foreign workers, they are valid for five years from the date of issue.

One of the reasons why I am bringing this up is that some people have been kind of trapped in a cycle where they may have done, for example, their language test and either they are near the end of the two years or there has been such a backlog that they have been unable to do the initial testing. I am just curious how the department is working with those folks who are either near the end of their language proficiency test or people who have not been able, because of a backlog, to take that test.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: With respect to the IELTS, language tests must be valid at the time of submission to the Yukon nominee program; however, they may be expired by the time of processing. As well, with respect to the WES, they provide educational credential assessments. These are a not a requirement for the Yukon nominee program.

Ms. White: Just for confirmation, did the minister just say that they are not required for the nominee program?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, the IELTS is required, but the WES is not required.

Ms. White: One of the other things that folks — and I appreciate that this is outside of the Yukon government's basket, but I'm hoping that they can work in close conjunction with the federal government. One of the challenges was, of course, that when a person applies for the nominee — is accepted to the nominee program — within six months, people will typically apply for their permanent residency. This was also a place where people were getting caught. They had taken the English proficiency exam, for example, or they were backlogged for that and that put their permanent residency

application at risk. How is the Yukon government working with the Canadian government to make sure that people aren't getting trapped in a cycle that was not of their own creation?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Officials are just sharing that when there is a challenge like the one identified by the member opposite, what happens is that the department does have the ability to extend the nominee permit. That gives them more time to be able to prepare to reapply — or if there has been some challenge and they need to pull documentation together. The one tool that we have is the ability to extend that time frame out while they are still working with the federal government.

I think that the other piece I would share is that we consistently share with either the minister who is responsible for IRCC or at the officials level different trends that we might see. So, if we're seeing a real challenge that continues to happen with a number of files or a number of processes, we'll flag that. In some cases — this has happened over subsequent years — you'll get a call or response from the MP's office — the person will go to the MP's office — usually at the staffing level — will come back over — assistant level back over to our staff. So, we'll do it at the ministerial level, but we'll also do it at the MP level.

Ms. White: I'm not asking the minister to guess about extensions now, but how many extensions were granted last year — let's say in the 2024 calendar year — to the nominee program, understanding that there were challenges? I note that I wrote a fair number of letters in 2024 about the nominee program. Were there any extensions granted in 2024?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There were, but we will come back to the member. Officials are going to get that number for us.

Ms. White: If it is possible — I don't need the answer today, but in a return would be good.

The challenge is — working with folks whose employers — or working with employers who, for example, have applied for the nominee program and then working to support the people whom they are trying to support through the nominee program, one of the things that I appreciated that the minister said is that there is a large percentage of this year's allocation that will go to folks who are living in the territory already. I support that. Folks who are already here have housing, they have an established community, and they are probably currently working and looking to extend that. I appreciate that; I think that will solve some of the concerns that I have heard on the ground, especially from those folks who have been kind of trapped in the cycle of being between applications.

One of the things that we had talked about previously in the Economic Development debate was the different industries that can apply for the nominee program. One of the things that the minister and I have talked about previously was the ability for governments — whether it is the Yukon government, municipal governments, or First Nation governments — to apply for the nominee program. I just wanted to know if there has been a broader look at those policies to make sure that folks who would, for example, work for a government within the territory — if governments are able to apply for the nominee program.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, both municipal and First Nation governments have the ability to use the nominee program.

Ms. White: Does the Yukon government have the ability to use the nominee program?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will share a bit around that. So, the Yukon nominee program is an employer-driven initiative that could be used by the Government of Yukon to recruit hard-to-fill positions that would benefit the territory when no qualified Canadian or permanent resident is available for the position. We are not currently using the program. There was a carve-out, but that is taking into consideration the Hospital Corporation and others outside of government that could use it. It is available, but we are going to have to wait and see. I think that is more readily available to the Hospital Corporation as a stand-alone than going directly through the government.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I think about things like rural Yukon and hard-to-staff positions in rural Yukon. I'm not necessarily thinking about folks moving to the hub — moving to Whitehorse; I'm thinking more about people in those positions in rural Yukon, but I appreciate the answer.

