



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Tuesday, October 6, 2026 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Yvonne Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2026 Fall Sitting

Speaker: Hon. Yvonne Clarke
 Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole: Patti McLeod
 Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole: Tyler Porter

CABINET MINISTERS

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PORTFOLIO
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Premier Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance
Hon. Cory Bellmore	Mayo-Tatchun	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Linda Benoit	Whistle Bend South	Minister of Highways and Public Works
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister of Health and Social Services
Hon. Jen Gehmair	Marsh Lake-Mount Lorne-Golden Horn	Minister of Economy, Tourism and Culture; Public Service Commission; Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister of Environment
Hon. Scott Kent	Copperbelt South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
Hon. Laura Lang	Whitehorse West	Minister of Justice; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Women and Gender Equity Directorate; Workers' Safety and Compensation Board
Hon. Ted Laking	Porter Creek Centre	Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

Yukon Party			
Doris Anderson	Porter Creek North	Yvonne Clarke	Whistle Bend North
Adam Gerle	Porter Creek South	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake-Ross River-Faro
Tyler Porter	Southern Lakes		

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

New Democratic Party			
Kate White	Leader of the Official Opposition Takhini	Lane Tredger	Official Opposition House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Carmen Gustafson	Riverdale North	Brent McDonald	Klondike
Linda Moen	Mountainview	Justin Ziegler	Riverdale South

THIRD PARTY

Yukon Liberal Party	
Debra-Leigh Reti	Leader of the Third Party Third Party House Leader Vuntut Gwitchin

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Allison Lloyd	Clerk of the Legislative Assembly	Logan Ockenden	Acting Deputy Clerk and Clerk of Committees
Bhreagh Dabbs	Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel	Joseph Mewett	Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Karina Watson	Sergeant-at-Arms	Deana Lemke	Hansard Administrator

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, October 6, 2026 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Speaker's statement — Artwork in the Chamber

Speaker: I am pleased to introduce today the five new pieces of art on display in the Chamber for this Sitting. The artwork that surrounds us serves as a reminder of the people, cultures, and experiences that help shape the Yukon. These pieces all come from the Yukon permanent art collection, a public collection that preserves and showcases the territory's artistic and cultural expression.

Beginning with the piece closest to me on my right and moving counterclockwise, the works are *Delight* by Lara Melnick; *Eagle Warrior Helmet* by Eugene Alfred; *Knife Sheath* by Betty Lucas; *Arrival of the Dog Team* by Diane Olsen; and *Galaxy Sunrise* by Faye Cable. Together, these pieces reflect the creativity, talent, and diverse perspectives that contribute to life in the Yukon.

I encourage all members and indeed all Yukoners to visit the Yukon Legislative Assembly's website to learn more about the artists and their work.

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: Before we proceed to the Daily Routine, the Chair wishes to inform the House of a change made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 153, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre, has been removed from the Order Paper at the request of the member.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.
Visitors introduced

Speaker: Tributes.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Statement — Gavin McKenna's NHL draft selection

Hon. Currie Dixon: Many might say that Yukon's greatest export is minerals, but Madam Speaker, after the Yukon's own Gavin McKenna was drafted first overall this summer by the Toronto Maple Leafs, the argument can be made that it's hockey players. And with another Yukoner, Dylan Cozens, playing for the Ottawa Senators, the battle of Ontario is now the battle of the Yukon. We're all familiar with Gavin's story and the hard work he and his family put in to get him to this point. But there is a bigger picture here. Both Gavin and Dylan have shown a generation of Yukoners that you can come from a territory of less than 50,000 people north of 60 and reach the highest level of your chosen profession.

I was at Takhini Arena for the draft party and the excitement was palpable. Yukoners of all ages were beaming with pride as one of our own took the stage as the first overall pick in the NHL draft. On behalf of my colleagues, I want to congratulate Gavin McKenna and his family. We wish him well during his first season, except when the Leafs are playing the Habs.

Statement — Access to abortion services in Yukon

Carmen Gustafson: I rise today to highlight in this Chamber the longstanding need to ensure safe, dignified, and timely abortion access across the Yukon, as detailed in the *Geography of Choice* report recently released by the Yukon Status of Women Council. Abortion care is health care, and every Yukoner should be able to decide whether and when to have a child without shame or stigma.

While Yukon health care does provide options for abortion care, there are multiple barriers to access, particularly in rural Yukon, where people must often travel, pay extra costs, and take time away from work and family to access abortion care. Ways to reduce barriers include properly resourcing the Opal Clinic, providing clear information about abortion options, and making the abortion pill more available, especially outside of Whitehorse.

A person's postal code should not define whether they can access dignified and timely health care. It is beyond time to improve abortion care in the Yukon.

Statement — Chum salmon returns on the Porcupine River

Debra-Leigh Reti: I rise today to speak about something of importance to me and my people in Old Crow. I am very happy to report the increased numbers for chum salmon on the Porcupine River. As of September 24, 17,201 chum salmon have been counted at the Porcupine River sonar. That is an increase of 8,553 over last year's numbers. The importance of such a vital resource to our community and its people cannot be stressed enough. While these numbers are encouraging, we must remember that one strong season does not mean that the population has fully recovered. We can only hope that this year's improved numbers might reflect a more positive outlook for the salmon population's long-term stability.

Statement — World Teachers' Day

Hon. Scott Kent: I rise today to recognize Yukon educators on World Teachers' Day. October 5 marked the 60th anniversary of the adoption of the *Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers*, which established international standards for teachers' rights, responsibilities, and working conditions.

UNESCO's 2026 theme, "Standing with Teachers: 60 Years of Protecting the Profession, Advancing its Status and Shaping Our Futures," highlights the importance of supporting teachers in a rapidly changing world and recognizes the key role they play in transforming education. The Canadian Teachers' Federation's 2026 theme, "Thank You for Brightening our Future", celebrates the lasting impact teachers have on students and the future they help shape. On this World Teachers' Day, I thank Yukon educators and school staff for the positive difference they make in the lives of learners, families, and communities across the Yukon.

Statement — Yukon public service collective bargaining

Linda Moen: I rise today as a former union member and labour activist to speak about the importance of strong unions and a fair collective agreement for the Yukon public service. The Yukon Employees' Union has been without a signed agreement since December 30, 2024. Going on two years without a renewed agreement is far too long. Yesterday's tabled economic report highlighted the pressures Yukoners continue to face, including high inflation and rising costs for housing and food. Public servants deserve clarity about whether their wages will keep pace with the cost of living.

Yukoners rely on public services every day. They rely on the roads they drive on, the parks they enjoy with their families, the health services they access, and the schools that their children attend. Public servants are the heart of these services helping to keep Yukon running. It is this government's responsibility to communicate with public servants when they intend to return to the bargaining table and that the Yukon Government continues to bargain in good —

Speaker: Order.

Statement — Lori Duncan's retirement

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I rise today to recognize Lori Duncan, Sha Geey Aakw Tla — a trail-blazer who shaped Yukon Government's elders-in-residence role. Lori is a Ta'an Kwäch'än Council citizen, Crow clan, and was adopted to the Deishuhíttan clan of Carcross/Tagish First Nation. She shares her knowledge and her Yukon First Nation history and culture with employees, often as their first introduction to First Nations and government. Her door was always open. She offered teachings, prayers, smudges, and practical guidance or simply listened. Her professionalism helped a pilot become a valued position, supporting intercultural learning and respectful relationships. After more than 30 years in the public service, Lori leaves a lasting legacy in the people she supported and the relationships she strengthened.

Thank you, Lori. We wish you a joyful and happy retirement with your family and your grandchildren.

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Justin Ziegler: I have for tabling a question for the Minister of Economy, Tourism and Culture.

Carmen Gustafson: I have for tabling a report titled *The Geography of Choice: Barriers to Accessing Abortion in the Yukon* by the Yukon Status of Women Council.

Speaker: Are there any committee reports to be presented? Petitions.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 6, *Act to amend the Workers' Safety and Compensation Act (2026)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Laura Lang: Madam Speaker, I move that Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to amend the Workers' Safety and Compensation Act (2026)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board that Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to amend the Workers' Safety and Compensation Act (2026)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for Introduction and First Reading of Bill No. 6 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT the membership of the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, as established by Motion No. 8, be amended by rescinding the appointment of Debra-Leigh Reti.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT the membership of the Members' Services Board, as established by Motion No. 9, be amended by:

- (1) rescinding the appointment of Doris Anderson; and
- (2) appointing the Hon. Linda Benoit.

Adam Gerle: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure safety for users by regulating the iGaming market.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question — Federal infrastructure funding

Kate White: Last winter showed Yukoners just how much pressure our electricity system faces. Yukoners understand that the territory needs new generation and repairs to aging infrastructure so the grid can reliably meet demand during periods of extreme cold. The Premier says that the solution to this problem must come from Ottawa. But after meetings with the Prime Minister, the Premier admitted — and I quote: "We don't have a firm commitment from the government on an amount of money or anything like that yet."

Nunavut secured more than \$17 million for renewable energy projects, and the NWT secured \$25 million in funding to double their hydro capacity. Meanwhile, the Yukon is still waiting for the federal investment needed to build a more reliable and affordable electricity system. If the Premier says that Yukon's energy future depends on Ottawa, what actions is he taking to secure federal funding?

Hon. Currie Dixon: This is an important aspect of our infrastructure here in the Yukon and indeed a top priority for our government, as we understand the extremely dire situation we find ourselves in after 10 years of neglect under the Liberal-NDP government with regard to our energy system.

We have taken steps here in the territory to reduce the demand or bend the curve for demand downwards as best we can. But ultimately, what we need to do is secure additional supply, and that's what the Leader of the Official Opposition has noted. We have engaged in multiple facets with the federal government. We've engaged at the staff level, we've engaged at the political level, and we've engaged at the highest possible

level, including me raising this directly with the Prime Minister of Canada.

We're optimistic that the Government of Canada understands the importance of this to the Yukon, and we look forward to continuing to work with the federal government to seek the necessary funding to allow us to proceed with some of these projects. As I've noted and as the Leader of the Official Opposition noted, the scale of some of these projects is such that we will require significant federal investment to avoid undue hardship on Yukon ratepayers or taxpayers.

Kate White: Yukoners and visitors are driving highways with deep potholes, loose gravel, and rough sections that have damaged vehicles and made travelling dangerous. These problems are especially serious on the North Klondike, Dempster, and Alaska highways where drivers have reported broken windows, damaged vehicles, personal injuries, and dangerous road conditions. The Premier asked Ottawa to fund upgrades to the North Klondike and Alaska highways. But while the Northwest Territories secured \$405 million for the Mackenzie Valley Highway and another \$15 million to replace aging culverts on its portion of the Dempster, the Yukon has received no similar commitment.

What actions is the Premier taking to secure the federal funding needed to fix the Yukon's highways?

Hon. Currie Dixon: As the member will be aware, we have received some funding when it comes to a number of different funding pots in the territory that we're deploying across the Yukon for Yukon highways. The project that she's referring to specifically, though, comes under the Arctic infrastructure fund. It's a new fund that the federal government created last year to which the Yukon, other territories, First Nations, community groups, and a number of other organizations across the North have applied. We haven't heard back as to the status of our application before the Arctic infrastructure fund, but we're certainly engaging with the federal government to ensure that they understand the priority that we place on having safe highways here in the territory. We'll work closely with the federal government to seek the necessary funding to make the upgrades necessary to ensure that is realized.

Kate White: Yesterday, it was announced that the Northwest Territories secured more than \$121 million in federal health funding. In July, Nunavut received \$74.1 million of federal investment for their health infrastructure. Meanwhile, at home in Yukon, Whitehorse General Hospital reached 146-percent capacity this summer. The Yukon Hospital Corporation continues to warn this government of underfunded pressures and a critical shortage of space.

The other territories have worked with the federal government to secure significant funding for their health care systems, their roads, and their energy needs. When our territorial neighbours have successfully secured funding for all three, why has this government received no comparable investments to meet the needs of Yukoners?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The announcement made by the Northwest Territories yesterday was for two streams of funding. One was the health infrastructure fund under the PT stream of the HICC department. That funding was received by the Yukon Government and was signed by the Minister of Health and Social Services and the respective federal minister earlier this summer. So, we have received that money. The

minister will be reporting on how that money will be deployed over the next three years very soon. As well, the second stream was the Working Together fund, and that's funding we already receive as well.

Those particular funding announcements that were made by the Northwest Territories yesterday have been made here in the Yukon. We've signed agreements with the federal government, and we're proceeding with the investments under those funds.

Question — Agriculture sector support

Carmen Gustafson: This morning, Sunnyside Farm, a family-run dairy operating just outside of Whitehorse, posted the following on their social media: "A fall update from our farm. We have run the numbers, and with the rising cost of farm supplies, diesel fuel, and the doubling of electricity rates, we are unable to keep our dairy open this winter."

It seems that Yukon producers that put nutritious local food on our tables are being squeezed from every angle. I want to highlight one thing from the post and that is the cost of electricity. We heard from the Yukon Party government that they're issuing rebates to households this winter. However, that won't help agricultural businesses keep their barns lit and water from freezing.

So, what is this government doing to protect Yukon farmers from rising electricity prices?

Hon. Ted Laking: The Government of Yukon recognizes that agricultural producers continue to face significant cost pressures and that decisions to scale back or pause production can be difficult for farm operators and their families.

Over the years, Sunnyside Farm has received support through a number of funding programs — from the Canadian Agricultural Partnership and sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership programs and the department of economic development.

The Agriculture branch at the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources will continue to engage with Sunnyside Farm to better understand its current circumstances, discuss available supports, and identify opportunities that may assist the operation moving forward. The Government of Yukon remains committed to supporting the growth and resilience of Yukon agriculture and local food production.

Carmen Gustafson: It really is this simple: no farms, no food. Fresh local food is not only good for us; it also benefits the Yukon in many other ways. It doesn't need to be transported as far, which means less fuel burned. Local food contributes to food security in Yukon. We've all seen how quickly grocery stores become bare when the highway is closed. Local food is close by and accessible. Local food is an investment in our communities. Our dollars stay in the Yukon instead of the pockets of grocery giants. We see Yukon First Nations and other local farms not only sell but generously donate food to feed citizens and neighbours. Ensuring a consistent and dependable market for Yukon producers helps them to secure financing and make plans for the future. The Yukon Government could be using local food in schools, hospitals, correctional facilities, and other institutional settings.

Can the minister tell me what government-wide plan is in place to increase purchases from Yukon farms?

Hon. Ted Laking: Financial support from the Government of Yukon is helping agricultural producers develop and expand their businesses, adapt to challenges, and grow sector resilience. Under the five-year, \$9.25-million sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership program, we are providing funding to a wide range of agriculture and food-related projects that contribute to Yukon's economy and food security, and we are also supporting cross-government work led by the Department of Highways and Public Works and the Department of Health and Social Services to increase purchases of local foods for government-run facilities.

Carmen Gustafson: Farming is never-ending hard work, the kind of work that many people don't want to do. Many Yukon farmers also work full-time jobs to make enough money to keep their farms running. A Yukon farmer's day starts with early morning chores before a shift at their day job only to come home to do evening chores and finish up by balancing the books. On top of that, there is equipment to fix and, in the winter, the work to keep everything warm. This is after you've found land for your farm, built the infrastructure, bought animals, seed, and other inputs, sourced equipment, passed all the health and safety inspections, found a way to sell your products, and built relationships with your customers. Farming is also heartbreaking and mentally challenging work — losing animals, having crops fail, running out of money, bad weather, or any other number of things you can't control. It is not for the meek.

The minister detailed some of the ways that their government is supporting Yukon farmers, but how is the Yukon Government supporting Yukon farm families?

Hon. Ted Laking: I don't think you'll find much disagreement between the member opposite and me on how important the agricultural community is and how much we admire them and their resilience to deal with difficult conditions.

I've detailed already a number of programs that the Government of Yukon has to support them. When it comes to land opportunities, we are looking at ways to expand those opportunities to ensure that there is more access for land to allow for more producers to come online here in the territory. We're going to continue to work with the Yukon Agricultural Association in this endeavour, and as we progress on this, we'll provide more updates to this House.

Question — Cost of living

Debra-Leigh Reti: My question today is for the Premier. The cost of living is rising faster here in the Yukon than anywhere else in Canada. In August, prices in the Yukon were 5.9 percent higher than a year ago. This is the highest increase in Canada over that time and double the average increase in Canada. The Yukon Party ran on making life more affordable and made a lot of specific promises to make that happen.

As we approach the one-year mark of this government's time in office, Yukoners are falling behind faster than anyone else in Canada. Does the Premier take any responsibility for the Yukon having the highest cost-of-living increase in Canada?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I think the Leader of the Third Party has, in my view, quite correctly noted that affordability is a very significant issue in the Yukon today. In fact, it's probably one of the biggest issues in the country right now. Whether it's the trade dispute between Canada and the United States causing economic disruptions, layoffs, and, in some cases, small business closures around the country or the soaring

prices for things like gas, diesel, and food, it's clear that these are difficult times. Like all other provinces and territories in Canada, some of these issues, like diesel or food prices, are somewhat beyond our ability to control. That's why the Yukon Government is focusing on the things that we can control.

We're working diligently to address our long-neglected energy system, including working to mitigate the impact of rate increases and ensure that we have a sufficient amount of power to keep the lights on this winter. We're working to ensure our health care system can respond to the challenges that massive population growth has created, and we're working to ensure that we have the financial flexibility to respond to emerging issues that our territory faces.

Our public finances unfortunately have never been weaker than when we took office after the Liberal government was in charge, and we are still in the midst of some very difficult work to get our budget back on a path to balance. But getting our fiscal house in order to be able to respond to emerging issues is exactly what the budget that I tabled yesterday and the budget documents that I tabled yesterday are aimed at doing. We'll keep focused on doing that hard work to get our budget in order so that we can respond to the challenges that we face.

Debra-Leigh Reti: The Yukon Party promised to make life more affordable. Instead, the cost of living is increasing faster here than anywhere else in the country. The government has refused to cut taxes on gas and diesel, as other places in Canada have been able to do, has broken a promise to roll back electricity rates, and has taken no action to reduce the housing costs. These are all things that are in their control.

Why hasn't the government moved ahead with any of these measures to reduce the cost of living for Yukoners?

Hon. Currie Dixon: As the member may be aware, we find ourselves in a very difficult financial situation in the Yukon Territory. We have tabled a budget that sees us with an \$82-million deficit as of this spring. We've been successful in reducing that deficit over the last few months to the state that it's in, but we are still in the red. We're pushed up against our debt cap. We have very little financial flexibility in the territory as a result of the irresponsible spending patterns of the previous Liberal-NDP government that shepherded the territory's finances to the doldrums that we find ourselves in today.

We know that if we want to be able to respond to emerging pressures that we're seeing in the Yukon today, we need to have the financial flexibility and strength to be able to do that. We're not there yet. We have a lot more work to do to get our budget in order to allow us to make the investments we'd like to make. In the meantime, we'll control what we can control. We'll focus on the things we can control, like dealing with our energy system, like dealing with our health care system, like dealing with our education system. Things like diesel prices, unfortunately, are far beyond the control of one territory in the far North.

Debra-Leigh Reti: The cost of living is increasing faster here in the Yukon than anywhere else in Canada. The Yukon Party has plenty of tools to help reduce the cost of living for Yukoners but either won't use them or pretend they don't exist. Their preferred option is to blame the previous government for everything, and as of late, they have switched the blame to the Government of Canada for their own inaction.

When is the Premier going to move past this blame game and take action to lower the cost of living for Yukoners?

Hon. Currie Dixon: We are taking action to get our budget in order. That's why we've tabled the fall capital budget that we tabled yesterday. That's why we've tabled the fiscal outlook which shows the progress that we've made in reducing the significant deficit that we are facing, and we're working closely with the Government of Canada to solve some of our larger capital needs as well as the need for an increase to our debt cap to allow us to borrow additional funds to make strategic investments in infrastructure in the territory.

Pointing out that the federal government hasn't acted on those things yet is not pointing the blame; it's simply noting a fact. We have a situation where the federal government regulates our debt and we have to apply to the federal government for them to make a decision as to whether or not that debt cap increases. That's not pointing the blame at Canada; that's simply stating a fact.

When it comes to some of our larger infrastructure projects — whether it is energy, whether it is roads, whether it is the hospital — we know that some of those projects are beyond the capacity of the territorial government to fund alone. They are beyond the capacity of the 48,000 residents here in the Yukon and require investment from outside the territory vis-à-vis the federal government. We'll continue the positive relationship we've established with the federal government, seeking the federal support that is needed to make the investments that are much needed here in the territory as a result of 10 years of neglect to our infrastructure.

Question — Cellular network connectivity

Linda Moen: Residents in McIntyre, Granger, Hillcrest, and Valleyview have dealt with unreliable cell service for years. People rely on their cellphones to call for help in an emergency. A call that does not connect can delay the arrival of police, firefighters, and paramedics when every second matters.

I first raised these coverage gaps with the Premier in December 2025. I raised them again in the following spring. However, residents have been given no plan, no timeline, and no indication of when their service would improve. These communities should not have to keep waiting while their safety is at risk. What action has the Premier taken to ensure that residents in these communities can reliably reach 911 during an emergency?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I do thank the member opposite for this question. It is a topic that we've heard about a lot over the course of the summer, and I'm sure all of us have had an experience where our cell service has been less than ideal.

I can say and share with this House that we have been actively working with both the federal government and Bell Canada and some regulatory authorities around what the options are here in the territory. We are a small territory with very vast areas to cover, and we are aware that we need to see some advancements and improvements in our cell service.

I'm pleased to say that we are working with Bell, we're working with Canada, and we're looking forward to sharing some optimistic news here in the future.

Linda Moen: This spring when I raised this question, the Minister of Highways and Public Works said their government had no plan to improve cellular coverage. The minister said

First Nation development corporations could bring proposals to the government; however, there were no commitments to approach them or bring partners together. Now a Yukon Party motion calls for immediate investment but only in Whitehorse and only through Bell and the CRTC.

The Yukon Party has once again left rural and remote Yukoners and potential First Nation partners out of its plan. Why is the Yukon Party demanding immediate action for Whitehorse while ignoring rural and remote Yukoners who cannot reliably reach 911?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: Thank you to the member for the question. Again, we are prioritizing this as an issue to work with the federal government on to see improvements. Things have changed; we have heard from residents, and the intention is not just to improve service in Whitehorse. We fully recognize that service is a requirement in the territory across all communities and all communities rely on the service. We agree this is an issue that needs to be dealt with and we are indeed working on it and look forward to sharing updates here in the future.

Linda Moen: I would call, but my call would probably drop.

In the spring of 2026, the Minister of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture said the Yukon Party was reluctant to invest in improved cell service because new cellular and satellite technologies may be coming. However, the minister could not say when those technologies would arrive or whether they would improve coverage in these neighbourhoods.

Residents cannot rely on a possible future technology when they need to call for help today. They deserve a solution based on their needs now, not speculation about what may become available later. Will the minister commit to taking immediate steps to improve cellular coverage in the Yukon, including McIntyre, Granger, Hillcrest, and Valleyview?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I think it's fair to say that the service over the summer experienced more challenges than it had in the past, and I think it's fair to say by myself and those whom I've spoke with over the summer that improvements do need to happen and that the degrading service was causing some serious concerns.

We acknowledge that; we've heard from Yukoners, and we are working on solutions for this with others such as the federal government as well as Bell Canada. So again, we're working on it. I acknowledge the question from the member opposite, and we're looking forward to sharing more information on this here soon.

Question — Wildland firefighters occupational health coverage

Tyler Porter: Wildland firefighters are trained to perform challenging and dangerous work protecting Yukon communities, infrastructure, and natural resources. Like structural firefighters, they are also facing serious long-term health risks because of the work that they do. Yet under the current legislation, wildland firefighters are not included in Yukon's firefighting cancer presumption.

Can the minister update this House on the government's plans to extend presumptive cancer coverage to Yukon wildland firefighters?

Hon. Laura Lang: I will be answering the question today as the Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and

Compensation Board, just so it's on the record. Thank you to the member for the question. Our government has communicated for years our support for wildland firefighters. They put themselves in harm's way to protect communities across the territory, often in difficult and demanding conditions.

During the election, we committed to extending presumptive cancer coverage to wildland firefighters, and today we are following through on that commitment. We have introduced amendments to the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act* that would include wildland firefighters under the Yukon's firefighting cancer presumption. This change reflects our recognition that wildland firefighters should not have to carry the burden and the responsibility to prove exposure to harmful chemicals that can lead to cancers.

Tyler Porter: Wildland firefighters and their families will want to understand what these changes mean in practice. Can the minister explain how the proposed presumption would apply if a wildland firefighter is diagnosed with an eligible cancer?

Hon. Laura Lang: Under the current system, a wildland firefighter diagnosed with a work-related cancer must demonstrate that the illness is connected to their employment. This puts an administrative burden on the firefighter and their families during an already difficult time. The amendments we've tabled are intended to change that.

By extending the cancer presumption to wildland firefighters, eligible cancers will be presumed to be work-related unless there is evidence otherwise. In practical terms, this will make it easier for wildland firefighters and their families to access the supports they need so they can focus on what matters the most: the health and recovery of the loved one.

Tyler Porter: Changes like these are strongest when they reflect the experience of the people directly affected. Yukon wildland firefighters have been raising this issue for many years and advocating for greater recognition of the risks associated with their work. Can the minister tell the House how these amendments were developed and how wildland firefighters and their representatives were involved in that process?

Hon. Laura Lang: This work built on years of advocacy from Yukon wildland firefighters and their representatives. The Workers' Safety and Compensation Board engaged directly with the firefighters and their representatives to better understand their experiences and concerns. I can also confirm that I met with members of the firefighting community on several occasions, and these engagements taught me that key to the next steps are the preventive measures that the wildland firefighting community, in partnership with Workers' Safety and Compensation Board, will need to take. Through these discussions, we confirmed that the proposed amendments before the House today would extend presumptive cancer coverage to wildland firefighters and better recognize the occupational risk they face.

Following these amendments, the government will work with the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board, firefighters, unions, and other stakeholders to review listed cancers, service requirements, and practical measures that support firefighter health and safety. While extending presumption is an important step forward, we know there is a

lot more to do, and we look forward to continuing those conversations.

Question — Downtown school replacement

Lane Tredger: Last spring, I brought forward a motion calling on the government to make sure there continues to be an elementary school downtown. This has been a critical issue for my constituents for years, so it was a relief that the government voted yes. The Minister of Education said he would support it regardless of what site was chosen for the future École Whitehorse Elementary. He said, "If the choice is to move up the hill, I think that at that time we will have to begin obviously planning for the new École Whitehorse Elementary School, but we will also have to start planning for a school in the downtown area, an elementary school."

Last week, it was announced that a new site for École Whitehorse Elementary had been selected and that it will be in Valleyview, outside of downtown. Now residents are eager to know about the minister's plan for a new downtown elementary school. Will the minister reaffirm his commitment to a new elementary school downtown?

Hon. Scott Kent: Yes, I will reaffirm our commitment to an elementary school being located in the downtown area. At the announcement last week that we made about the new location, the new proposed location for École Whitehorse Elementary School, I indicated at that time that the initial work underway is with respect to the existing Whitehorse Elementary School and whether or not it's cost-effective and beneficial to be able to repurpose that building into something else.

That would be the first step I think that we will undertake in determining the location for a new downtown elementary school. But again, that said, we remain committed to doing it. It's a separate process from what we're doing with École Whitehorse Elementary School up the hill with the new location, but it is something we remain committed to, and I look forward to meeting with the Downtown Residents' Association in the near future to get their feedback with respect to what they would like to see a new school look like in the downtown area.

Lane Tredger: I'm sure downtown residents will be very pleased to hear that. Thank you to the minister. As he mentioned, he wanted to look at whether the current building could be repaired rather than torn down. And during the previous consultation on a downtown elementary school, two sites had been proposed. One was the current location, and the other is a new site at Fifth and Rogers. There is this to decide, but there are also many other elements of a future school that will need to be designed and decided on.

The downtown community has asked to be involved in the process, and they are full of ideas and inspiration. The minister has mentioned that he'll be meeting with the Downtown Residents' Association. Can he go over his plans to work through them or through other methods to work with downtown residents to plan their new elementary school?

Hon. Scott Kent: Yes, as I mentioned to the member opposite, I will be reaching out to the Downtown Residents' Association. I did have the opportunity to meet with them during the consultation on the proposed locations for the new École Whitehorse Elementary School, and the member opposite is absolutely correct. They are full of a tremendous

number of ideas and also have concerns with respect to a new school in the downtown area.

Regarding the two locations that the member opposite mentioned, there is the existing school site, but the site at Fifth and Rogers is no longer owned by the Yukon Government. That site was sold by the previous government to private sector interests, so we no longer have the opportunity to use that land as our own. It would have to be purchased or acquired some other way.

So, that said, we'll continue to work with the Downtown Residents' Association. Building a school in the downtown area remains a commitment that we made and we voted on in two separate motions in this Legislature. So again, we look forward to those conversations and, while we're going through the process to build a new École Whitehorse Elementary School, separately working with downtown residents and those school communities on the best possible solution for a downtown school.

Lane Tredger: For years now, my constituents have been fighting for a downtown elementary school. They have written letters, signed petitions, made phone calls, gone to consultations, and attended debate in this Legislature.

They have shared stories about what a neighbourhood elementary school means to them. They have said it tells families they're welcome downtown. It brings laughter and joy and life into our community. It is a key part of creating a vibrant, livable neighbourhood, which ultimately prevents crime and makes downtown safer for everyone.

Residents are anxious to know about the timelines for opening a new elementary school. They are hopeful that there will not be a gap without one because of the important roles it plays in our community. What are the timelines for building a downtown elementary school or refurbishing the existing building, and what year can downtown residents expect it to open?

Hon. Scott Kent: I appreciate the member opposite's remarks when asking the question. And we agree with those, and that's why we voted twice on private members' motions to ensure that we continue with planning for a downtown school. I think it's premature at this time to give timelines. At the press conference last week, I mentioned that I would want to see as low a gap as possible, as short a gap as possible, if there is indeed one between a downtown school being there right now as it is with the École Whitehorse Elementary School and a new one being built, whether it's at the existing site or not.

One of the reasons that we did not choose the existing site for École Whitehorse Elementary School was we didn't want an active construction site next to an active school, so we have to factor that in as well. But again, I look forward to discussions with the Downtown Residents' Association and other community stakeholders when it comes to what the needs and wants are for a new school in the downtown area.

Question — Fiscal management

Adam Gerle: Yukoners elected this government to manage public finances responsibly while continuing to invest in the priorities that matter to families and communities. The interim fiscal update shows some progress.

Can the Premier highlight what these results mean for Yukoners and how they support our government's path to balance?

Hon. Currie Dixon: So, the member is quite correct that yesterday I tabled an interim fiscal update to update the work that we've been doing on our budget, and that update shows that we have been making modest progress toward our path back to balance. Those results are driven but in part by the budgetary reforms and measures that we introduced in the spring, including amendments to the *Financial Administration Act* and the creation of the contingency fund, which we're all familiar with.

The implementation of the two initiatives, both the red tape reduction strategy as well as the responsible spending initiative, are seeking to find ways to improve government efficiency. We've also introduced a debt management plan and communicate with the federal government on the structure of that plan to ensure that we re-establish a healthier relationship with debt here in the territory. And then, of course, the creation of the fall capital budget was intended as part of those packages of budgetary reform as well.

The projected deficit for 2026-27 has improved by \$28.1 million from \$81.8 million to \$53.7 million, while net debt is forecast to be \$28 million lower than expected. Those are very positive results, but they show that we do still have more work to do. We are seeing increased revenues from the federal government, stronger investment returns, and a placer mining sector that is projected to achieve one of the strongest seasons in decades, with production expected to reach a near 30-year high.

Adam Gerle: People across the Yukon can see construction activity underway, from new housing developments to major public infrastructure projects. The economic update seems to reflect this and points to growth in construction and residential development.

Can the Premier tell the House what these numbers say about the state of the Yukon's economy?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The economic outlook, of course, provides Yukoners with the best available information that the Department of Finance has to report on the economy. The economic update that I tabled yesterday confirms that there are positive developments across Yukon communities but also some very serious economic challenges ahead.

One of the bright spots is that building construction investment and building permit values are up in 2026. Building investment grew by nearly 45 percent in the first seven months of 2026, reaching more than \$564 million. Residential construction investment increased by almost 64 percent to just shy of \$384 million. Through August, the value of non-residential permits increased over 15 percent to just over \$149 million, which represents about two-thirds of the total permit value of \$220 million.

As well, through the first eight months of 2026, the value of residential permits also rose 15.5 percent to almost \$73 million. These projects are creating good-paying jobs for Yukon workers, supporting local contractors, and strengthening our economy. So, while we remain optimistic about the overall economic outlook for the territory, we can't ignore the very serious headwinds that we're facing related to the impacts of ongoing trade pressures and geopolitical uncertainty. We'll continue to do the work that

we can to bring our budget into order so that we can respond to these challenging headwinds that face us all.

Adam Gerle: Tourism remains a cornerstone of many local economies across the Yukon; from the Klondike to Kluane, Whitehorse to Watson Lake, businesses rely on a strong visitor season to create local jobs. What does the economic update tell us about the performance of Yukon's tourism sector?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I appreciate this question and the opportunity to speak to it. Over the course of the summer, I was able to get out and experience some of the local economies and the tourism businesses operating in the territory, and to no surprise to myself and I'm sure to others in this Chamber, there is some fantastic work and commitment happening out there in the territory by tourism operators, and what I will say is that it's starting to pay off.

Preliminary numbers are showing that spending in Yukon, at Yukon payment terminals by tourists, including Yukoners travelling throughout the territory, reached over \$368 million throughout the first eight months of this year, which is an increase of over 20 percent compared to last year of the same period. During June, July, and August, visitor spending was up more than 30 percent year over year.

At the same time, arrivals at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport reached over 185,000 passengers, up 10 percent from last year and on pace to surpass the record set in 2025. Hotels are seeing strong occupancy and higher revenues. From placer miners to contractors to tourism operators and small businesses, Yukoners are creating the economic activity that strengthens government revenues and allows us to continue investing in these priorities, the priorities that matter most to Yukoners across the territory. This is how we make progress on the path to balance while continuing to build a stronger Yukon economy.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of Opposition private members' business

Debra-Leigh Reti: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3)(b), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, October 7, 2026. It is Motion No. 168, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

Lane Tredger: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3)(a), I would like to identify the items standing in the names of the members of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, October 7, 2026. They are Motion No. 161, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre, and Motion No. 160, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 203, *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second Reading, Bill No. 203, standing in the name of the Hon. Currie Dixon.

Hon. Currie Dixon: I move that Bill No. 203, *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Currie Dixon: I rise today to present the 2027-28 fall capital budget and provide Yukoners with an update on our government's work to date.

When we came into office just under a year ago, we were clear with Yukoners about the challenges facing our territory. We inherited growing financial pressures, increasing demands on public services, aging infrastructure, and a number of difficult decisions that had been deferred for too long. At the same time, Yukoners expected their new government to act. They wanted a government that would confront challenges directly, make decisions with the needs of future generations in mind, and deliver practical results for all Yukon families, businesses, and communities.

We heard that message clearly. The commitments we made were ambitious, but they reflected the reality Yukoners were facing and the direction they wanted their government to take. From the beginning, we knew that meeting these expectations would require much more than maintaining the status quo. It would require that we make tough decisions, establish clear priorities, and begin laying the groundwork for long-term growth and prosperity. That is the context in which this new fall capital budget has been developed. The challenges we faced did not emerge overnight, and they will not be resolved overnight. In fact, most of them have been building for many years, but progress begins by taking action and making decisions in the best interest of all Yukoners.

The business before the House today reflects a government focused not only on addressing today's pressures but preparing the Yukon for the opportunities and demands of tomorrow. Canadians across the country are facing economic uncertainty driven by global instability and ongoing trade pressures, and we are not immune here in the Yukon. From groceries to fuel and building materials, trade pressures are making life more expensive for families, businesses, and workers. But this uncertainty also creates opportunity.

Across Canada, there is a growing consensus around the importance of sovereignty, strengthening economic resilience, developing strategic resources, and building the infrastructure necessary to support long-term growth and prosperity. Yukon is uniquely positioned to play an important role in this work. We are a gateway to the North, with strategic transportation corridors, strong partnerships with Yukon First Nations, and a highly skilled workforce. Yukon is home to abundant natural resources, with placer activity approaching levels not seen in decades and growing interest in critical minerals needed for energy security, advanced manufacturing, and national economic resilience. Our territory possesses significant natural resources, including deposits of gold, copper, and zinc as well as one of the world's largest high-grade tungsten deposits at Mactung and many others. At a time when countries are seeking secure supplies of critical minerals and strategic resources, these advantages position Yukon to contribute to Canada's economic resilience while creating good jobs here at

home. This puts us in a strong position, but opportunity alone is not enough.