One of the things that we have had lots of conversations back and forth about is the credentialing of foreign health care workers, whether we're talking about nurses, nurse practitioners, or doctors. I know that there was an exchange with my colleague the Member for Porter Creek North, but I just wanted to know: Can the minister give us more of an idea of where we are at in the process of trying to fast-track that? I mean, we've all identified that bringing in doctors, for example, from the United States makes a lot of sense and from India and other countries makes a lot of sense. Can the minister tell me where we are at, where we're expected to go, and a timeline for that?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that the question is pertaining directly to doctors. I can share some of the work that I have been involved in with the minister. Then I leave it to the minister and health officials to have a discussion. We have had at least one discussion on direct recruitment abroad and it was looking at recruitment through south India.

There are a number of things that have to be taken into consideration. The infrastructure has to be in place, which we have to do here in the Yukon. That might be individuals who can come and be part of an existing clinic that has space or individuals whom we can support in a clinic space. The conversations that I was part of with a senior official from health on the call was really around family medicine. That seems to be the target area.

I think that the ability to recruit in the current context and the number of doctors who are required will be limited by infrastructure that is required. There is probably a bit of challenge going through the registry and, of course, the funds that have to be put in place, but I think there is a good pathway. So, that's why I have had a little exchange with other members in the House when I'm like: I think we're on the right track.

The conversation that I had with Dr. Bryant the other day was: I think we're in a position where, when you take into consideration where we are on the wait-list, the dialogue that is

happening, and the avenues that are available now to us for doctor recruitment, we're in a pretty good spot.

The other thing that has happened is that we have had entrepreneurs who are doctors come and speak directly with health officials. Again, there could be an interest in those cases of making sure that the government plays a role in supporting the infrastructure that is required.

I wouldn't have enough data points right now to give you an accurate answer around how long it takes, but I would say this: There is a pathway available to meet the required needs for doctors both in the short run for the wait-list and looking at doctors who are looking to retire over the next 36 months. The number roughly — would it be 20 doctors? That pathway is achievable, for sure, but I do think that between the summer and the fall, we can make some incremental gains. I think that having a clinic where you have a half a dozen doctors, depending if they are focused on working in family medicine versus balancing that as a hospitalist — but just has family medicine — we are probably in a really good position to look at absorbing the wait-list. To be fair to those doctors, they are not going to absorb the whole wait-list. There will be period of time as they come online on how long it takes whether, at their full capacity, they can absorb that entire wait-list, but they will have to go through a process of meeting those patients and the intake. I think that may take a little longer, but you would have the capacity to absorb that.

We are looking, on the US file — I think that was a good point that was brought to the House by opposition folks saying: You have to look at the US. There were conversations that were happening there between our minister and the minister in British Columbia. British Columbia was the first out of the gate. My sense is — and I haven't had the direct conversation — that the YMA's recruiter, who mostly focuses on locums through the YMA — those are funds that we provide.

Just a broader sense as we get into the next couple of months of where to target the recruitment — and they said, those west coast states through organizations: We want to make sure the money is used appropriately.

It makes for good Question Period, for sure, and it is a good point, but the reality is that, before you start spending money, you want to figure out where you are going to get the most effective use of that money. Is it existing associations of doctors? Is it state by state? I think that those are the things that are being thought about and looked at now before we start to have a targeted approach on the US piece.

Our minister shared with me — Ireland and lots of folks in the Middle East, other places in the world, the US. Those are really significant spots to be recruiting doctors from for the Yukon.

Ms. White: The minister just referenced the Minister of Health and Social Services. Is this being done in conjunction with both departments, or is this being led by Health and Social Services?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We play a role in the health human resources committee and around that strategy mostly because our labour market — as we went through the budget, a portion of that money for foreign credentials now sits in Economic

Development. So, we have a series of tools that we can use now to help offset some of the expenditures and costs that an individual may have to bear if they are coming into the Yukon.