To realize our potential, we must create the conditions that encourage investment, support innovation, and provide confidence to those looking to invest and create jobs here in the Yukon. That's why our government has committed to improving the efficiency and transparency of Yukon's regulatory processes.

I'm pleased to share that over the past year, real progress has been made on that front. As of August 31, more than 100 quartz mining and placer gold decision documents had been issued, more than double the number issued during the same period last year. These improvements are helping provide greater certainty for proponents, communities, and investors at a time when competition for resource investment is increasing across the country. Decision timelines for resource projects have improved by more than 50 percent, and Yukoners can now track projects online through a new public permitting tool. The purpose of these improvements is straightforward. We want a system that provides clarity to the public, Yukon First Nation communities, proponents, and investors while maintaining environmental and social standards Yukoners expect. A more predictable and efficient system supports investment, helps enable the private sector to create jobs, and helps ensure Yukon remains competitive at a time when opportunities and competition grow across the country.

No issue better illustrates the importance of planning for the future than energy. Reliable and affordable electricity is essential to our quality of life, to economic development, and to future growth and prosperity. It is also an area where years of inadequate investment, population growth, and increasing demand have placed significant pressure on our existing infrastructure. For that reason, our government committed to taking a more proactive approach to energy planning. I'm pleased to share that this work is also well underway. We are increasing energy supply by advancing phase 1 of the Whitehorse Power Centres project, which will bring 15 additional megawatts of generating capacity online beginning in 2028. We continue to work with the federal government to secure support for all phases of that project, which has the potential to double Yukon's electricity generation capacity over time. These investments are essential, because energy security is directly connected to our ability to build housing, attract investment, and support long-term economic growth.

We are continuing critical work at the Mayo hydro facility to ensure that the dam continues to safely generate reliable winter energy. We've also taken immediate steps to manage peak winter demand and improve reliability while longer term projects move forward. We also recognize that affordability remains a serious concern. That is why we have taken steps to provide relief to ratepayers while continuing to advance longer term infrastructure solutions.

Later this fall, our government will release its draft winter reliable energy plan, which will outline additional measures to improve reliability, manage risk, and support Yukon families and businesses, because the reality is that our territory is growing. Our population is approaching 50,000, and electricity demand continues to increase. If we want to build more homes, attract new investment, and support a growing economy, we must have the energy security in place to support that growth.

The investments we're making today will help ensure Yukon has the energy infrastructure needed to support that future growth, and they represent another important step in fulfilling the commitments we made to Yukoners. We also made a commitment to Yukoners to get our fiscal house in order. We knew that we needed to bring spending growth under control, strengthen financial controls, and ensure taxpayer dollars are focused on the priorities that matter most to all Yukoners.

Since the Spring Sitting, we have taken important steps to do exactly that. We introduced changes to the *Financial Administration Act* for a new voted contingency which enables us to respond quickly to emergencies and other unexpected events while adhering to the same robust reporting requirements. We've made progress to reduce annual growth in operation and maintenance spending from the unsustainably high rates of the past to one that we can actually afford. We also implemented a new debt management policy to govern our borrowing and debt-related risk oversight and reporting. As our borrowing needs evolve, this new policy will help ensure debt is managed responsibly and supports our long-term fiscal sustainability.

Significant investments will be required in energy, health care, and other priority infrastructure over the coming years to catch up to the needs of Yukoners. But we can't rely solely on borrowing for these initiatives; we need to look within government to address the gap between government revenue and spending.

That's why we launched the responsible spending initiative to empower the public service — the very people who design, run, and implement our programs and services — to help us find ways to get our finances back on track. The initiative is a key component of our work to balance government spending while protecting front-line services, respecting taxpayers, and supporting all Yukoners and communities. Together, these measures are helping establish a stronger foundation for long-term financial sustainability, and they are producing results.

The updated fiscal forecast shows a deficit improvement of more than \$28 million compared to the original projections from budget 2026. In other words, we have cut the deficit by one-third in just a few months since taking office. Combined with spending restraint measures introduced over the past year, these are important early steps toward restoring long-term fiscal sustainability while protecting the services Yukoners rely on. While this progress is positive, continued discipline is required, because fiscal responsibility is not about doing less; it's about making sure we can continue to make the investments all Yukoners need now and well into the future.

Economic growth depends not only on investment but also on government's ability to work effectively with businesses, communities, and partners. One of the commitments that we made to Yukoners was to make government work better — better for businesses looking to invest, better for organizations delivering services, and better for Yukoners trying to navigate programs and services. That commitment is reflected in both how we spend public dollars and how we design the systems that support economic activity. Put simply, we want it to be easier to invest, to build, and to work with the government. The introduction of this fall capital budget is one example of that. Through this fall's capital appropriation, government expects

to invest close to \$140 million in infrastructure projects that will support jobs, economic activity, and improved services across Yukon communities.

By providing greater certainty about upcoming infrastructure projects, we are giving contractors and businesses more time to prepare, make investment decisions, and participate in opportunities across the territory. Earlier visibility on projects also helps Yukon First Nations, local suppliers, and contractors to plan ahead and maximize participation in projects that will be delivered over the coming construction seasons.

We will continue to work with industry to make additional common-sense improvements that support business and protect valuable taxpayer dollars. This same approach is guiding our work to reduce unnecessary red tape. Through our red tape reduction portal, Yukoners have shared valuable feedback about the rules, processes, and requirements that make it harder to access services, grow business, or get work done. That feedback is helping shape the next phase of this initiative, and our government looks forward to sharing more about that work later this fall. These changes may not always attract headlines, but they are important. By making government more responsive, reducing barriers, and increasing certainty, we are creating the conditions for investment, helping projects move forward, and supporting a stronger and more competitive Yukon economy.

Turning to housing — housing remains one of the most significant challenges facing Yukon families, communities, and employers. Over the past year, we have taken action to increase access to land, support new housing construction, and expand housing options across the territory. We announced a \$350-million partnership with the Government of Canada to support the construction of up to 500 units. Phases 12 and 13 in Whistle Bend will be ready for release soon, opening 400 units of housing and commercial and institutional lots in Whistle Bend. And we continue to work with Kwanlin Dün First Nation to advance the Chasän Tatäy or Range Point neighbourhood, which will provide up to 70 lots for medium- to high-density development, supporting more than 400 housing units.

On the advice of the Yukon Contractors Association, we opened the residential builders lottery pilot project as a part of our commitment to reform the land lottery system and recognize that home builders are the ones that provide most of Yukon's housing. We made new residential lots available in Haines Junction through a land lottery and added lots for over-the-counter purchase in Whitehorse, Haines Junction, Mayo, and Carmacks. We also know that affordable housing is an important part of the housing continuum and continue to advance rent-geared-to-income housing in Dawson and Whitehorse as well as an employee housing duplex in Burwash Landing.

The fall capital budget builds on our accomplishments to date by investing over \$26 million to support housing construction, renovation, and funding programs, including: \$10.5 million for community housing projects in Mayo, Teslin, and Haines Junction; \$6.7 million for partner-led housing projects through the housing initiatives fund; \$6.8 million for renovation and rehabilitation of Yukon Housing units and the replacement of aged-out units in communities; and over \$2 million for staff housing duplexes in Burwash and Ross

River. While no single project or initiative will solve our housing challenges, increasing land availability, supporting construction, and working with partners will help create more housing opportunities for Yukoners. As we invest in our communities and create opportunities for growth, we must also ensure Yukoners have the skills needed to fill those jobs and build their futures here at home.

Turning to education — preparing Yukon's future workforce begins in our schools. As we look to the future, we must ensure Yukon students have the opportunities, skills, and supports that they need to succeed in a changing economy and take advantage of the opportunities being created here at home. That is why supporting students remains one of our government's core commitments. Programs such as STEP into the Trades are helping connect students with hands-on learning opportunities and career pathways in some of Yukon's most in-demand sectors. The pilot program helps high school students earn a wage and credits toward high school graduation while also gaining important work experience in a trade. This past summer, students were able to gain job experience in carpentry and welding and as construction electricians and heavy-duty equipment technicians, which is helping to build the workforce our growing territory will need in the years ahead.

At the same time, we continue to strengthen the broader education system to ensure all Yukon students have the support that they need to succeed. This year, we launched an independent review of Yukon's education system to help identify opportunities for improvement and to ensure students remain at the centre of our decision-making. The goal of the review is to ensure that Yukon's education system, from kindergarten to grade 12 and beyond, is fair, responsive, and that it meets the territory's growing needs. The final report of that initiative will be out at year's end.

We are addressing immediate near-term needs as well while also planning for future generations of Yukon learners. The fall capital budget invests \$9.7 million for much-needed school infrastructure, including new modular classrooms for high-enrolment schools, roof replacements at the Teslin community school, and public announcement system upgrades. We also announced the site selection across from the Canada Games Centre, as was discussed earlier in Question Period, and are investing \$1.2 million to begin planning for the new École Whitehorse Elementary School.

These investments are about more than buildings. They are investments in students, families, and the future workforce that will help build and maintain Yukon communities for decades to come.

Turning to health care — improving access to health care remains one of the most important commitments our government made to Yukon families. Yukoners want timely access to primary care providers, shorter wait times, and confidence in the future of the health system. We are making progress on those objectives. Since November 2025, 12 new physicians have begun practising in the Yukon. The number of Yukoners waiting for a primary care provider has fallen from more than 4,600 people in January to fewer than 2,000 today, a reduction of nearly 60 percent. That means that thousands more Yukoners now have access to a primary care provider than they did just several months ago. These improvements are the result of strong collaboration across the health system and targeted

efforts to recruit and retain health care professionals. We've expanded access to the Whitehorse Walk-In Clinic, strengthened partnerships with Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and supported new initiatives to improve access to primary care through nurse practitioners. These results matter, because behind every statistic is a Yukon resident who can access care more easily than before. That is exactly the kind of progress that we committed to delivering and what we're keen to see carry on. At the same time, we are investing in the future of Yukon's health system.

This fall capital budget includes more than \$14 million to support planning and early work for the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion as well as investments to improve maternity services and support health care training and recruitment. The hospital expansion will help address future demand on the health care system, increase capacity, and support improved access to services for a growing Yukon population.

These investments will help meet the needs of our growing population. The decisions we make today will shape Yukon for decades to come. We cannot control every challenge that comes our way, but we can control how we respond. We can choose to defer difficult decisions or we can take action. We can focus only on today's pressures or make the investments necessary to support future generations. Our government will act, govern, and make decisions in the best interest of all Yukoners.

This fall capital budget reflects a government that is strengthening Yukon's fiscal foundation, investing in critical infrastructure, and creating the conditions for long-term growth and prosperity. Through the fall capital budget, we are providing an early signal to our partners about our intent to invest in the infrastructure that matters most to Yukoners, including over \$70 million for highway rehabilitation, building maintenance and upgrades, as well as other transportation infrastructure; more than \$26 million to support housing construction, renovation, and funding programs; over \$18 million for community infrastructure planning and development; more than \$14 million to prepare and expand the Whitehorse General Hospital; and almost \$10 million for school infrastructure, including expanded modular classrooms, the roof replacement at the Teslin community school, and public announcement system upgrades.

But the work of delivering on our commitments extends beyond this budget. In the weeks ahead, Members of the Legislative Assembly will consider legislation that reflects many of the commitments that we have made to Yukoners, including measures to support responsible firearms owners in the Yukon, expanded presumptive care, expanded presumptive cancer coverage for wildland firefighters in recognition of the service that they provide to our communities, and amendments to balance the needs of tenants and landlords.

Together, these initiatives reflect a government that is listening to Yukoners, responding to their priorities, and following through on the commitments that we made to Yukoners. There is much more work ahead, but the direction is clear. We are strengthening our public finances. We are investing in the infrastructure our growing territory needs, and we are improving the services that Yukon families rely on. We are creating the conditions for opportunity, growth, and long-term prosperity. That is the work that Yukoners elected us to do, and that is the work that we will continue to deliver.

I will conclude my opening remarks on the fall capital budget and look forward to hearing from my colleagues.

Kate White: I appreciate the opportunity today to speak to something that is the first time ever. I will note that there are lots of folks from wildland fire in the Assembly, and I think you have something — there is a lot of time to sit here, but this is probably not the most exciting time. I think you have other things coming, but I note that they're there, and there have been lots of wildland firefighters over the years who have been here as we've championed things. Congratulations to all of you for the work that you did. That's really exciting, but you probably don't need to listen to this debate. So, I just wanted to get that out there, because you're welcome to stay, of course, welcome to stay.

I appreciate that the minister said that we can choose how we respond to something, and it's true. I'm just going to put this on the floor here. I'm naturally a cheerleader, but when I have said nice things about government in the past, it has come back at me in a weaponized way, and I don't think that "consistent" was a compliment despite the fact that it's been repeated multiple times, but I am going to give the Premier a compliment right now. When I was first elected in this House with him in 2011, I know that businesses and the business community said that one of the things that they really needed is advance planning so that by the time construction season started, there wasn't that "fall over yourself" to try to get things going. It was about the shovels in the ground; it was about making sure that brushing could happen when people were using the highway. It was about all these things.

So, if I reflect back on the last 15 years, this has been a discussion that has been brought forward by all colours, to be frank. But I will say to the Premier: Congratulations. This is a really big deal. It's also one of those things that we haven't seen in action. The territory hasn't seen it, the construction industry — and neither have the departments. So, I do appreciate the briefing that we had from the Department of Finance recently, and one thing that they really highlighted is that, as we go through this capital budget, it does not mean that the money is released ahead of April 1, 2027. So, what this does is this signals that these different projects have been identified as priorities.

But they did also caution that these priorities could change by the time the money finally rolled around in April. That was something that we were told — that this was an approximation, but it could be different. But what I do think is important is that this is an opportunity for the folks within Yukon Government to do the planning required to be able to get these things out early. At this point in time, we haven't had briefings from the departments about what their projects will look like. So, this is a general statement and general comments.

But I do know that this is what I've heard from the building community, from the business community, is that there needs to be an opportunity to plan ahead of that construction season and that push. And this is that first step. We'll see how it goes. We'll hear from community members and those in the industry as this gets navigated. Good luck to those public servants who are going to be working on those plans, trying to figure out what those projects look like going forward. And so, my comments today are brief, because this is just a general thing.

We look forward to having the debates with each of the ministers as we discuss what those priorities are. But again, this is something that's been discussed for many years in different ways about how important it is to make sure that industry knows what's coming ahead of the season. And so, I think this is the first opportunity, and I think it's an important one. So, I'm happy to see it. I look forward to seeing how it works in practice, hoping that if there are lessons learned by the time we get to next fall, that those lessons then are adopted and prioritized. But I'm happy to see this and look forward to the conversation on what these projects mean for Yukon.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I rise today to speak to Bill No. 203, the *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*. As my colleague mentioned, I was advised as well that it's about 25 years since the Yukon Government has produced a full capital budget. I think it was in 2001 or 2002. The one before us today is a partial capital budget, not a full one.

In principle, we have no objections to the decision to proceed in this manner with such a short construction season up here. As mentioned, I am sure Yukon contractors will be in favour of this approach, and project managers seeking to get work done over the summer season will be happy to have more time to prepare and do the administrative legwork ahead of time.

During yesterday's briefing, officials noted that \$138 million before us is about one-third of the total capital budget expected for the entire year. Seeing that the Premier is not here to respond right now, perhaps the Premier can confirm that in his closing remarks today.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Hon. Scott Kent: The Leader of the Third Party drew attention to the fact that a member was not in the Chamber, and that is out of order.

I would just ask that you rule on that.

Speaker's ruling — Members not to refer to the absence of members

Speaker: There is a point of order. Let's move on.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Mähsi'.

Well, I appreciate that not all the projects are ready or in need of the extra time that this budget allows. Splitting the capital budget in this way makes it very difficult to evaluate the capital budget plan in its entirety for the year. I guess this will have to wait until Yukoners see the full picture in the spring.

That said, what we can see now is that the overall capital project for this current fiscal year is quite a bit lower than previous years, and budget documents from the spring showed the capital budget being reduced even further next year. This means less work for the private sector and less investment in important infrastructure that is needed to grow the territory and improve the lives of Yukoners.

I am pleased, though, to see the Shakwak funding included in this bill. This type of funding had disappeared years ago under the Yukon Party and reappeared a few years ago, just starting again. So that was great to see.

Briefing materials that were provided yesterday did indicate there will be funding for fire truck replacements in this budget, and I wanted to note that I hope that my community of Old Crow is at the front of the line for one of those new trucks. There was a tragic house fire in Old Crow this summer, and our community had to use pumps and hoses from the river. Thankfully, it was summer, not winter.

Our current truck right now is 30 years old. We are not allowed to use it, and it will be decommissioned this year. So that is a great and serious problem for my community.

Speaking of my community, the words "Old Crow" I noticed do not actually appear in any of the capital budget documents released yesterday, and so in his closing remarks, perhaps the Premier can highlight any projects that are in the budget for Old Crow.

While a small line item in this, the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion is perhaps the most significant project being discussed here. In the briefings on this budget, we were informed that the current price tag for the expansion is \$1.1 billion. Perhaps the Premier could confirm that number in his closing remarks as well, because that is not a very small number.

Moving forward, it would be good to know that there is a plan in place for how to pay the overall cost as we continue to spend on site improvements and other preparations. Across the country, other provinces and territories have struck significant deals with the federal government to support critical infrastructure. Major announcements are being made. Bold visions for the future are being put forward, and governments are seizing this unique moment to take real action.

But here in the Yukon, we are debating a modest capital budget that tinkers at the edges of but takes no bold leaps forward. That's what we are seeing. We need to see real investments in our future to build a stronger future for all Yukoners, so I will be voting against this bill.

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I would like to begin today to just say that I welcome the change in the practice to move forward early work in tendering projects early in the year and take full advantage of the short construction season in the Yukon. Finding opportunities to be efficient and timely in planning and delivering projects is important and necessary for us while we are working to improve our fiscal situation and continue to bring important projects for communities to completion.

The Department of Community Services has a broad range of roles and responsibilities that impact the lives of every Yukoner every day. Thank you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly for the opportunity to highlight some of this work and how we anticipate taking advantage of having an early capital appropriation through this fall capital budget.