I have sat with the minister of health and said: We can extend some of our programs that were primarily being used for individuals who had already been here looking to bridge.

So, it's definitely led by Health and Social Services, but we are going to try to make sure that some of the money that we have available for foreign credentials can also be used for individuals who are interested in making Yukon their home.

Ms. White: I know that the Premier touched on this in his opening remarks, but in the forecast for the Department of Economic Development, it talks about the \$1 million for the Yukon trade resiliency program. I just want to know more about the creation of that program, what it might look like, and who is involved in that conversation. I understand that it may not be ready to be rolled out or announced right now, but I'm interested to know how it's going to be developed.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Subject to approval of the main budget, the trade resiliency program will have a budget of \$1 million to help the Yukon's economy respond and adapt to the trade war launched by the US federal government. The program will focus assistance through three mechanisms: collective business-led actions through business organizations, which will be expression-of-interest driven; an expression-of-interest-driven component for individual businesses that can demonstrate direct negative impacts on their operations; and directly commissioned projects where appropriate. So, key features for the program — it is intended to be an adaptation program, not a revenue replacement program.

The program is not designed to provide direct financial support to businesses impacted by a general economic downturn, but it may do so indirectly. Given the ongoing uncertainty and the highly unpredictable leadership in the US, the TRP is based on the principle of remaining flexible and nimble in response. The program will seek to be complementary to other programs. We're waiting to see what the federal programs are going to look like and not duplicate. That's part of the reason. I mean, we have been trying to ensure that we have a good, fair process for folks to be able to apply. Second is that we're trying to understand what the real impacts are. We have had discussions; we brought a number of businesses together to understand where there are going to be impacts.

I will share a few things with you. We brought the home builders subcommittee that is part of the Yukon chamber together. Pretty much most areas of material — many areas of their supply chain will be affected, in some cases, even where products are Canadian-made but there is a component that is from the US — same thing with Northerm. They have concern based on what's going to play out. So, we have been trying to get a real sense of the impact before we roll the program out.

But we also know — and I'll add to the earlier information that I shared — that part of what we need to do collectively as a region and nationally is diversification as well. So, we also see this as an opportunity where, if sectors want to expand on

their already good work, they can go through an expression-of-interest-driven process — apply.

We have been listening to the chambers. Our team is in constant conversation with all of the chambers, and it has been our policy officials who have been doing the work of building out the program. I have great comfort in the work that they do. The best programs that were built in this country through the pandemic were all built by those folks — primarily the same team coming together to help lead this. I think that we should be in good stead. I'm sorry that we're not getting into deeper detail about it today, but I think that we just have a little bit more work to do and, of course, to get to the budget passing as well.

Ms. White: I guess I'm curious — through the process, once the program is announced and people are starting, will there be a metric to — for example, when a business or a business organization applies for funding, is there going to be a check-and-balance process to make sure that what the money is intended for or what it's indicated to be used for is, or is it a no-strings-attached — for example — grant?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I'll go back and have a broader conversation with our officials, but in every case, we'll have a TPA. Our transfer payment agreements will have appendices of identified outcomes and expectations. I appreciate the question, because this is something where — potential clients will say that this is a bit of red tape and there's a reporting mechanism that's required. But inevitably, that's what we have to do because of the use of public money. At some point, you're going to have an Auditor General analysis. It happens to every department, and you want to be in a position to be able to show the accountability framework that you've put in place as you move that money. If there's any difference in that, I know that my official will tell me, but that's essentially how we've always transferred funds when we invest in Yukon businesses.

Ms. White: Deputy Chair, I appreciate that answer from the minister and my question about the checks and balances — or the TPA — wasn't a criticism. I think it's important to know that public money is being spent in responsible fashion, and so I appreciate that. I look forward to seeing more information when that comes out.

With that, I have no further questions today. I'm interested to get to Energy, Mines and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to take an opportunity to thank the deputy minister as well as the assistant deputy minister for the team's preparation and all the financial work that was done. I know that Catherine is away right now with family. But also, to the folks who are in communication or are unit and branch leads, thank you, for those who are listening, for all your work in preparation of this, getting the budget ready this year — again, being prepared to go through a more challenging economic time like you've done multiple times before, and you do it so well. For the one or two people who are — at least one or two of our senior folks are retiring — if they're listening today, thank you for your service to the department and, again, for all the preparation and the material that was shared with our opposition parties getting ready for briefing.