The 2027-28 fall capital estimate includes \$18.225 million for the Department of Community Services under the Fire Marshal's Office. The Department of Community Services Fire Marshal's Office oversees fire services throughout the territory, working with municipalities and unincorporated communities. This branch provides oversight, administrative support, protective equipment, and training resources to 16 fire department jurisdictions across the territory.

This budget includes \$1.225 million for fire apparatus replacement by Yukon volunteer fire departments. Having this

funding available at this time enables the Fire Marshal's Office to increase the chance that the equipment will be delivered within the 2027-28 fiscal year. As some may know, the ordering and delivery of fire apparatus has a very long lead time. These are not off-the-shelf purchases. Having the equipment sooner will reduce the time the Fire Marshal's Office and volunteer fire departments depend on aging fire apparatus.

Under Infrastructure Development, the Department of Community Services ensures communities have the everyday infrastructure Yukoners need. To support this, the Infrastructure Development branch manages construction projects and administers federal infrastructure funding for Yukon municipal and First Nation governments to upgrade, replace, and build essential community infrastructure and for work done in unincorporated areas in the Yukon. The \$15 million will help advance these types of tender-ready projects.

The envelope will support a water treatment plant in the Hamlet of Mount Lorne, flood mitigation measures in the community of Carmacks, continued upgrades to the Village of Haines Junction's water and sewer infrastructure, design work for a new fire hall for the City of Whitehorse, and assisting to replace the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation public works building.

These projects have been long-standing local priorities. Our government is pleased to take decisive action to help meet these community needs. Finally, in this appropriation, there is \$2 million in this budget to help support the early stages of community infrastructure projects throughout the territory.

As a first step for most projects, the branch completes preliminary scoping to ensure there is enough information about the projects to meet eligibility requirements from various Government of Canada infrastructure programs. By confirming that our infrastructure projects are eligible for federal funding, the branch is maximizing funding opportunities while advancing critical infrastructure across the territory.

This budget will allow the Department of Community Services to continue the vital work of ensuring Yukoners have access to the services and infrastructure they need. Thank you to the staff from the department for their dedication in providing these services in communities across the Yukon. I'm constantly reminded that, together, everyone achieves more.

Thank you to the members of the Legislature here today for the opportunity to highlight the department's work. I just like to say that I look forward to seeing the positive outcomes of having the fall appropriation available so that work can begin early in the new year or when available so that we're able to get going and make the most use of our shortened construction season here in the Yukon, as we often see projects starting later in the fall.

Lane Tredger: I just want to add on to my colleague's comments that we do appreciate the conversation around the capital planning, and we appreciate the intent of bringing this budget forward. It is, however, a confidence matter, as all budgets are, so our caucus will not be supporting this bill.

Hon. Linda Benoit: I'm happy to stand here today as both the MLA for Whistle Bend South and the Minister of Highways and Public Works to respond to the 2027-28 advance vote fall capital budget.

It's been a very busy fall. My caucus colleagues and I have been out across most of the territory holding public meetings, meeting with First Nation governments, municipal governments, local advisory councils, and more. It's an absolute privilege to be able to travel our vast and beautiful territory and hear from Yukoners about their ongoing priorities.

Things are also busy in Whistle Bend. The 2026-27 school council for Dámbü Tán Kets'adañ Kù is in place. I welcome Amy Nichols-Hogan and Andrea Oldridge back, and welcome new school council members Jenna Kowalyshen and Carson Abel and Stacey McDiarmid. I would be remiss if I didn't mention Secretary-Treasurer Jerry Zahora. She works very hard to keep everyone organized.

I'd also like to thank outgoing school council members Rebecca Hutchings-Archibald, Sheena Laluk, and Brittany Vogt for their service. I would also like to recognize Dámbü Tán Kets'adañ Kù educators Amber Allison and Jasmine Isstead for being recently honoured by Connected North during the 2026 Yukon Community Builder Awards presented along with the Yukon Association of Education Professionals for their leadership in opening their classrooms to live interactive learning.

I would also like to mention the 2025-26 Whistle Bend Neighbourhood Association Board of Directors for their hard work over the past year. Chair Kylie Campbell Clarke, Treasurer Damian Topps, Secretary Parth Joshi, and directors Nick Schonewille, Ovide Perreault, Robins Chako, and Josey Antony. This dedicated group of volunteers has organized FireSmarting, barbecues, a neighbourhood festival, a Christmas light contest, multiple trash cleanups, and invasive species weed pulls alongside other community groups and volunteers.

They have advocated to Community Services, the City of Whitehorse, and other government agencies on behalf of Whistle Bend residents. I look forward to continuing working with the WBNA after their October 7 AGM, and I'm happy to support everything that they do for our neighbourhood.

I would also like to acknowledge that we are following through with the commitment we made to Yukoners to reintroduce a fall capital vote. This fall capital budget will provide greater clarity and certainty to businesses and contractors by giving them more time to prepare and participate in tendering opportunities. Tendering capital projects early will allow them to better plan their season and will ensure that we are also ready in order to maximize the length of the construction season.

Moving along to the details, I am pleased to present the 2027-28 advance vote fall capital budget of \$70.3 million for the Department of Highways and Public Works. Highways and Public Works is responsible for building and managing the infrastructure and systems that Yukoners across the territory interact with daily. We maintain the roads people drive on, the airports that connect our communities, the buildings where services are delivered, and the digital systems that governments rely on.

This budget reflects that responsibility. It is focused on maintaining safe and reliable infrastructure, strengthening connections between communities, and investing in facilities Yukoners rely on each day. These priorities guide every investment in this budget. Together, they help ensure that no

matter where Yukoners live, government remains accessible, services are reliable, and our economy can continue to grow.

Our department maintains more than 4,800 kilometres of highway along with bridges, culverts, barges, airports, and aerodromes across this vast territory. This infrastructure supports modern life in the Yukon but is also necessary for emergency response, tourism, and Arctic security.

Much of this work is focused on the transportation network that connects our communities. This budget includes significant investments to keep those connections strong. For example, our continued investment in the North Klondike Highway will make a real difference for communities along the corridor. We are requesting \$23.6 million to continue reconstruction that will improve safety and reliability, helping residents travel more safely and ensuring dependable access to services.

This funding will support completion of the 21.6-kilometre section of the Klondike Highway south of Stewart Crossing in 2027 and the start of reconstruction on a further 17 kilometres south of Gravel Lake. This project is supported through Canada's national trade corridors fund, and costs are 75-percent recoverable from the Government of Canada.

Connecting communities also happens on a smaller scale, including the expansion of Whitehorse's multi-use trail network. We are requesting \$3.5 million to expand the Alaska Highway multi-use trail from Two Mile Hill to the Kopper King area. This project will be supported by the Government of Canada's active transportation fund. This project would see an additional 1.6 kilometres of paved trail and upgraded trail connections into Porter Creek, improving safety and connectivity for people walking and cycling in the area.

We plan to complete the connector portion from Two Mile Hill to Takhini as well as design work for the remaining trail in the following year. It is important to remember that our connections are not limited to our territory or even the country; our neighbours in Alaska also rely on Yukon highways for travel and trade.

Through our partnership with the State of Alaska and the US Federal Highway Administration, we have secured \$37 million USD to support the rehabilitation of the north Alaska Highway or Shakwak Corridor over the next several years. We are requesting \$8.6 million in 2027-28 to continue this work. This fully recoverable investment helps address permafrost damage and protect a critical northern trade corridor.

Maintaining Yukon's trade routes, including the Alaska Highway, requires significant ongoing investment. The Alaska Highway is the only road directly connecting Yukon to southern Canada, making its continued safety and reliability critical.

A key part of this transportation route is the Nisutlin Bay bridge in Teslin. While the new bridge is under construction, we are doing what is needed to maintain the current bridge so it can remain in service. This budget includes \$500,000 toward interim maintenance and repairs to the existing Nisutlin Bay bridge.

Further along the Alaska Highway, we are also investing in the Lewes River bridge. This budget includes \$2.7 million for rehabilitation work in 2027 to support critical repairs and maintenance. This work is part of our ongoing efforts to improve safety on and around the Lewes River bridge through

targeted investments in traffic control, lighting, highway access, and bridge infrastructure.

Continuing on the Alaska Highway — we are including \$3 million in this budget to address erosion near Marsh Lake, where high waters have eroded the slope. This investment will repair and strengthen the slope to protect the highway from further erosion. The work planned for the 2027 construction season will help protect this important transportation corridor during future high-water years. We are also investing \$4.5 million toward the roadside safety improvements program to support vegetation control or brushing, sightline improvements, and safer travel conditions for all road users throughout the territory.

Our role in ensuring safe and reliable infrastructure is not only limited to highways. We also have a significant role to play in supporting aviation. This budget includes targeted investments to maintain and improve airport and aviation infrastructure across the territory. We are investing \$840,000 toward pavement repairs and maintenance at the Dawson, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse airports. This work will help maintain airport infrastructure and support continued compliance with Transport Canada requirements. We are also investing \$1.8 million to complete structural upgrades to the Watson Lake Airport terminal building. This Yukon historic site does double duty, serving aviation users as well as tourists and history enthusiasts. At the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, this budget includes \$700,000 to begin preliminary work on replacing the airport maintenance facility, which is over 60 years old and no longer meets operational needs.

Beyond transportation systems, we are also investing in the places where Yukoners learn, work, and gather. In 2027-28, we are requesting \$17.3 million to invest in 23 identified building maintenance projects across the territory. This includes \$5.4 million to replace the roof at École Émilie Tremblay in Whitehorse, \$1.3 million for site work at Robert Service School in Dawson, and \$1.1 million for mechanical upgrades at Chief Zzeh Gittlit School in Old Crow.

This budget also includes a request for \$750,000 for accessibility upgrades. Projects such as washroom upgrades to Jack Hulland and Golden Horn elementary schools will improve accessibility for Yukon students. We're also improving Yukoners' access to justice by adding barrier-free infrastructure to the Justice Centre and courthouse in Whitehorse.

Beyond maintaining and improving our public buildings, we must also ensure the essential systems within them continue to operate effectively. These buildings must have reliable heat, proper ventilation, and appropriate lighting, which is why this budget includes \$4.3 million for energy-efficiency upgrades at government facilities. We plan to upgrade the boilers at J.V. Clark School in Mayo and Porter Creek Secondary School in Whitehorse in 2027-28. These investments will improve building performance while helping reduce energy use and long-term operating costs.

This budget reflects what Highways and Public Works does best. We connect communities and we provide the spaces for Yukoners to gather, learn, and access essential services. The investments in this budget are practical, but together, they have a profound impact on daily life in the Yukon. Through

responsible, disciplined investment, we are building a safer, stronger, and more resilient Yukon.

Hon. Brad Cathers: I'm pleased here in speaking to the fall capital budget to note that the single item in the fall capital estimates for 2027-28 is an advance vote of \$14.4 million to support the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion project. This builds on funding that was invested in the 2026-27 main estimates, which included \$4.1 million to advance this project. This is a high priority, of course, for this government. We've also noted that this is one that we require the support of the federal government to advance because of the high cost of the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion project being beyond our current fiscal capacity because of the constraints of the federal borrowing limit that we must live within as well as the significant cost of this infrastructure project.

However, we also believe that this is an opportunity for partnership with the federal government, because as the federal government does more to protect the Canadian Arctic and to assert Canada's Arctic sovereignty north of 60 and within the Arctic, it is also essential that the military have the hospital capacity to support the operations of the military in the Arctic. That includes increased presence of military and their families who require hospital care as well as the ability to support patrol and potentially combat operations. It may go without saying but should be emphasized that there are two hospitals north of 60 that are key to supporting Canada's Arctic sovereignty — the hospital in Yellowknife and the Whitehorse General Hospital.

The current Whitehorse General Hospital was built in the 1990s for a much smaller population, and the significant population growth that we've seen in the territory over the last 20 years has already created a situation where the hospital is typically overcapacity in any given week. That includes reaching as high as 146-percent bed capacity in June before we opened eight additional beds in July. While those eight additional beds, on a percentage basis, are an over 10-percent increase to the number of hospital beds and are mitigating the problem we have with overcapacity, it does not solve it. So therefore, we are moving forward and appreciate the work that is being done, led by Yukon Hospitals, along with the support of Health and Social Services, Highways and Public Works, and the Department of Finance. We've engaged Infrastructure BC as well because of their great technical experience in building hospital projects, and we are doing our level best to move forward with this project as quickly as possible — while again noting that it is absolutely essential that the federal government come to the table to assist us with this project. I would also like to note and thank the federal Minister of Health, Minister Marjorie Michel, and the Yukon's Member of Parliament, Dr. Brendan Hanley, for joining me on a tour of Whitehorse General Hospital to see it for themselves and to hear directly from physicians, staff, and others this summer and appreciate their interest in hearing directly from those who are using the facility every day as well as from ourselves here in the Yukon Government and myself as minister.

The \$14.4 million is to advance the early works on the Whitehorse General Hospital for next fiscal year. There is certainly more funding that is required to move forward with the project itself, but as part of moving forward with this multi-phase, multi-year project, an early appropriation related to the

early works will allow important work to proceed and to maintain momentum on planning and preparation underway. The intention is that once this budget is passed, the \$14.4 million will be provided as a transfer to the Yukon Hospital Corporation for the 2027-28 fiscal year, and the funding is to support advanced preparation for the hospital expansion, including early works such as water main relocation, site preparation, and renovation of the maternity ward as well as developing additional parking spaces in recognition of the fact that the planned site of the expansion project is in an area that is currently parking. As that project proceeds, it's necessary to provide alternate locations for physicians, staff, and others to park, and so that is why that is part of the early works.

Whitehorse General Hospital is, as I noted, under sustained pressure, with typical bed occupancy consistently exceeding 100 percent and hitting as high as 146 percent in June. Demand continues to grow across the emergency department, surgical, inpatient, and outpatient services. The planned expansion will increase surgical, inpatient, and critical care capacity, help address current pressures while preparing the Yukon's health system for future population growth and meet our future hospital needs. I should note that the volume being handled by our operating rooms currently is already quite high, and it's necessary to add additional OR capacity to meet our current needs, not to mention our future needs as this project is planned to address. This investment of \$14.4 million in early works is an important step toward advancing the Whitehorse General Hospital project, and I thank all of my colleagues for their support and in moving forward with the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion project.

And I'll conclude my remarks and look forward to questions at a later date.

Hon. Scott Kent: It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to the fall capital budget that is before the House, introduced by the Premier yesterday and here for Second Reading today. This is an exciting time, because I was actually here when the last one was introduced back in 2001. The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin is correct; it was a full fall capital budget, which represented the entire appropriation for the following year.

This is different, but I believe it'll still assist contractors in better planning. It'll assist the Yukon Government in better planning and potentially lead to better pricing when we're able to get those tenders out earlier. I'm interested in what the Leader of the Official Opposition heard about these potentially changing.

How this is structured is so that we can get early tenders out for these specific projects that are listed here, get those projects awarded so that when April 1 comes, money can start to flow. Contractors moving heavy equipment can do so ahead of the highway road restrictions and get that out to construction destinations or potentially bring in material that they might need to source from outside the Yukon without paying the additional freight charges that happen during the highway weight restriction period as well. This is a real opportunity to make a difference for the contracting community and for the government as a whole in getting these projects out the door and tendered early.

The Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Education both have votes in this budget, and I'm excited to talk about the specifics of those items right now. I'm going to start with the Yukon Housing Corporation, and I do appreciate the opportunity to respond as the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Member of the Legislative Assembly for the riding of Copperbelt South.

I'd like to start by thanking Yukon Housing officials and the Board of Directors for preparing this budget and for all the work done behind the scenes to prepare for the upcoming debates in Committee of the Whole. The fall 2027-28 capital budget that is before the House for Yukon Housing Corporation is \$26.2 million. This budget includes three areas of focus: \$12.7 million for key capital projects, \$6.7 million for the housing initiatives fund, and \$6.8 million for maintaining and renewing Yukon Housing's portfolio.

This budget supports Yukon Housing's commitment to increasing housing supply and improving access to affordable housing. Yukon Housing continues to work with Build Canada Homes to finalize an agreement that will see Canada and the Yukon invest \$193 million in affordable housing across the territory.

Many Yukoners will recall earlier this summer when I made a joint announcement with federal Minister Gregor Robertson regarding this funding as well colleagues the Minister of Health and Social Services and the Minister of Community Services were at that same press conference to announce additional funding in their areas, some of which came up earlier today in Question Period.

While this budget cannot yet reflect those recoveries, as the agreement still hasn't been finalized, these investments in new housing stock are part of the overall partnership between Yukon Housing and Build Canada Homes. I'll focus on some of the key capital projects. The fall capital budget proposes an investment of \$12.7 million toward key housing projects in the communities of Burwash Landing, Ross River, Haines Junction, Mayo, and Teslin.

These projects include a mix of employee and community housing units in those communities, which support recruitment and retention of essential staff and increased access to affordable rent-geared-to-income housing. The housing initiatives fund capital allocation is \$6.7 million in this budget. This is a core Yukon Housing program that has provided over \$39 million in funding to support housing developments by First Nation governments and development corporations, non-profit organizations, and the private sector.

This budget will support increased incentives to unlock further investment by partners along the housing continuum. And to help maintain Yukon Housing's portfolio, a total of \$6.8 million is allocated toward necessary maintenance, repairs, and renovations on units as well as replacement of aging-out units. I look forward to providing additional information on these details and responding to questions from members opposite when Yukon Housing Corporation is called before Committee of the Whole later on in this Sitting.

I want to turn now to the appropriations in the Department of Education. Early approval will again allow the department to undertake the procurement and planning required to advance priority capital work that is scheduled to begin in the next fiscal year but advance that work in this current one.

The department is requesting \$9.653 million for capital investments in Yukon schools. These investments respond to enrolment pressures, support student safety and programming, and address the condition of school infrastructure across the territory. The largest item is \$4.8 million for modular classrooms. This funding will allow the department to put four modular classrooms into operation for the 2027-28 school year and purchase two additional modular classrooms for installation in 2028-29. This represents a year-over-year increase of \$3.6 million.

The increase will help address existing space requirements while allowing the department to plan for anticipated enrolment pressures. The early appropriation also includes \$1.2 million for planning, design, and site preparation for the replacement of École Whitehorse Elementary School. This funding will allow the project to continue advancing, with expenditure projections updated as planning and site-specific requirements are confirmed.

A further \$1.35 million will support the complete replacement of the roof of Khâtinâs.âxh Community School in Teslin. This work will protect the building envelope, address health and safety concerns, extend the useful life of the facility, and support the continued delivery of educational services. It also reflects the department's commitment to maintaining school infrastructure in partnership with Yukon First Nations, including the Teslin Tlingit Council — all the same, while planning and preparations will continue for the building of a new community school in Teslin, and we look forward to continuing that work with the Teslin Tlingit Council, the Village of Teslin, and the broader community.