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

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

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

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

Deputy 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 lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$26,343,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$1,013,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$27,356,000 agreed to

Department of Economic Development agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*.

Would members like to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*.

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources

Deputy Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I would like to welcome Deputy Minister van der Meer and Deputy Minister Moore back to the Assembly to help us get information for colleagues in the House on Energy, Mines and Resources.

I am just going to give a response to the question from the Member for Watson Lake today who asked about the southeast Yukon forest management plan. First of all, we don't yet have a southeast Yukon forest management plan. That work is being done in combination with some other planning and being led by the Executive Council Office.

What we have been doing is a lot of timber harvest plans within southeast Yukon. Let me get some additional information on that. First of all, broadly in the Yukon in 2021, our total wood harvest was about 10,000 cubic metres, and last year, we got some additional reporting late in the year. We are up over 20,000 cubic metres. In the last three years, we have doubled the amount of harvest. That doesn't mean that we don't still have some challenges and problems. In southeast Yukon — the Scoby Creek timber harvest plan has been approved by the Yukon government and the Liard First Nation, and there is harvesting going on right now. That has licensed 17,000 cubic metres of sawlogs and fuelwood.

There are log builders here in Whitehorse who have expressed concerns about the sawlogs, because what has happened is that, under the Scoby Creek timber harvest plan, which includes the harvest of larger diameter logs, those logs are now going to Heartland Timber Homes, which is in the Watson Lake area. We are working to try to support folks here to support them with timber harvest plans that, again, can be down in southeast Yukon.

It's similar information — we have planning underway with the Yukon Wood Products Association and the Liard First Nation to advance a timber harvest plan in the Poison Lake burn and a new project in the Scoby Creek area. We know that there is quite a bit or an abundance of large sawlogs in the Poison Lake area, but there is a challenge with access, so it will need road-building. That is one of the questions that is still outstanding. We are working with the Liard First Nation on trying to come up with a government-to-government forestry agreement.

I will stop there and just say that there is a lot of work happening down in southeast Yukon, but we do not yet have the broad-scope forest management plan.

Mr. Kent: Deputy Chair, just to ask a few questions then about forest resources, since the minister opened with that. He mentioned that they are working to support log-home builders in the Whitehorse area with supply. How long does he anticipate that support to take, and when will we see some sort of Yukon supply available to those log-home builders in the Whitehorse area?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I think the question from the member opposite was about timing.

There are two ways that we are sort of approaching that. The first way is that we are working right now to get more timber harvest plans in place. For example, I mentioned a new project in Scoby Creek and also the Poison Lake area. I also noted that the Poison Lake area has this other challenge with access, so it's a bit of an open-ended question. I am sure that they are working on the timber harvest plans right now.

Again, we have had support from the Liard First Nation on this generally, so that has been good.

With respect to the Whitehorse area home builders, Eldorado Logbuilders and Carpenter's Construction — we are talking to them to see whether they would be interested to go down. What they have told us is that the logs from other areas of the Yukon aren't really of the size or the quality that they want for their log-home building, so really, they want the logs

that come from southeast Yukon. That's the place where the good wood is, but if the timber harvest plans that are there now — or the permits that are in place right now — are not producing the wood for them, we are seeing whether they would be interested in doing harvesting. We are seeing whether there are other harvesters who would be interested in gathering logs.

One of the challenges isn't just the wood; it's who is going to go and do that harvesting, because the current contract with Mr. Whimp — he is focusing on the Heartland Timber project, so we may need another harvester. Anyway, the department is working at it right now to see if there is any opportunity.

We know that we have more permit out there than what has been harvested, so there is still room. That just basically indicates to us that we need to continue to work with harvesters.