The budget includes \$300,000 for site improvements and recreation development. This annual funding supports work such as fencing, playfield equipment, cultural spaces, signage, accessible playground surfaces, tarmac repairs, and traffic-calming measures.

This includes an increase of \$150,000 for the supply and installation of accessible playgrounds at Jack Hulland Elementary School and Grey Mountain Primary School. These targeted improvements help make school grounds safer, more accessible, and more useful for learners and the broader school community.

The budget also includes \$150,000 to develop a dedicated trades learning space at CSSC Mercier in the francophone high school in Riverdale. Four existing offices will be converted into a small trades workshop supporting French first language programming in light woodworking and small engine mechanics. The project will include the required building modifications, safety measures, equipment, ventilation, electrical upgrades, and storage.

I know my colleague the Minister of Highways and Public Works mentioned it, but a further investment in École Émilie Tremblay to replace the roof is also in this capital budget. It is listed in the Highways and Public Works side of things, but again, an important improvement to École Émilie Tremblay that the Francophone School Board has asked for, and we're pleased to be able to deliver on that request in this budget.

There is an investment of \$953,000 that will begin accelerating upgrades to public address or public announcement systems at 15 Yukon schools. Many of these PA, bell, telephone, and clock systems are between 20 and 30

years old, and these upgrades will improve system reliability, audio quality, communication between different areas of schools, and support for emergency messaging. This is an important safety feature that many school councils and school boards have been requesting for a number of years.

The department is also requesting \$500,000 to continue improvements at Ross River School. Planned work includes simplifying mechanical piping, replacing the existing boiler, and improving landscaping and drainage around the school. These improvements will help direct water away from the building and reduce the risk of water infiltration and related damage.

Finally, the budget includes \$400,000 to replace aging school activity buses that have reached the end of their useful lives. These vehicles support experiential learning, field trips, and other educational opportunities outside the classroom. Their replacement will help schools continue to provide these opportunities safely for their students.

These investments reflect a balanced approach to school capital planning. They combine additional classroom space and facility renewal with targeted improvements that support safety, accessibility, and learner programming. Early approval will allow the department to begin procurement and planning in advance of the next fiscal year, helping projects move forward efficiently and making the best use of Yukon's construction season.

As the Premier mentioned this morning on CBC Radio, education often has a shorter construction window than most other departments in the government due to the fact that much of this work has to be accomplished in that summer break, which is often two months or less in duration. Being able to have these contracts out, tendered, and awarded before the start of the next fiscal year will help plan so that we can move into those schools that need this work done while school is out as soon as possible after the dismissal of the school for the summer break.

With the support of the Legislative Assembly and colleagues, we'll continue investing in safe, functional, and effective learning environments while putting the needs of learners at the centre of Yukon's education system.

Thank you very much for the time today, and I look forward to further debate and the vote on this appropriation.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I'm pleased to rise to close debate at Second Reading on Bill No. 203, the fall capital budget. I appreciate the comments from my colleagues on both sides of the floor and look forward to getting into further debate in Committee of the Whole.

I know there were some specific questions raised at Second Reading by both the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party that I'm happy to address in committee. I'll just quickly note a few things, though.

The Leader of the Official Opposition noted that at the briefing there was an indication that there could be a change in some of the priorities between now and April. I simply wanted to clarify what I think she meant by that. The way that this fall capital appropriation has worked is that there are some

envelopes that have been appropriated funding, and it is possible to shift projects within envelopes.

It's not possible, though, to shift from one envelope to another. So, for instance, there is a transportation infrastructure envelope, there is a public maintenance envelope, and there is a schools envelope. Those envelopes are fixed by this bill. However, within those projects, there is the room to change if needed.

As the Minister of Education outlined, it's possible that which schools receive modularity could possibly change as we go forward from now to tendering. But it's our intent to be as open and transparent as we can with Yukoners about when we'll see tendering happen. Once that tendering happens, it's locked in, because there'll be commitments that are made through the tendering process, through the procurement process, and by engaging with the private sector.

I hope that clarifies some of the questions that the Leader of the Official Opposition had. But I'm happy to engage in a more fulsome debate in Committee of the Whole.

Turning to the Leader of the Third Party, I know that she expressed a concern about a lack of specifically naming her community in this. But I would note that within those envelopes there are projects that will be likely applied to the community of Old Crow. In particular, I'm aware that at least the school in Old Crow is slated for some mechanical upgrades. So, there are projects that will likely be deployed in that community.

However, I'll leave it to individual ministers to provide specifics about their departments when we get into Committee of the Whole. The Leader of the Third Party also noted that it appears that this budget is less than the spring capital budget, and that is correct. This is not meant to be a complete replacement of the capital budget; it is meant to complement the capital budget. So, the remainder of the capital appropriation will come in the spring and there will be another round of capital money in the spring budget. This is just pulling several of those projects — \$138 million or so worth of them — into the earlier appropriation to allow them to be tendered, to be procured, and to have visibility from the private sector as to what they are.

I look forward to providing further clarity if necessary in Committee of the Whole, but I'll conclude at this point and simply thank officials for the work done to date on the production of this bill. As many members have noted, it is the first of its kind in a generation or so — more than 25 years since the last time this was attempted, and I think that we are approaching it in a prudent and responsible way by hiving off a number of projects and not all of them.

I think that the changes in the process that the Department of Finance has led have been done soundly, and I look forward to engaging through the Department of Finance with all the Yukon Government departments that have appropriations in the fall capital budget to ensure that they are done in a manner consistent with the transparency and accountability that we expect of all of the entirety of Yukon Government. So, with that I'll conclude and look forward to voting at Second Reading on Bill No. 203 and proceeding to Committee of the Whole debate later today, I'm sure.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Scott Kent: Agree.

Hon. Cory Bellmore: Agree.

Hon. Brad Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Linda Benoit: Agree.

Hon. Ted Laking: Agree.

Patti McLeod: Agree.

Hon. Laura Lang: Agree.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: Agree.

Hon. Wade Istchenko: Agree.

Adam Gerle: Agree.

Doris Anderson: Agree.

Tyler Porter: Agree.

Kate White: Disagree.

Lane Tredger: Disagree.

Brent McDonald: Disagree.

Linda Moen: Disagree.

Carmen Gustafson: Disagree.

Justin Ziegler: Désaccord.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Disagree.

Clerk: Madam Speaker, the results are 13 yea, seven nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for Second Reading of Bill No. 203 agreed to

Bill No. 204, Second Appropriation Act 2026-27 — Second Reading

Clerk: Second Reading, Bill No. 204, standing in the name of the Hon. Currie Dixon.

Hon. Currie Dixon: I move that Bill No. 204, *Second Appropriation Act 2026-27*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 204, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2026-27*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Currie Dixon: I'm pleased to rise today to speak at Second Reading of Bill No. 204, the *Second Appropriation Act 2026-27— Supplementary Estimates No. 1*.

This is, of course, the first supplementary estimate budget for this fiscal year. When we introduced budget 2026, we were very clear with Yukoners about the fiscal circumstances facing our territory.

Since then, I have continued to be clear with Yukoners that we could not remain on the path that we are on. At the time, I spoke about the need for discipline and responsible fiscal management, and I will continue to stress the importance of discipline throughout these remarks and during my time as Premier and Minister of Finance.

I also spoke about the importance of making sure that government lives within its means while protecting the services Yukoners rely on. Today's supplementary estimates are an important part of putting that approach into practice. There is reason to be positive about what we are presenting today. These

supplementary estimates are in a way administrative in nature but also a continuation of our path to balance. They reflect updated information, new federal funding, and changes in forecasts. At the same time, they present minimal costs that have emerged during the fiscal year. They demonstrate that government is responding to circumstances as they arise but doing so carefully, transparently, and responsibly. What they do not do is present a list of new initiatives and flashy headline-grabbing expenditures.

The supplementary estimates recognize \$23.8 million in proposed additional revenue for the territory. They also provide for \$8.1 million in proposed additional O&M funding, after accounting for contingency allocations, and \$1.8 million in proposed additional capital authority. The supplementary estimates reflect \$11 million in proposed new O&M recoveries and \$3 million in proposed new capital recoveries. Many of the new proposed expenditures are cushioned by the government's new contingency fund. Of the \$21.4 million in additional gross O&M authority, \$13.3 million is being provided through contingency transfers, resulting in the \$8.1-million figure I mentioned. That means we are using the tools available to government to respond to emerging pressures without unnecessarily increasing the overall spending envelope.

As part of the bigger picture, these supplementary estimates show a revised deficit of \$53.7 million. This is a \$28.1-million improvement from the figures tabled in March. Equally, these estimates show a revised year-end net debt forecast of \$776.3 million. Although still preliminary and subject to change until the Public Accounts are finalized and tabled in the Legislature later this month, early results from 2025-26 suggest this year-end forecast will improve significantly based on initial financial results from last year. This is exactly the kind of disciplined approach that we are committed to in budget 2026.

This focus on spending within our means is what will ensure our commitment to long-term sustainability and a responsible path to balance in the coming years. When looking at some specifics from this appropriation, the largest adjustment in these estimates relates to the Department of Community Services. Wildfire season is an unavoidable reality of living in the North. This year, the Government of Yukon has incurred additional costs associated with responding to wildfire activity as well as flood response activities during the summer. While much lower than last year's financial pressures in this area, the supplementary estimates recognize approximately \$10.8 million for Community Services for emergency response related to fire and floods. It also recognizes increased recoveries associated with the deployment of Yukon crews and aviation resources outside the territory. When emergencies happen, government has to respond, and we cannot predict exactly when a wildfire will start, where it will spread, or when a community will require assistance responding to flooding. But we can make sure that when those circumstances arise, the government has the ability to respond. That is what the contingency is for. That is why providing these funds through contingency transfers is both appropriate and fiscally responsible.

While on the topic, I want to recognize the work of the people who respond to these emergencies: wildland firefighters, emergency management personnel, community

leaders, first responders, and Yukoners who step up to help their neighbours. These typically are difficult circumstances, and their work is critical to keeping Yukoners safe.

Another significant component of these estimates is in education. The government is recognizing \$7.5 million in additional funding for early learning and childcare, supported by federal funding under the Canada-Yukon agreement. This is a good news item. The additional expenditure authority allows the government to access new federal funding and continue investing in early learning and childcare. There is no net impact on the territory's 2026-27 fiscal position from this particular adjustment, because the expenditure is fully supported by federal recoveries. This is exactly the kind of partnership that we want to see with the federal government. When federal funding is available to support priorities that matter to Yukon families, we need to be in a position to access that funding and put it to work.

These estimates also recognize \$10 million in additional federal revenue to support measures to increase Canada's housing supply. Housing remains one of the most important challenges facing Yukon families. As we said in budget 2026, the cost and availability of housing affect whether people can stay here, whether businesses can recruit workers, and whether young Yukoners can build their futures in the territory. Federal funding that helps increase housing supply is therefore very welcome. This revenue will support the broader work of increasing housing availability and affordability in the Yukon.

We are also recognizing \$4.35 million in additional forecasted interest revenue resulting from higher cash balances than previously forecast. Again, this is not new spending; it is updated revenue information based on the territory's current financial position. Budgets are forecasts. As the year progresses, actual circumstances become clearer. When those circumstances result in additional revenue, we should recognize that revenue transparently, which is what we are doing today with this supplementary.

There are also a number of important health infrastructure adjustments in these estimates. Health and Social Services is receiving \$2.5 million in additional capital authority. This includes funding associated with health infrastructure projects at Whitehorse General Hospital, including a surgical sprinkler project and electrical system upgrades, with a significant portion of those costs expected to be supported through federal health infrastructure funding. These are the kinds of investments that support the reliability and resilience of our health care infrastructure. I have also spoken about the need to make sure that Yukon's infrastructure keeps pace with a growing population. That includes roads and schools. It includes housing. It includes energy infrastructure, and it includes our health care facilities. These projects are part of that broader effort.

There are also several smaller adjustments that are important to recognize, because they demonstrate the careful financial management behind these estimates. The Executive Council Office includes proposed funding associated with the *Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement* and the implementation of protected areas planning and establishment in the Yukon. There is also funding to support the Yukon Residential Schools Missing Children project. This is an important investment in reconciliation and supporting the work of First Nations

partners. The French Language Services Directorate will receive \$320,000 in fully recoverable funding from the Government of Canada for an 18-month special project to embed bilingual communications into Yukon's emergency preparedness and response. Once again, this is an example of government taking advantage of federal partnerships to advance priorities for Yukoners.

Highways and Public Works will also see several adjustments. These include pressures associated with commercial leases, electricity costs, facility fire and life safety systems, highway emergency repairs, and municipal utility costs. Taken together, these adjustments recognize approximately \$2 million in proposed additional O&M spending authority. Importantly, these are largely pressures that have already materialized. This is not government asking for money simply because it might need it; these are costs that have been incurred or are now sufficiently known to be recognized in the government's financial forecasts. Where appropriate, we are using contingency to address them, which is evidence of responsible budgeting.

Viewed as a whole, these estimates tell a positive story. They show a government that is responding to pressures when they arise, that is accessing federal funding when it's available, and that is using contingency for its intended purpose. They also show a government that is not treating every emerging pressure as an automatic request for new money. That is the approach we committed to in budget 2026, a disciplined approach that will put us on a path of balance.

When we presented that budget, we said that restoring fiscal balance would require us to do government differently. We said that we would protect front-line services, that we would focus on priorities, and we said that we would ask government to find efficiencies before asking more of Yukoners. These supplementary estimates demonstrate those principles in action.

There is also a broader lesson here. The Yukon is growing, our population is growing, our economy is evolving, and the demands on our infrastructure and services are increasing. That means government must be both responsive and disciplined. We cannot simply build larger budgets every time circumstances change. We need to be smarter about how we use the resources we have. We need to take advantage of partnerships. We need to access federal funding, and we need to make sure that every dollar ultimately is efficiently spent and supports better outcomes for Yukoners. That is what these estimates do.

When I delivered the Budget Address in March, I said that the Yukon was at a crossroads. I also said that this budget needed to be the starting point for getting our finances back on a sustainable path. That work will take time, but it is already underway. The supplementary estimates before us today are not about making major changes to the direction established in budget 2026. They are about implementing that direction carefully as the year unfolds. At the same time, they demonstrate that fiscal responsibility does not mean government stops responding. It means we respond thoughtfully and strategically, often with the resources we already have. And it means we maintain transparency with this Legislature and with Yukoners.

Within the fiscal challenges facing us as a territory, there is good news in these estimates. We are seeing additional federal funding flow into Yukon. We are recognizing higher than expected revenues. We are supporting critical emergency response. We are investing in health infrastructure. We are supporting early learning and childcare, and we are advancing housing-related investments. At the same time, we are maintaining discipline. We are not funding every request. We are using existing resources where appropriate, and we are using the contingency vote rather than unnecessarily expanding the spending envelope. This is the approach that Yukoners can continue to expect with this government.

These supplementary estimates are one small but important part of that work. They demonstrate that we can respond to changing circumstances while maintaining fiscal discipline and that good financial management is about more than simply spending less; it's about spending wisely, efficiently, and about partnering wherever possible.

I'm pleased to present the 2026-27 *Supplementary Estimates No. 1* for consideration of the House, and I look forward to the discussion and debate that will follow in both Second Reading and during Committee of the Whole.

Kate White: Today, in speaking to this supplementary budget, there's lots of different things. I think about this past summer that I spent with my colleagues speaking to Yukoners where they were at. Whether it was at their doors or whether it was at Moosehide, whether it was in communities like Teslin in supporting their amazing race, whether it was at conferences, campfires, or just in community events around the Yukon, we heard a lot of similar messaging. One of the most resounding concerns we've heard from Yukoners is about the cost of living, about affordability. It's on the tip of everybody's tongue, and to be frank, it feels different for everybody, but everybody is feeling it — whether it's the person who's afraid that at the end of the month they won't be able to pay their rent and their electricity bill on time or it's the folks who have Yukon Government jobs and who are at the grocery store having to make decisions about what they buy and what they don't buy based on the cost of the items on the shelves. It's not talking about the increased number of folks who are accessing the food bank, how three days of food now has to stretch so much further because people just can't afford it.

At the Yukon NDP, we've shared the story about the senior who told us that because of the cost of her power bill, she stopped using her dryer and she's no longer baking. And the reason why this hits so hard for me is that, in talking to this senior, you know that baking for her was like an expression of joy and an expression of love and it was something that was really important to her. So, hanging your clothes to dry is one thing, but not being able to express your love for the people around you because you're afraid about the electricity bill at the end of the month — that's something different. In talking to the senior — this is a person who budgeted carefully her entire life, who thought she had it figured out and is now hanging her laundry and no longer baking.

So, when I respond to the supplementary budget, I have to go back to the spring and I have to think about that main budget that this government tabled, because the supplementary budget in front of us just doesn't tell the full story. If anything, it

continues to demonstrate how this government is out of touch with what Yukoners need.

I reflect back to that budget speech in the spring that cost nearly \$10,000 that was paid to a contractor when the Premier told Yukoners that Yukon was broke. But you wouldn't think so when you see this government's priorities — whether it's jetting around the country promoting the mining industry — it's the same government that cut \$500,000 from youth mental health and then spent \$500,000 to open mining roads for the placer mining industry weeks ahead of the scheduled opening. It's about priorities. So, clearly, when it's the priorities of their donors, they find the money and Yukoners pay the price.

I note the funding for youth mental health. It hits even harder for me now than it did in the spring when I first brought it up, because what I found out, unfortunately through the experience of others, is that Yukon really doesn't have mechanisms in place to support youth who are in a mental health crisis, that they fall through every crack that ever existed.

The Premier said things like: dire financial straits. The government has talked about how broke they are. It's fascinating that they didn't take the opportunity to hold anyone accountable for the hundreds of millions of dollars Yukon taxpayers have already spent cleaning up Victoria Gold. Charges could have been brought, but instead, the Yukon Party let the deadline pass without holding anyone accountable for what happened on the living territories of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. Yukoners have highlighted that this doesn't seem like sound financial management.