I will just finish off by saying that we know we have gotten more wood to market broadly, but we recognize that we are not filling all of the niches, so the Forest Management branch is just working on trying to see if they can connect this demand with a supply.

Mr. Kent: I guess the next question is: Will there be summer harvesting opportunities available?

I know that in the past we have talked about summer harvesting not being available during wildfire season. There is also migratory bird nesting, I think, that may affect that. I guess that would be my question for the minister: Are there summer harvesting opportunities available in the southeast, or do we have to wait until the fall and potentially freeze-up to get into some of these areas to get at these sawlogs for, again, in particular, the Whitehorse area log-home builders who have reached out to me and my colleagues?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It's just a very specific question. We're asking the department if they can get us information, but I'll just encourage the member — if he has more questions — to go ahead, and I'll catch up as soon as I can with the responses.

Mr. Kent: I did want to ask then about the *Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan*. It was signed off five years ago by the Yukon government and three First Nations: Kwanlin Dün, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and Carcross/Tagish First Nation. You know, reading over the document, that sign-off in 2020 was the culmination of eight years of work. You know, harvesters — not necessarily the log-home builders but the harvesters — in the Whitehorse area are anxious to know when they can access timber that is close to their operations and close to the Whitehorse marketplace.

The plan itself says — and I'll quote from it. It says: "The first priority is to establish an implementation agreement and identify areas for timber harvesting and fuel abatement." I'm just wondering if the minister can tell us if that implementation agreement is complete, and if so, which areas have been identified for timber harvesting, and if not, when can we expect it to be complete?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There are four new wood supply projects in the Southern Lakes area. There is a joint Teslin north project with the Teslin Tlingit Council; it's active right now, and they are going to be putting in road access this summer.

There is a Marsh Lake project for the harvest of 18,000 cubic metres of sawlogs and fuelwood. The project has been approved, but there is a requirement for a heritage resource impact assessment. I think that there is an expectation that the heritage resource assessment should happen this summer once the snow is gone.

There was a decision document issued for the Lubbock Valley project for the harvest of just under 15,000 cubic metres of sawlogs and fuelwood. So, the Forest Management branch is working on finalizing that timber harvest plan.

There is also fuel abatement work that is going on. That includes a Copper Haul Road project. It is now in — I'm not sure if that is part of the — this might be the same thing or it might be slightly different; sorry, I'll have to check on that. But there is a project along the Copper Haul Road. It's in YESAB right now for assessment. It's between 13,500 and 14,000 cubic metres of sawlogs and fuelwood. There was an open house about that project early in February. I think that the input period is open until the end of this month. I think that there may be a public meeting held this Thursday.

So, that's the work that is happening in Whitehorse and Southern Lakes.

Mr. Kent: So, I'm just curious: Has there been an implementation agreement for that *Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan* finished? If so, where can we find that? Is it on the website, or — where can we find that?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Maybe I need to clarify the question. The *Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan* is up online. There is a page that has all of our management plans that are up there.

I wasn't sure if the member opposite was asking about the specific timber harvest plans, which are sort of the sub-pieces of the forest management plan, or the broad management plan.

Mr. Kent: That quote that I mentioned earlier from the document *Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan* says that the first priority is to establish an implementation agreement and identify areas for timber harvesting and fuel abatement, so I was just curious about the implementation agreement. Has that been established, and if so, is that a public document?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The department is letting me know that there is an implementation agreement in place. It's not public-facing. I guess I can ask the department to look into whether that is something that can be shared, but I just don't have an answer today about whether or not it is shareable. Because it is an agreement, I think that we would need to check with our partners to see what their sense of it is. From our perspective, we would be happy, but I would just check in.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that from the minister, and I look forward to hearing back.

So, of those timber harvest areas that he identified in his previous answer in and around Whitehorse — I believe that he said that there was one out by Johnsons Crossing, in Marsh Lake, and in the Copper Haul Road area. I am just wondering if any of that timber is going to be available this summer, or do

we again have to wait until the fall and winter for harvest of that wood?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Well, some of them, we think, will be available this summer. We think that the Teslin one is likely to be. We still have to get through the road development, but that's, I think, a doable piece.