And 2025 saw record high placer mining profits: \$449 million — record high, record high. I mean, it makes sense, because in December 2025, placer gold was \$6,200 an ounce. And in a jurisdiction like ours, that should be good news. That should be good news. But still today, we're using the royalty rate from the early 1900s when placer gold cost \$15 an ounce. And at the time, maybe it was reasonable when we charged 2.5 percent of that at 37.5 cents an ounce for the royalties that Yukon collected. Maybe in 1906 that was reasonable — \$15 an ounce — but when Yukon placer miners or folks who placer mined in the Yukon — people who profited from that brought in \$449 million, Yukon Government collected just under \$33,000 in royalties.

It's pretty embarrassing, to be frank. We cut supports for youth mental health. We can't support having a shop teacher in Dawson City, but placer royalties being set in the 1900s — \$33,000 last year? Yeah, it seems like good financial management. Compare that with the Victoria Gold cleanup and no one being held accountable — and then we just have to look to this fall's interim economic update — the increase in inflation is the highest in the country. When you think about what that means for folks, when you think about what that means in every way — it says in that report: "Inflation in Whitehorse has consistently outpaced the national average. The latest figures for the Whitehorse Consumer Price Index shows year-over-year inflation at 5.9 percent in August, representing the highest inflation rate among Canadian jurisdictions." What does that mean for people? What does that mean for people? Well, it means that people are struggling. They're struggling. They're struggling in so many different ways.

When we launched our NDP petition calling on this government to request that the Yukon Utilities Board do an

independent review on ATCO billing practices, I never expected the flood of what we would see. I have been in this building for a very long time, and I have never seen the number of people come into my office to sign a petition like I have in this last summer. There are hundreds of signatures on that petition. People were picking up blank copies and they were going door to door in their apartment buildings. Stores were hosting it on the counters. People were concerned about this and rightfully so, because when someone would reach out and they would say in May that they just received a bill from ATCO Electric that dated back to December — so, going back six months — and it was for more than \$6,000, there was lots to be concerned about. We can think about the person who came in with a two-bedroom mobile home, who was getting billed \$2,500 a month in the winter, and there's a lot of concerns there.

I'll remind this government that they campaigned on saying that they were going to roll back those rate increases. As diesel prices have spiked due to measures outside of their influence — although I appreciate a minor increase to the rate or the relief that folks will feel in the winter, as my colleague for Riverdale North pointed out today, there's nothing in there for businesses. Agriculture, small business, medium business — they all pay electricity. As someone sent out after that press release about the new additional support, she said, "What about those of us who heat with oil?" What about those of us who heat with oil? Or what about those who, due to government programs, switched and now are on primary oil when they weren't before?

Yukoners are worried. I've heard from friends and from neighbours, from folks at the market, who are really seriously considering moving out of the territory at this point. They're talking about leaving a place that they love, because for the first time, they don't know if they can afford to live here anymore.

And we haven't seen the worst of it yet. That's the hard part. Yukoners haven't seen the worst of it yet, and they're bracing for this government's next move. Because the Premier actually just alluded in his previous speech that there's more legislation coming forward, and he mentioned firearms, but then he also mentioned changes to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. So, it's been broadcast that this is coming.

I'm going to share a story. I have friends who both work at Yukon Government jobs and they live in an apartment. When that announcement came out that this was the intention of the government, they were seriously having a conversation about how much of an increase could they afford to absorb. What could they afford to absorb? What could they cut out? They're the first to say that they're lucky — they're living in a place that's not priced like others right now, but they recognize that they might get three months' notice to say that their rent is going to go up by \$500. They talk about how they're lucky because they could probably absorb that, but that's not going to be everybody; it's going to be far from everybody.

The government has signalled, but we haven't seen it yet, so — I mean, we're going to wait — but they have signalled that they're going to remove rent controls, completely unregulating the already incredibly expensive rental market and putting Yukon tenants in an impossible situation. I don't know if anyone has taken a look at the market right now, but there are one-bedroom apartments in Whitehorse that are going for \$2,000 or \$2,500 per month. I saw a two-bedroom basement

suite advertised for \$3,000 a month. And it's fascinating, because these prices are higher than some of the highest rental markets of the country. I mean, they compare to Toronto; they compare to Vancouver. But this government is going to take off any protections that tenants had. We don't know how it's going to go. We don't know if it's going to be rolling. We don't know that there's going to be any timelines, but people are already freaked out about it.

It's fascinating, because this has been something that the Yukon NDP have felt was a concern, but what was really interesting this summer was when small businesses started telling me that they were concerned, because the biggest issue or the challenge that they face right now is recruitment and retention of employees — the biggest issue. I'm sure that the ministers would recognize if they had a conversation — I mean, they have lots of conversations, I'm sure, with folks in their departments. But when a job gets posted, if someone doesn't live here already, they may accept the position and then try to find a place to live and then rescind that acceptance. Because when a person coming from Outside realizes the cost of living here, the cost of rent, tries to find housing, it could be a deal breaker.

I've had some really wild conversations with folks in the Chamber, because I said, "Well, I guess we'll be hearing from you come May when the rental protections are removed." And your members are telling you that if they had a hard time recruiting and retaining employees before, it's going to only get worse.

The Premier said that the way out of this is mining, but it's not a sure thing and it's not immediate; it could be far in the future. I'm not the only person who grew up here, so we'll all remember the muffin trucks. We'll remember those big trucks that used to drive toward Skagway — those muffin trucks — and we'll remember when we saw them and we'll remember when we didn't see them. I've talked in this House before about the time that I've spent in both exploration camps and the mining camps. Sometimes it's up and sometimes it's down.

When we talk about mining, I think about the recent announcement about the Wolverine mine — that the ponds were leaking; they were leaking out toxic water. I worked at that site; I know all about the water. I was there when, going in toward production, the mine was shut down because the water couldn't be treated fast enough. Despite every measure that they had in place, they couldn't treat the water fast enough for it to be discharged safely. And then here we have an announcement coming out to say that it's leaking. Guess what? Under the Yukon Party, there wasn't enough collection of that money; we spent the money that was collected; we're paying money — Yukoners are paying right now. Yukoners are paying for Victoria Gold; we're paying for Eagle.

Mining is not immediate. What could be immediate is a change to the placer royalties. I'd welcome that. That'd be fantastic. That would be one way to bring in some money. That would be fantastic. That would be a more immediate fit than any large mine at this point, any quartz mine project right now. Those are years away.

And I think about the opportunities in tourism. Tourism is a key driver. I think about all the times that I've driven to Dawson City up in the Tr'ondëk territory in the last number of years, and I will tell you that, honestly, this summer, I didn't

want to drive. I didn't want to drive. This summer, I decided after last year's many, many trips on the highway that I didn't want to drive, and I flew to Dawson to go to Moosehide. I'm so glad that I did, because every single person I talked to in Dawson City who had driven the highway was like, "Wow, that was really bad." One reflection of how bad the condition of the highway was, was knowing that the welding shops had to close the big gates on their yard because they had jobs backed up for weeks. I'm not talking minor jobs; I'm talking people's mobile homes. They couldn't drive their trailers because of the significant damage that had been done to them on that road. On Facebook, there are all sorts of groups that talk about travelling the Alaska Highway; they talk about driving the Alcan Highway — they have all these things, and when the warnings started to go out on those groups about "Do not drive this highway" and people started changing their trips — when you talk to hotels and folks in Dawson City who said that things were cancelled — that people were cancelling things because they didn't want to deal with the highway — that's an indication. It's an indication that more action should have been taken about that.

I think about the opportunity. I think about tourism operators. I think about agriculture. I think about farmers. I think about small businesses and entrepreneurs. They all have solutions and they have ideas. I think that's an opportunity to harness. I think that would be a real opportunity. Unfortunately, sometimes, what I hear from this government is that any hope for Yukon's future rests solely on relying on pending hardrock mines to get us out of this — mines that will require massive energy use.

Today in Question Period, I mentioned that there's been lots of money secured by our neighbours in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut when it comes to energy projects but not for us. If grid connection is the only answer, that's not immediate. We're talking about the need for surplus diesel, and I don't disagree — diesel costs have gone through the roof. Those aren't in. So, what does that mean for energy when we talk about those large-scale mines?

We think about what's happening to the grid right now. We've heard the doom and gloom from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and, I mean, rightfully so. I don't know that I fully support some of the language, but, yeah, it's bad. Absolutely, it's bad. And the Premier told us that he simply can't solve the grid. Right? This government can't do it on its own. I don't disagree. But the money has to come from the federal government. So, where's the money? Where's the plan?

And we've heard some of the same refrains. It's interesting. In Question Period, the NDP made it out of one question of not being included in the refrain, but we got wrapped back in by question 3. The minister has been here — the Premier's been here for a long time. He was previously — well, no, he wasn't here in 2016, so that was a different thing. But the Yukon Party at that time was blamed by the then-Liberal government about all the inaction and the problems and the things that they had inherited, and here we are a decade later and I get to hear it from a different colour telling the other colour that it's all their fault and this is where we are. That's not the truth. Things come up, decisions are made, and priorities are decided on.

It's almost a year that this government has been in government, that this government has been in power. There's no more: We're new. The second that spring budget was tabled and priorities were made and money was put to forward to, like, to — money was put on the table. That doesn't work anymore. We're in your priorities. Take \$500,000 from youth mental health — \$500,000 to open up placer mining roads weeks ahead of the scheduled time.

No funding for a full-time shop teacher in Dawson City — for a government that says that they support trades. I don't know who else in this room remembers the smell of the metal shop and remembers that smell as a safe place, but Mr. Romanczak was my grade 10 shop teacher, and I loved that place. I loved it. And when I was at Robert Service School and I got to see my friend Peter doing his thing and I understood how much that program mattered to that school, to all of the kids, to that entire community — but you know what's not a priority for this government? Funding that position. And I think that's where it shows the disconnect. It shows the disconnect. It shows the separation between the person who is not sure how they're going to afford to live next month, who's afraid about the future. It shows the disconnect from communities who say: This is what we need.

It shows the disconnect when I think about Beaver Creek, which has been without a nursing station at this point for probably just about 100 days — it will be 121 days by the end of October. What does that mean for that community? And hard things have happened in the last number of months up there. Hard things have happened. So, not only is this government out of touch with Yukoners, but it doesn't appear to be making any effort to get in touch with Yukoners.

According to the briefing calendar we've been given, there's at least five pieces of legislation that will be introduced, but there's only been public engagement on one piece of legislation that we know, which is firearms. Today's legislation on changes to the workers' health and safety or workers' compensation — I can't remember what it's called anymore — I mean, in all fairness, there's been lots of work on it so far, so I'm less concerned about that. But the Premier indicated that there's going to be changes to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. Where was the engagement on that? When did tenants get to say how it affects them?

So, we think about this legislation that we've been told is coming — well, we know there are five pieces — and we wonder about that public engagement. Then I think about the stuff that I know or what's coming and then I ask the government: How many Yukoners would have prioritized it? Some, for sure. Probably not as many as the folks, the numbers of people who are having to access the food bank right now to make ends meet. Probably not nearly as many as people who are tenants and who are worried about what the future has.

So, again, budgets are all about priorities. Budgets are all about priorities. So, I think about the things that I don't see. Where's the supports for youth in the middle of a mental health crisis? Where's the support for schools that ran really critically important programs? Where's the support for businesses who have to pay electricity bills? Where's the support for farms who also need electricity to make their operations run? So, there's a lot of gaps. There's a lot of gaps. A lot of opportunity — maybe we'll see some changes — an opportunity, hopefully, for us to

have ATCO here as witnesses — that would be great — an opportunity to right some wrongs, definitely an opportunity to ask questions.

I thank you for the opportunity to respond to this supplementary budget. I'll have a lot of questions as we go forward.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I rise today to speak on Bill No. 204, the *Second Appropriation Act 2026-27*.

I will be voting no at Second Reading. This minor supplementary budget is a small addition to the plans laid before the Legislature in the spring. I voted against that budget, and on first glance, there is nothing new before us today that would change my vote to a yes. I will have more to say on the budget in a few minutes.

Public service is a privilege. It is also a serious responsibility. It is about making choices that reflect the real needs of communities, not just political ambitions or campaign slogans. And it is about being clear, honest, and accountable to Yukoners today and for the years to come. I was reminded of that again and again in the recent months.

This summer, I was pleased to spend a majority of my time in my home riding being with the people that I represent, being accountable for the work I did on their behalf over my first six months as an MLA. I spent that time gathering information about their priorities for the days ahead, and I intend to share that with the government over the next two months. While I was home, I can't say that I saw a member of the government in my community. I would love to be corrected, but I don't believe a member of the government has been to Old Crow since the election.

The Premier did take note recently that the Prime Minister hasn't been to the Yukon since he was elected, and I would like the Premier to know that the constituents in Old Crow have been inquiring as to why our community has not seen the Premier visit yet since our election last fall. So, we are looking forward to an upcoming visit.

I'm grateful for my community of constituents and those who reach out on a regular basis to share ideas and bring their concerns forward — which leads me to touch on just a few items. This summer, we had a tragic house fire. It was all-hands-on-deck with pumps and hoses to the river. Thankfully, that house is right on the edge of the Porcupine River. We're thankful that the grandmother, her son, and four grandchildren got out safely within seconds. It was pretty scary. At this point, we have a meagre SSRU. Members are discouraged to join, because we have a fire truck that's being decommissioned this year, so we can't train properly. And we also lost our community van that burnt up in the fire. It was parked beside that house. It was the only vehicle that had the space to roll in a stretcher.

A huge concern for our constituents are the overdoses, substance use, the dealers, the dealers who are having free flow through all the northern communities, because all our airports up there are not designated airports, so there's no security. It's something we really need to work with CATSA about.

My constituents are concerned about the lack of EAs in the school, as we've seen such a rise nationwide of children with disabilities and autism. In Old Crow, these children are not able to attend school.

Constituents are worried about the main road along the river, the one that's eroding that I brought up last fall and in the spring. There seems to be a makeshift solution going on right now, but I haven't seen any more progress other than some grass being cut.

On a positive note, I was happy to meet with lots of my colleagues at Moosehide and hear from constituents in Dawson as well. It was nice to see my colleagues cooking bannock outside my family martin cabin there at Moosehide. It surprised me, but I was so happy, though.

I attended the CYFN GA in Burwash, and there was leadership from my community and also constituents who showed up for that. It was wonderful to hear from some of the new chiefs on their priorities and concerns for the Yukon.

I've also just met recently with our current chief and council and went over a whole list of priorities that they would like me to bring forward as they end their term and we welcome in the new chief and council with their swearing-in date of October 23.

To be honest, I'm surprised to be here this fall debating a supplementary budget given the commitments the Premier had made to Yukoners on page 5 of his budget speech on March 19. In the spring, the Premier vowed that his government would not be relying on supplementary budget requests in the fall. He went on to say, "Unlike previous years when the budget would say one thing and Public Accounts would show a dramatically different picture, what I have tabled today is our budget for the year. We will ask departments to address emerging fiscal pressures by finding areas where they can reduce spending. They will need to live within our means as responsible stewards of our territory's finances." Fast-forward to today and we are debating a supplementary budget with new spending.

The budget contains additional funding for forest fires and floods, and I think all Yukoners can agree that we did get off lightly this summer, and that is reflected in the low number for fire costs. But sadly, we were surrounded this summer by fires in Alaska, NWT, and British Columbia. The supplementary tells a similar story with regard to floods, with only \$400,000 needed to cover unanticipated costs from flooding, and let's hope this continues.

Budget decisions begin with the economy, because they affect every Yukoner, every family, every small business. During last year's election, the Yukon Party promised to unleash the private sector and grow our economy. Yet this budget update tells a different story. Budget documents released yesterday say our GDP in 2026 has been revised downward from 1.2-percent growth to just 0.2 percent. GDP has also been revised down in 2027 from 2.6 percent to just one percent. The forecast for the unemployment rate in 2026 is up from 4.5 percent to 5.3 percent, and the next year has also been downgraded. The latest monthly employment numbers in the Yukon show that 400 new private sector jobs have been added since this government came to office in 2025. Over that same period, a thousand new jobs have appeared in the public sector.

Another economic concern this budget update doesn't address is the cost of living. The government has options. Reduce the fuel tax, for example. Live up to its promise to roll back electricity rates. I have a similar story. A few elders in Old Crow have been consistently asking me on a regular basis if the government be helping with their high bills and all the

misbilling that took place. Some of these elders were forfeiting buying groceries to make sure that their electric bill was not cut off. They were so worried.

We are leading the country, and cost-of-living increases are double the national average. The cost-of-living issue is literally worse here than anywhere else in Canada in the last 12 months, and there are no new initiatives in the budget update before us to address the problem.

I am very pleased, though, to see revenues from the oil activity in the Beaufort finally showing up in the Yukon's bottom line. This transfer of royalties from Canada has been in the works for the last several years, and I do want to thank Clarke LaPrairie in the Department of Finance for this work on this file and getting it across the finish line.

If we want to talk about how a budget impacts the community, there is no clearer example than health care. The health authority was created together: Yukon First Nations, public servants, health professionals, and community members. It was built to improve care for everyone. This government's top health care priority when it came to office was to dismantle the health authority. It was not a promising start, and things haven't improved much since then. Over the summer, we learned the government had quietly cut the baby basket program for new mothers. These were the first priorities of the new government.

The first issue I raised this Sitting was the lack of progress and the broken promises from this government regarding the Whitehorse shelter. Another issue raised on day one was the frequent closure of rural nursing stations. The Yukon Party made quite a lot of promises to rural Yukoners about these facilities, and as the Leader of the Official Opposition said, many rural Yukoners believe the situation has gotten worse and not better over the time the Yukon Party has been in office.

I am also looking forward to the Yukon Hospital Corporation appearing as witnesses this fall so we can discuss the hospital expansion project. This is the project the government committed to in their election platform, with no idea or plan to fund it.

I'm also happy to see there is new funding to work on protected areas. However, I've not seen any details on what that will entail, so I will have some questions in general debate on what that work is and whether any progress is being made on the IPCA proposed by the Kaska and the national park potentially taking shape north of Mayo. This is important work, and I hope to hear that progress is being made.

The same goes for progress on new mineral legislation and the approval of the Dawson land use plan. These are two key steps in creating certainty and allowing both development and conservation to move forward in this territory. But again, despite promises otherwise, they remain unresolved, and Yukoners have heard no news of any real progress. While the rest of the country seems to be charging forward, embracing the moment to envision a bold future and take action to build that future, we in the Yukon are stuck waiting for the real change this government promised on their platform.

As I review the updated spending plans of this government, it raises the same questions I posed back in the spring: Whose priorities are being served? Are decisions transparent and accountable? Do they reflect the needs of communities today and for the future? And most importantly, are we meeting our

First Nation partners at each table and working alongside them from the beginning to the end?