The Lubbock Valley project is doable for this summer. The other projects still may need some time, especially the Copper Haul Road one. I mean, look, I think the idea is that we need to keep the wood supply flowing at all times, and so the idea is to continually work to have supply on.

I'll also note that I don't think that these areas look — like, they do have sawlogs in them but not the type of logs that the Whitehorse log-home builders are looking for. They need very specific tall trees. But, yeah, I think some of these will be available this summer — or this year.

Mr. Kent: I guess the same question would apply as the one that the minister was looking into for me a few moments ago with respect to whether there will be any harvest restrictions during the wildfire season or during the migratory bird nesting season, which has affected other industries and other harvesters in the forestry side of things.

Just while the minister is hopefully getting that information from department officials, I will move over to a question about some of the outstanding decision documents.

So, I was on the YESAB registry this morning, and I counted 77 decision documents where the recommendation has been sent from the YESA board to the various decision bodies, but the decision document hasn't been issued. Obviously, there are various levels of timing.

I guess the first question would be: Does the minister have any statistics or any numbers for us on how many decision documents have been issued since we started talking about this — let's say since March 1 or some more recent point in time. How many decision documents have been issued since there has been a focus on this over the past couple of months?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am guessing that we are going to do a little bit of this, because we are getting information as I stand to respond, but I will try to keep it flowing.

First of all, with respect to summer harvesting, it depends on the YESAB application and whether there are restrictions, but we definitely have places where summer harvesting is allowed or there are opportunities for summer harvesting. Generally speaking, our harvesters prefer to harvest in the winter. That is a rule of thumb. Then they tend to process in the summer, so that is more the sequence, so there are some opportunities.

I am just checking on the other answer. Over the last three weeks — we are coming from the beginning of March — seven decision documents have been issued and 45 are in consultation.

Mr. Kent: Again, just looking at the YESAB registry today, it looks like there are 32 placer mining decision documents where a recommendation has been sent and they are still awaiting a decision document.

On the quartz side, it's a little bit better, but there are some historic ones. Going back to 2022, in September of that year,

there was a recommendation sent. It's still awaiting a decision document two and a half years later. To be fair, that's the Michelle Creek property up the Dempster Highway, but then there are a number of other ones going up to May 3 last year where the recommendation was sent.

Is the department or the minister in contact with the proponents on these — just giving them regular updates? I guess sort of the companion question to that — and I know that we asked about it during supplementary debate — but can the minister give us an update on where we're at with Michelle Creek? I know that there was court action sought with respect to the recommendation YESAB sent, but that was denied by the court for a judicial review — I believe is what the government was looking for when they took the YESA board to court.

I am just curious if there are any updates with what is happening with Michelle Creek, which is, as we know, the property up the Dempster Highway.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I know that there is a lot of pressure on the system right now and there is a lot of delay, but Michelle Creek is obviously very special or different in all of that, because we did approach the courts to seek their perspective on whether or not the process had been done appropriately. Basically, the court said no and that it was up to us to take the decision. Our concern with what had happened was that we didn't have the full or proper information in order to be able to take that decision, but the court was pretty clear. We have not appealed that decision, so we are in the process right now of formulating a decision. I won't speak further about the contents of that, because it is in process at the moment.

I think that the next question was: Do I or the department meet with proponents? The obvious answer is that the department does meet with proponents — applicants — and I do when I'm approached or available. For example, at Roundup, I met with several proponents; at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada set of meetings, I met with several proponents; I met with one today, so I have meetings as they arise.

I think that the bigger focus is that, yes, we are meeting with proponents, but we are also meeting very proactively with the Klondike Placer Miners' Association and the Yukon Chamber of Mines to work through this raft of decision documents and to talk about how the rest of the process is unfolding. For example, sometimes if there is a class 4 licence, it will move from YESAB to us and then to the Water Board, so we need to be looking at all of those stages in order to ensure that we are addressing this volume of applications. Some are renewals for existing licences and some are new. Then they get mixed in with all the other things that YESAB and the Water Board are doing; for example, the Whitehorse dam relicensing is in the middle of all that, too.

It is important to note that, yes, we are meeting with proponents, but we are also looking at how to work with industry to navigate through the volume of applications.

Mr. Kent: With respect to the Michelle Creek property, Silver47 Exploration Corp. — which is the proponent for that project — sent a letter on March 26, 2025 to the Premier and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources regarding a

request to open discussions for a Silver47 class 3 exploration permit. I'm just curious if the minister can comment on whether or not that letter has been responded to yet, and if not, when is a response forthcoming?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Can I just check on the date again? I just looked up to see that I had received a letter on September 28, 2023. We did respond to that. I'm just looking to see whether the member has — I'm not sure if I caught the exact date of the letter that he was referencing.

Mr. Kent: The letter that I'm looking at is March 26, 2025, sent by e-mail to the Premier and the minister, and that was from Silver47.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Sorry, I got the letter from March 26, 2025. Basically, the letter is asking to meet with us to talk about mapping out the next steps. Unfortunately — I have not responded yet, but I will say to the House is that, as I noted in one of my earlier responses, we are in that stage right now where we are considering what our decision should be as the court has directed us. In that stage, we don't work with the proponent. We, as a decision body, will review the material in front of us and make our decision. We would be happy to dialogue with the proponent after that, but it is not appropriate for us to do it at this point. I hadn't yet — that letter was routing through casework, but I will just say for folks that is the stage that we are at right now.

Mr. Kent: Let's jump over to the placer mining issue, then. We saw a letter from the Premier to the KPMA that was copied to the minister and copied to my colleague the Member for Copperbelt North with respect to the backlog suggesting that one of the ways to clear the backlog was with an amendment to YESAA that has gone to the Government of Canada. Obviously, with the election and other uncertainties, it could be some time before that amendment hits the floor of the House of Commons and all the other processes they would need. The urgency of this situation is with respect to placer miners who have applied well in advance of their licence expiring but are facing that expiry this summer.

I know, in that letter, the Premier mentioned that the Yukon government is exploring all options to expedite, so I am just curious if the minister can tell us what options are being looked at to deal with the most urgent cases on the placer mining licence issue for those operators who could see their placer mines cease operations this summer and could have to lay off workers as a result of those potential closures and potential licence expirations.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yeah, of course, we're just looking at the letter from the Premier and just reviewing how we're tackling this. First of all, we've added capacity within the department to try to address the issue. Within the department, we're sort of triaging the files that the permit's based on if they are part of renewals or if they have peculiarities or challenges around the application — whatever those flags may be — to try to bring expertise to bear.

So, we temporarily brought back past experienced staff to Energy, Mines and Resources to the Mineral Resources branch to dedicate those resources to the project applications that we currently have before us.

We're coordinating with the other regulatory bodies — YESAB, the Water Board, ourselves. I mentioned earlier that we are working with industry organizations, like the Klondike Placer Miners' Association and the Yukon Chamber of Mines, to try to make sure that we are getting all of the flags they're bringing to us — sort of how to help triage these applications and to make sure that we have the most current knowledge about the applications as a whole.

We continue to seek to keep our obligations to consult with nations, but we're also looking to make sure that is moving. When I say that we're coordinating with YESAB, for example, they're also — the Water Board is doing similar triaging to what we're doing, and so we're trying to coordinate on those sorts of issues.

Then, finally, we're also reviewing regulations to see if there are any opportunities there that will help address the backlog.

So, that's the sort of high-level approach to how we are addressing the situation.

Mr. Kent: Deputy Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt South that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: Order. The time now being 5:30 p.m., the Chair shall now rise and report progress.

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 217, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2025-26*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

The time being after 5:30 p.m., this House now stands adjourned until 10:30 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

The following document was filed April 22, 2025:

35-1-332

Urgent Capacity and Staffing Concerns at Whistle Bend School, letter re (dated April 18, 2025) from Whistle Bend School Council to Christine Franes, Superintendent of Schools (Kent)