Yukoners deserve budgets that prioritize community impact, long-term planning, and transparency. Given the plan is essentially the same one we voted on in the spring, I will be voting no at Second Reading. I will continue to bring forward the perspectives of my community in Old Crow and the perspectives of communities across the territory to every review of this budget and all future decisions. Yukoners deserve leadership that listens, acts, and plans for the long term.

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I just have a quick response today for the Department of Community Services and the expenditures in the supplementary budget. I'd like to thank the members of this Legislature for the opportunity to present these numbers. The Department of Community Services is responsible for much of the emergency response in Yukon, and this is a big portion of the amounts in this budget, so I just wanted to very quickly go over that.

The estimates before us consist of a \$10.8 million increase in operation and maintenance. This is a transfer from the voted contingency from last year. As we know, in the springtime, we need to plan for what we're doing as the summer rolls out. Of course, we were lucky this summer, thank goodness, not as unlucky as our nearby neighbours. But we did not have an incredibly active fire season or flood season, so our numbers were not as extreme as they have been in the past. That was the purpose of the contingency — to be able to deal with this emergency spending. We knew it was going to happen; we did not know how much it was going to be.

So, at the end of the season, at this point in time, it's \$10.8 million. It was used to protect homes and critical infrastructure from the impacts of wildfires and floods. During the spring and summer, the department used these funds to help keep communities safe. Wildland Fire Management used \$10.4 million to accomplish critical work of protecting Yukoners from wildfire. EMO used \$410,000 to assist the Village of Teslin with preparing for and responding to high-water impacts in their community.

The money also covers expenses related to spring and summer incident response, including the activations of the Emergency Coordination Centre. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Yukon staff across all departments who answer the call when emergency coordination centres are activated. I'd also like to acknowledge the communications staff members who put their names forward to be on an emergency on-call roster day or night and are ready to communicate important information to Yukoners.

Wildfires are, of course, unpredictable, and the true cost of protecting people and their properties cannot be known until the season ends, as I said. The additional funds reflect the significant efforts of Wildland Fire Management to contain fire activity near Yukon communities. As of September, the Yukon saw 85 wildfires this season, with 6,310 hectares burned. As a member of the Canadian Inter-agency Forest Fire Centre, the Northwest Compact crews from the Yukon answered the call to help partner agencies suppress wildfires in British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Ontario, Parks Canada, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska. We rely on these external resources in situations where the fire risk grows beyond our capacity to respond. In return, we proudly support our partners.

National collaboration and resource-sharing are fundamental to the Yukon's wildland fire approach. The Department of Community Services will recover \$2.9 million from sending our wildfire crews to other jurisdictions.

I encourage this Legislative Assembly to join me in thanking Protective Services and its staff for their dedication to protecting Yukoners in emergency situations.

Justin Ziegler: Je vais commencer par une confiance. I will start with a confidence.

You probably remember the day we debated the motion to respect the results of the plebiscite on electoral reform. I have to admit, I went home and I cried. And this is not one of my communication tools. I don't cry, but that day, I did. We had lost the vote, of course, and in this job — especially in Opposition — you must learn quickly how to lose a vote. But that's not why I cried. I cried because of what I had heard that afternoon. One after another, my colleagues stood up and spoke with their hearts about trust, about people who feel their vote disappears, about what democracy could look like in this territory. It was intelligent. It was generous, and honestly, it was beautiful.

Then the Premier spoke, and then nobody else did. Not one other member of the government stood up. When the time came, they all voted the same way. This Assembly has no official whip. Every one of those members was free to stand up and speak, and so I cried because I wanted to hear them too. I wish they had felt they could speak from their own perspective even if it was different from mine — actually, especially if it was different from mine.

Yukoners had spoken through that plebiscite. They deserved an answer from the people they elected in their own words. Instead, they got silence. And silence in a debate about democracy says a lot about how seriously democracy is taken. And that afternoon, Yukoners were let down.

I want to be sincere about this. I cried because I wanted to hear them too. They were elected for their voices the same as I was, and I wanted to know what each of them believes about how Yukoners choose the people who represent them. That afternoon, those voices were lost. Now, everything has a price. In fact, this is the only thing this government can talk about: dollars. And speaking of price, words have one too, and we now know this: \$15,000 for the Throne speech, \$9,000 for the budget speech — \$24,000 of words, and so many of those words were the same: There is no money.

I don't want to be unfair. Saying there is no money convincingly so many times in a row must be hard work. Actually, it is so hard that it costs thousands of dollars. Les mots que nous prononçons dans cette Chambre ne restent pas dans cette Chambre. Ils voyagent. Ils arrivent dans les bureaux des organismes, dans les réunions des conseils d'administration, dans les cuisines des bénévoles, des Yukonaises et des Yukonnais. Those words do not stay in this Chamber. They travel. They arrive in the offices of organizations, at board meetings, in the kitchens of volunteers and Yukoners.

Since I was elected, I have met with many organizations — arts groups, community groups, non-profits — that hold this territory together with very little. And I've noticed something that worries me more than any line in this budget: They have stopped asking. When I ask them what they need, they

apologize first. They tell me they know times are hard. They cut their request in half before they even make it. Some would rather not ask at all, because they are afraid it will be held against them. They judge their own needs as too much in front of a government that keeps telling them there is nothing left.

In December during the electoral reform debate, I said in this Chamber that this is how people stop voting. I had no idea they would also stop asking. The minister may ask me to name them. I won't. The fact that they don't want to be named tells this House everything. Tell a story often enough and people start living inside it. A story of scarcity makes people small. It makes them tired. It makes them feel guilty for having needs. That is a cost too, and you won't find it anywhere in these estimates.

This week, the Premier told us the fiscal picture has improved. I'm glad. I hope someone will tell the organizations that stopped asking, because for a year, the only thing they heard from this government was that there is no money. Take the Old Fire Hall, a place that matters to so many artists and community groups in this city. Nobody knows what will happen to it. I asked the question publicly. I actually asked this question right here. More silence, and the people who depend on that building are left to guess.

Last December, I quoted Aimé Césaire in this Chamber. I promised that my mouth would be the mouth of the adversity that has no mouth. Ma bouche sera la bouche des malheurs qui n'ont pas de bouche. So, today, I want to report back. I want to bring some voices into this room. That friend who told me what the senior income supplement debacle meant for the seniors living through it. The neighbour who told me about Meals on Wheels, a service some of our neighbours count on for a hot meal. The mother who worries about the children walking to school on the streets of Riverdale. The friends of mine who talked to me about FASSY and the people it supports. That person who explained to me with a lot of patience everything that makes the workplace inaccessible for some employees of this government — of this government. And my two new friends and all the neighbours who will spend another winter beside diesel generators in Riverdale, because the deadline for noise mitigation was pushed back by one more winter. When you live next to that noise, the night is long — very long. Each of them did exactly what citizens are supposed to do: They spoke up; most of them actually apologized for it. The least this government can do is listen and answer.

Et j'aimerais maintenant vous parler dans ma langue, une fois n'est pas coutume, celle dans laquelle je pense, celle dans laquelle j'ai appris à aimer, à danser, à me mettre en colère. Chaque jour dans cette Chambre, j'écoute, je traduis dans ma tête, je cherche le mot juste dans une langue qui n'est pas la mienne. Je ne m'en plains pas. Mais je sais ce que cela coûte. Et je pense à toutes celles et à tous ceux qui ne se présenteront jamais, parce qu'ils ont peur de ne pas être compris et de ne pas suffisamment comprendre. I just wanted to say this in my own language — the language I think in, the one I learn to love in, to dance in, to get angry in.

Each day in this Chamber, I listen, I translate in my head, I search for the right word in a language that is not mine. I'm not complaining about this at all, but I know what it costs, and I think of everyone outside of this Chamber who will never run

for office because they are afraid of not being understood or afraid of not understanding enough.

This year, I met parliamentarians from across the country — francophones who sit in Assemblies where their language is a minority, queer MLAs who know what it is to be only a few of us in the room. For the first time since I was elected, I sat with people who looked like me, sounded like me, and needed nothing explained. Many of them told me that they are ready to support the Yukon and its francophonie. I came home lighter. I came home stronger. Et je veux le dire clairement, parler français dans cette Chambre n'enlève rien à ma légitimité. Je suis légitime que cette salle me comprenne ou non. Let me say it clearly: Speaking French in this Chamber takes nothing away from my legitimacy. I am legitimate whether or not this room understands me. And the same is true for anyone who would stand here and speak Gwich'in, Hän, Kaska, Northern Tutchone, Southern Tutchone, Tagish, Tlingit, or Upper Tanana. These languages were spoken on this land long before this building existed. As we heard in the tributes yesterday and as we should never forget, these are languages that were taken from children by force.

A language that is not heard is a language that slowly disappears. An Assembly that cannot hear the language of its own land has a choice to make. I have chosen my hill. Languages is a hill I will stand on. I have no plans to die on it. I plan to stay standing for a very long time. This is my commitment: I will work with every member willing to work with me. The next generation of candidates should never have to wonder whether their English is good enough to serve their community. I will keep speaking in English, in French, for the people who stopped asking and for the ones who never started. And I have a challenge for the members opposite: Speak. Once this Sitting, stand up and tell us what you believe — not what was written somewhere in Alberta or by someone upstairs, not the line about there being no money — what you believe. I promise I will listen. I might even cry, but I will listen.

In December last year, I ended up quoting Léon Gontran Damas. He wrote that what we were about to do was — and I quote: “Beau, beau comme l’accent aigu d’un appel dans la nuit longue”. Et aujourd’hui, je pense à cette nuit longue. Elle a des visages, le visage de ceux qui passeront encore un hiver à entendre les générateurs gronder, les organismes qui n’osent plus appeler, les langues que cette Chambre n’a pas encore appris à entendre. Cette nuit, il y a des appels. Mon travail, notre travail, à tous, c’est d’y répondre fort comme l’accent aigu d’un appel dans la nuit longue. That says: ...strong like the sharp accent of a call in the long night. These are words from Aimé Césaire: Today, I think about that long night. It has faces. The faces of those who will hear the generators rumble through another winter, the organization that no longer dared to call, the languages this Chamber has not yet learned to hear. There are calls in that night, and my job — the job of every one of us — is to answer them strong like the sharp accent of a call in the long night.

Carmen Gustafson: I appreciate a few moments to speak to this bill and just share some reflections on some things that I’ve learned and some things that I’ve heard since my time being elected.

I appreciate that the Premier noted his time in Opposition yesterday and understanding the challenges of the position. I

find as a former public servant like some others in this Chamber, it’s challenging in the Opposition to not really be in the know about what’s going on. I think that’s something that I’m sure everyone who spent time in Opposition can appreciate, so I was very grateful to the ministers who took time to meet with us as well as some briefings that we’ve had with departmental staff over the summer so we can better understand the challenges that the public service faces in responding to some truly difficult situations.

This summer, I also spent time, like a lot of people here, with Yukoners and listening to their issues. My objective was and always will be to learn as much as I could, and I commit to continuing to learn. I think that’s one of the most rewarding parts of our role here and I’m grateful for the ability we have to take the time to go out to listen and to learn. I don’t think it’s just a perk of the job; it’s a necessity; it’s a core function of our roles. Sometimes, that means stepping out of our echo chambers and from time to time talking to people we don’t usually talk to or may not be on our radar. It may be that my optimism is showing, but I maintain that Yukoners agree on more than we disagree on. We care about each other; we care about the land and the water; and we want our territory to be the best it can be. How we get there and the things we prioritize are probably where we’re going to disagree from time to time.

Now I’m into the part of my notes that are in my own handwriting, so I do apologize — this could get a bit rough. From talking to Yukoners this summer, there were some things that I’m hoping to hear more about during this Sitting. Some of them require a lot of public input; a lot of them require working cooperatively with First Nation governments, so I’m not expecting that we’ll see the conclusion of a lot of these things, but they are some topics that I will be hoping to hear more about.

Of course, the first one is the co-development of minerals legislation in partnership with Yukon First Nations. We’ve also heard a lot in the capital budget and from questions about just improving our basic infrastructure and services. I have to say, after driving to Dawson this summer — and then I drove all the way up to the Dalton Highway bridge in Alaska and then in the early fall, I went down to visit my family in BC who lives in an area not usually known for the quality of their highways. Driving in BC was a much more pleasant experience, particularly the section of road outside of Beaver Creek on the Alaska Highway — I was shocked at the condition of that highway from the last time I had been out there. I appreciate that a lot of work was done this year and there is money for more work on our highways, but I think that is important to keep in mind.

As well, our electricity and energy systems — we hear a lot about it and I know there are incredible challenges in maintaining and improving our electricity infrastructure. We also have to continue to consider climate resilience in our infrastructure. From recent reports, climate warming is only happening faster, and it’s here, so we need to be resilient to that.

Of course, my colleague talked today about the collective agreement with the Yukon Employees’ Union. We need to make sure that we ensure that public servants are going to stay in their roles so that they can continue to do what they do best. I am also looking forward to hearing more about how we’re going to improve access to services for Yukoners who rely on

them. So, making it easier for families of medically complex children to care for their families so that they have the things that they need to make their homes safe and to be able to provide the care that their children need — ensuring that we can get the medical care we need when we need it, particularly for women and gender-diverse individuals who are facing challenges accessing services that are for their needs. We also need to make government processes easier to navigate for vulnerable Yukoners.

I'm looking forward to hearing about increasing opportunities for youth employment to encourage Yukon youth to see a future for them here. My partner's son went off to Switzerland for the summer, and we recently cancelled his return flight because he decided that he would like to stay in Switzerland. And one of the things that he talked about was: Oh, it really sounds like my friends who stayed home don't really have jobs lined up. They're finding it really hard to find work. So, I'm going to stay in Switzerland. Also, the chocolate, cheese, and skiing are really good in Switzerland, so that may have something to do with it.

Another priority is addressing out-of-reach housing costs. We've heard about investments for Yukon housing but also about market housing and protecting renters. Climate change planning — I don't really see anything about that here. So, I'm sure we'll be asking questions about how the new climate change plan is going. Climate change hasn't gone away, and as I referenced earlier, we're looking at probably increased impacts from climate change.

Another priority is making sure that we don't leave anybody behind. Social assistance and disability support sometimes don't allow people to live dignified lives, and they keep or put people into precarious poverty situations. We can't leave any Yukoners behind when we're talking about economic prosperity and development and the things that we're doing to improve our territory. So, one of the things that I'm struck by, though, is — when I talk to people, when I talk in our briefings, and when I listen to the government as well — is that even though it feels like our problems here are very heavy and very big, they're also so solvable when you compare us to other jurisdictions. We're not a lot of people. We're not looking at the kinds of dollar figures that other jurisdictions are looking at, and we're also not alone. The challenges we face are felt around the world. We have similar challenges to other jurisdictions. We have friends and allies to look to for solutions to work on things together.

I see the good work being done by Yukon First Nation governments, organizations, and development corporations in areas like education, housing, land stewardship, justice, and health. There's much to learn from the leadership of Yukon First Nations, their innovation in solving today's issues while honouring their knowledge, laws, and ways of being.

I hope that while we're trying to solve these big issues, we look to our friends, we work together where we can work together, we have this healthy debate where we disagree on some things but that we keep at heart the things that we do agree on as Yukoners about improving our territory, about not leaving anybody behind, and protecting our natural assets.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Currie Dixon: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to close debate at Second Reading of Bill No. 204, the *Second Appropriation Act 2026-27*. I appreciate the comments from my colleagues from both sides of the floor and look forward to getting into debate in Committee of the Whole throughout the course of the next little while and getting on with further debate.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Scott Kent: Agree.

Hon. Cory Bellmore: Agree.

Hon. Brad Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Linda Benoit: Agree.

Hon. Ted Laking: Agree.

Patti McLeod: Agree.

Hon. Laura Lang: Agree.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: Agree.

Hon. Wade Istchenko: Agree.

Adam Gerle: Agree.

Doris Anderson: Agree.

Tyler Porter: Agree.

Kate White: Disagree.

Lane Tredger: Disagree.

Brent McDonald: Disagree.

Linda Moen: Disagree.

Carmen Gustafson: Disagree.

Justin Ziegler: Désaccord.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Disagree.

Clerk: Madam Speaker, the results are 13 yea, seven nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for Second Reading of Bill No. 204 agreed to

Bill No. 205, *Third Appropriation Act 2025-26* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second Reading, Bill No. 205, standing in the name of the Hon. Currie Dixon.

Hon. Currie Dixon: I move that Bill No. 205, *Third Appropriation Act 2025-26*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 205, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2025-26*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Currie Dixon: I rise today to speak to Bill No. 205, also known as the *Third Appropriation Act 2025-26* or *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* for the previous fiscal year. To be clear, this appropriation covers the 2025-26 fiscal year and not the current 2026-27 fiscal year. My remarks for this appropriation will be brief, as the appropriation itself is concise and largely administrative in nature.

The total amount to be voted as a part of this appropriation is \$949,000 in capital expenditures. This amount resides entirely within the Yukon Development Corporation's budget and would bring the \$11.78 million voted to date to \$12.73 million. The reason I refer to this as an administrative exercise is that this amount is fully recoverable through the federal Investing in Canada infrastructure program or ICIP.

The funding and associated recovery claims relate primarily to eligible expenditures associated with the Sâdeq initiative, or the Watson Lake Solar Project, along with a smaller amount related to the Battery Energy Storage System project. These are approved energy infrastructure projects supported through existing federal funding programs. The minister responsible can provide more specific details on these projects and answer any questions members may have as necessary during Committee of the Whole.

The need for this supplementary appropriation is due to a misalignment between the timing of the expenditures incurred in the 2025-26 fiscal financial year and spending authority for the identified recoverable capital projects. The required spending authority has already been granted through a Management Board directive. The *Financial Administration Act* requires that any amount paid under the authority of that directive must be submitted to the Legislative Assembly as part of an appropriation bill at the next Sitting of the Assembly. As a result, this appropriation act and estimates need to be tabled at this Sitting.

Because these projects are fully recoverable through a federal program, this appropriation has no net impact on the government's overall fiscal position, including its surplus or deficit position. Importantly, the expenditures that have been incurred have not and will not be borne by Yukon taxpayers. Rather, this appropriation aligns the spending authority with the appropriations for the 2025-26 financial year to ensure compliance with all applicable financial authorities.

There is no new policy being proposed here, nor is there any change to the government's fiscal outlook. Bill No. 205 is a straightforward supplementary appropriation for the 2025-26 fiscal year. It formalizes expenditures by the Yukon Development Corporation from the consolidated revenue fund.

With that, I'll conclude my remarks and look forward to the bill receiving consideration by the House.

Kate White: Today, in speaking to *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*, I'll just note that we got a great briefing from the Department of Finance the other day. I appreciate the Premier's words today, but often when we get to this point, the money has already been spent, it has been moved around, it's passed, and we're moving into the future.

So, I thank the Premier for his statements, and we look forward to getting on with it.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I rise today to speak to Bill No. 205, the *Third Appropriation Act 2025-26*. As the Premier noted, the bill contains only two items for the Yukon Development Corporation, and the spending is 100-percent recoverable from Canada.

One of the items is the battery energy storage project. In the spring, the minister informed Yukoners that the project was damaged over the last winter. The future viability of the project is still unknown, and I'll have several questions about that project when we get to debate on this line.

By the end of the month, the government will be releasing the Public Accounts for the 2025-26 fiscal year, and so I am curious to see what the Auditor General will have to say about the Yukon Development Corporation exceeding its vote authority, because that usually is considered a violation of the *Financial Administration Act*.

Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I look forward to providing further information in Committee of the Whole on this bill, and I look forward to bringing it to a vote at Second Reading.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Agree.

Hon. Cory Bellmore: Agree.

Hon. Scott Kent: Agree.

Hon. Brad Cathers: Agree.

Hon. Linda Benoit: Agree.

Hon. Ted Laking: Agree.

Patti McLeod: Agree.

Hon. Laura Lang: Agree.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: Agree.

Hon. Wade Istchenko: Agree.

Adam Gerle: Agree.

Doris Anderson: Agree.

Tyler Porter: Agree.

Kate White: Disagree.

Lane Tredger: Disagree.

Brent McDonald: Disagree.

Linda Moen: Disagree.

Carmen Gustafson: Disagree.

Justin Ziegler: Désaccord.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Disagree.

Clerk: Madam Speaker, the results are 13 yea, seven nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for Second Reading of Bill No. 205 agreed to

Hon. Scott Kent: Madam 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: Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 203, *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*.

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. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the interim capital appropriation, better known as the fall capital budget, in Committee of the Whole. I'll begin by welcoming Deputy Minister Jason Bilsky from the Department of Finance, who has joined me here to support providing answers to questions that members may have.

I attempted to use my speaking notes and speech at Second Reading to convey some of the details that members will find in the details of the fall capital budget. I will note that we are at general debate, so I will leave ministers responsible for the individual lines to provide more detailed responses to specific questions members may have about the individual departments themselves. But I'm more than happy to respond to questions from members about the bill generally, the process that went into its creation, some of the decision-making around it, and any questions otherwise that members may have.

As I've noted in my Second Reading speech and others have noted as well, this is the first time we've had a fall capital budget in over 25 years, and I think the novel nature of it means that there could be some more process-based questions around its creation as well. So, I look forward to whatever questions members may have.

Kate White: I forgot my mobile phone, so I couldn't be sure, but I feel like if it's been 25 years, then it means every member in this Chamber hasn't had a chance, including the Member for Lake Laberge.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Kate White: Oh, okay. Others — there hasn't. Okay, so one person in the Chamber has had the chance — the Minister of Education. So, for the rest of us, it's a novel and brave new world. Like I said in my response, I think, in all my time here, this has been something that I've heard from the construction industry and others about — if the planning could be done ahead of time, then it means that when construction season was finally able to start, that this could happen. And so I do appreciate it.

My first question is: How did government lay this out for this time around? How did the Department of Finance work with departments to prioritize what their projects would be for this these fall capital estimates?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

The creation of the fall capital budget is one of a suite of budgetary reforms that we have brought in over the last year,

which includes the creation of the voted contingency through amendments to the *Financial Administration Act*, the initiation of the responsible spending initiative, the red tape reduction initiative, and, of course, the changes we made with regard to our debt cap. The broad suite makes up a collection of reforms that we brought in to try to address the fiscal situation that we find ourselves in.

When it comes to the specifics of the fall capital budget, it was something that we had identified around the time of the spring budget, and in the course of that work, we began planning for it earlier in the year and then planned to do it. We did it a bit differently than was done in 2001 when it was done by a previous government. At that time, they had used the entirety of their capital budget in the fall appropriation. In this case, we decided that we would not bite off the entirety of the capital budget. Rather, we would select a number of projects and then bring it forward as a component of the budget. So, it would become a complement to the spring budget, not a replacement for the spring budget.

Once that decision was made that we would go ahead with that, we put a call out to all departments. The Department of Finance led that work and did a call out to all departments to provide ideas or proposals for items that could be considered in a prospective fall capital budget. A number of departments responded, and from the list that was provided to Finance, Finance conducted an initial review which occurred at the technical level to decide which projects fit the parameters outlined in our concept of what a fall capital budget would be to fit the parameters for what we wanted to see, which was projects that would benefit from early design, planning, tendering, and procurement processes.

We can get into some of that, but ultimately, that call out went to all departments. Finance obviously filtered in some departments not knowing exactly what was intended because this is a new process, submitted things that we didn't think fit, and so the department would have filtered those out. Ultimately, once a recommended list was included or was developed, it came to Management Board for approval. Management Board considered it, and the end product was the bill that we see before us today.

The criteria generally that we wanted to see was projects that had some sort of seasonality to them or would benefit from an earlier tendering period. The kinds of projects that we're talking about tend to be more construction based. So, you see a heavy emphasis on Highways and Public Works, Community Services, and Yukon Housing as sort of the primary ones. There are additional ones in Education as well. Some of the capital projects that other departments would have typically used are for the purchase of things like computers or office equipment. Those types of things weren't deemed to be eligible for this. We didn't think that there was a need for early tendering for those types of things, and so those types of ongoing — while capitalized or well considered capital — didn't fit the parameters for what we wanted for this capital budget. So, that was the general parameter or scope that we used to create it. And I'm happy to. I hope I have answered the member's question.

Kate White: Thanks to the Premier for that answer. And so referencing the last being done in 2001 — I think it was a Liberal government at the time — and mentioning that was

their entire capital budget — so, knowing that we have this \$138.8 million in front of us, what percentage is this expected to be of the government's capital budget in the spring?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I can't actually say, because we haven't put together the capital budget for the spring yet, and so it's impossible to provide a precise answer to that question. But when you look at the general trend that we've seen over the last number of years, the capital budget has ranged from somewhere between \$300- to \$500 million over the last five or six years. So, this budget is \$138 million. You can take an estimate roughly of where that fits in the broader capital plan, but that's the most I could probably say to that question.

Kate White: I'm just going to think — based on those numbers, we're talking about one-third. In the briefing — and I mentioned this in my response and maybe got some eyebrows on the other side. I'm just looking for confirmation or maybe clarification. It's my understanding that even as we go through the debate for this and this gets passed, the money is not available until April 1, 2027. Can the Premier let me know if I'm correct in that understanding?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The money cannot be spent. What can happen from now until April 1 is that the department can begin planning, the department can begin procurement processes, they can even put products or projects out to tender, and I believe they even in some cases will be able to award contracts, but they can't pay against those contracts for work done to those contracts until the new budget year.

We still have obligations around timing with regard to the budget year, but this allows the government, for one, the certainty to proceed with the procurement and the private sector on the other side to know that the procurement is coming and to see it advancing through the government's system. What we're hoping to do is have a bit of a schedule internal to government at least to lay out the tendering plans for the projects that are set out in this. That'll be easier for some projects than others. The bigger ones are easier to wrap your head around, because they're large numbers, but some of the smaller projects that will happen within an envelope that is assigned to a department will be more challenging and more subject to change. But for the most part, I think that we'll be able to chart out a path between here and the spring, the end of the budget year, as to when and how we can get these projects out.

Kate White: Thank you for that explanation. In looking at these projects, when a person looks at these, myself included, are these concrete commitments — like, every one of these things in this capital estimate will happen or is there flexibility or fluidity or will there — is there the possibility of rearrangement, for example, within departments if priorities change? I'm just trying to get a sense of if this is written in stone or if there's still a pencil and eraser at play here.

Hon. Currie Dixon: There is flexibility within an envelope, and what I mean by that is that some departments like Highways and Public Works and Community Services have fixed envelopes within which they can make decisions based on their own — the flow of their projects and their budgetary needs within those.

So, there is flexibility within an envelope, but for more discrete projects that are clearly outlined — and I'll give one example just for discussion — the replacement of the Teslin

school roof. That's a discrete line. It's not within a particular envelope, I don't believe, and it's meant to be a stand-alone piece. That's a project that we anticipate going forward on its own.

I would encourage the member to ask individual departments what their plans are within their envelopes. The ability of the department to exercise flexibility exists within those envelopes, but for some discrete or specific projects, there isn't flexibility, and those are projects that, to borrow the member's term, are more concrete.

Kate White: I appreciate some of that explanation ahead of departmental briefings. It's not super helpful, because the one I had today was Health and Social Services, and it's one line, and it's work ahead of the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion. So, it is one item. But I'll note, in the examples that the minister just used within Education, each of those are individual. Whereas if I flip over to Highways and Public Works, when we're talking about envelopes, maybe the example there is — well, it's funny. It says: Core transportation envelope examples of projects include... and so I'm just trying to get a sense. I mean, every item listed in Education is stand-alone. In Highways and Public Works, it says: Core transportation envelope example projects, but then it does talk about Alaska Highway reconstruction and it has kilometres, and so I'm just trying to get a sense. Yes, we'll ask this in our department briefings. Yes, we'll have this when it's brought out, but I'm just trying to get a sense right now of that.

Hon. Currie Dixon: I'll provide information that I have available to me now, but I'll note as well, though, that individual ministers in the departments will be able to dig in at a greater detail than I am able to today.

First of all, on the Whitehorse General Hospital piece, the member is correct — that's an individual line, so that's a project that's going ahead under this appropriation. It's not subject to change within an envelope. That's a discrete line that the hospital will be working on, and the funding that's allocated to it — the \$14.4 million is for preparatory work related to the expansion of the hospital, and the minister can provide further details about that. Roughly, I know that it relates to changes in the parking lot, changes to the water main and the city's water to the facility, and I understand as well some changes to the maternity ward. So, that's the extent of my knowledge about it, and I'll leave the minister to provide further information.

Going through some of the envelopes, I'll start with Community Services. Community Services has an infrastructure development envelope. Before I start listing projects there, I'll simply note that these become more subject to change for the reasons I just said — that these are within envelopes. So, these can be moved around based on the possibility of changes within the department or changes in the community because of a project's trajectory. But they're contemplating \$15 million for the CS infrastructure development envelope for projects including the Mount Lorne water treatment plant, Haines Junction infrastructure phase 4(b), Little Salmon Carmacks FN public works building, the design of the City of Whitehorse fire hall, and the Carmacks DMAF. Each of those have their own discrete line. But again, because of the nature of those projects, they can move up and down or move within that envelope. Moving to the HPW building efficiency program envelope, that's where we'll see a number of some schools included. For instance, there's a planned propane

boiler upgrade and controls upgrade at the J.V. Clark School in Mayo and a propane boiler upgrade at the Porter Creek Secondary School and some other changes to or some smaller projects related to the Young Offenders Facility and the Whitehorse Tourism Business Centre.

In the core transportation infrastructure envelope, that's a total of \$14.54 million, and that includes projects on the Alaska Highway — notably the Shakwak project — a line simply noted as road safety improvements — and again, typically when they have that in an envelope, it's subject to some change. And there's relocation work on the Lewes River bridge south of town.

In the building maintenance envelope, it notes here that there's many projects, but a few of the highlights include the Watson Lake Airport terminal, some site works on the Robert Service School, the Yukon Justice Centre firewall upgrades — that sounds like some changes at that facility. And as I noted in my Second Reading speech, there's a proposal for mechanical upgrades at the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School in Old Crow.

Those projects are the ones that we have noted. There's more than that, and ministers can provide more information about those. I would just note again that those are subject to change within the envelope but not outside the envelope.

Kate White: I appreciate that explanation or additional information from the Premier. I'll just note that the briefing notes that we have — for example, the Shakwak highway rehabilitation is actually under Alaska Highway reconstruction, and then there's an entirely different thing that says "envelope" and it says "core transportation envelope". They're separate, so trying to understand — I mean, it's much easier when you look at HPW and it says "envelope", and it says "examples may include", but my point was that looking at where — that wasn't quite so clear. So, in Education, there's a list of things and Housing, there's a list of things where it doesn't say "examples" or that this is an envelope and it may change. So, I was just trying to get a sense of that.

What kind of work has been done with the business community getting ready for this point, and how will the process be reviewed on the other side? I think it's really important that when we're trying to do something new, we accept that it might work better than we thought, it might work less well than we thought, and there might be really visible areas for improvement or things that should be mirrored in other ways — so, I just want to know how the Department of Finance and then, of course, the departments will review this as we go forward so that by the time we get to next fall, there's a better understanding of what works and what doesn't.

Hon. Currie Dixon: I apologize for the confusion provided by my wonky explanation of the Alaska Highway project there. I would just note that this is the perils of me getting into details of a department where I don't have that information fully at hand. And so, when it comes to any of the specifics, I encourage the member — or any member — to ask questions of the ministers themselves who have the full information for their respective departments. I'll do my best to steer clear of that level of detail lest I get myself into trouble or provide inaccurate information.

When it comes to communications with the contracting community or the business community, there's been general communication. Obviously, we put in our platform that we

intended to move to a fall capital budget, so there was an explicit statement there. And then since then, we've announced plans for how we intend to go that way, and those communications have been public and there have been many conversations at an individual level. Once we got close to this fall capital budget, we began to engage formally, and so the Contractors Association, for instance, was provided a technical briefing prior to the tabling of the budget — not about the contents of the budget, not about the details of individual lines but about what it was, what the fall capital budget is, how it works, and some of the conversation that we're having here today was covered in that material.

Following that, I had a breakfast meeting with the Yukon Contractors Association this morning where I provided further information about the budget now that it had been tabled. And so, again, just further engagement with a long list of businesses and contractors who were members of the Contractors Association. I should say there's also briefings provided for other business organizations, stakeholders, levels of government, and the media that were provided with technical briefings prior to the debate here today.

When it comes to review of the fall capital plan and how we will evaluate it, we haven't set a formal evaluation system in place yet, but we're already thinking about what that's going to look like. Ultimately, what we're trying to do is make sure that these projects get out early, and if we find cases of projects not getting out early or not being realized in the way that we're contemplating now, then we're going to be thinking carefully about why that happened and why they got delayed or whether or not — if it was a fault of our decision-making at the front end to include these projects in the fall capital or if something happened outside of our control with the procurement of it or some other considerations that we — that I can't contemplate right now.

So, we haven't established a clear criteria for review, but we will certainly be reviewing it. We'll be reviewing it as it goes. We'll be reviewing it in the lead-up to the spring budget, and then once April 1 rolls around, we'll have a really good picture of everything that had happened prior to that and whether or not we have any perhaps even cash-flow issues early in the year when we start having to pay a bunch of bills after April 1 for some things. That's possible; we're anticipating some of that, but it all remains to be seen. Because it's the first time we're doing this, there is a general understanding that it's possible that it may be different than we expect, but that's what we're hoping.

So, I'm sure the member would like me to provide a much more detailed explanation of how we intend to review it, but at this point, we haven't finalized that because of the fact that it's just ongoing, and we're going to in some ways see how it goes and evaluate both as we're going and post facto.

Kate White: I thank the Premier for that. I actually didn't want a more detailed evaluation process. I just wanted to know that it's been contemplated that it's going to be ongoing. As I said before and I'll say it again — when things happen the first time maybe and sometimes when they happen the 50th time, if it doesn't work, then it's worth going back and sorting it out, right? And so I understand that what is contemplated right now and what is hoped for — I mean, ultimately, we all hope that it works out on the end. It's important. We're all

dependent on these projects; businesses are dependent on them, so I just wanted to know how that was going to look.

The minister mentioned that there were briefings for others, including media, leading up to the tabling of the fall capital estimates — that bill. Can he give me a list of who was briefed ahead of time?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I will respond to that directly in a moment. But I've just noticed on my phone where Gavin McKenna just got his first career assist and therefore the first point as an NHLer. So, I know that from the applause received in the Legislature today, we can memorialize that moment in Hansard and recognize what we were all doing when Gavin got his first career point as an NHLer.

Turning back to the question that the member asked — just to close the loop on some of the evaluation piece, the deputy minister provided me with a short list, which I think is complementary to what I said earlier. There are several things that we're contemplating by way of evaluation. One is the tender progress, so the progression of the tender process going from the presumed passage of this bill to award; the project spending progress — so exactly how it works from a cash flow and spending perspective; the project completion timelines for these projects; and hopefully absolutely minimal lapses in funding. So, those would be the metrics that we would look at. And then the final piece — and I think it's relevant to what the member just asked — which is industry feedback. We'd want to hear from those doing the work whether this worked, whether it was helpful, and, of course, I would expect we would get feedback from project managers within the Government of Yukon who are handling these files and these projects about whether and how it was helpful or not and whether we need to make changes.

In terms of the briefings, I don't have the list of companies, but the industry briefings — oh, I do have the list of these organizations. The following groups attended the briefing: the Yukon Convention Bureau, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, Yukon Venture Angels, Connective, the Yukon Contractors Association, the Yukon Agricultural Association, the Yukon Chamber of Mines, the Child Development Centre, the Heart of Riverdale Community Centre, and the Safe at Home Society. And it looks like there were multiple representatives from each of those organizations at the meeting. So, the total number was something like twelvish. Then, for media — there were three media that attended the media briefing. I don't have the list, but I think we can probably guess which three it was based on the number of media in this town. Then there was a final one for other levels of government, and I am told there was between 10 and 12 who attended that, mostly Yukon First Nation governments as well as municipalities. There were representatives from the Village of Carmacks, City of Whitehorse, municipality of Haines Junction, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Village of Teslin, Carcross/Tagish First Nation, NNDDC, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government, Tagish Local Advisory Council, Town of Faro, another rep from the CTFN, Teslin Tlingit Council. If I'm repeating myself, it's because there were multiple representatives of that same organization. Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Kluane First Nation, Village of Mayo, Carcross/Tagish First Nation. I don't have names, but those are the organizations that they were representing at the briefing.

Kate White: Can the Premier just tell me when those briefings happened? So, if it was for industry and others and then a separate one for government and media, can I just get the dates of when that was?

Hon. Currie Dixon: They were last week. I'll have to get back to the member on the exact date, but they were provided to members last week. And just to be clear, again, this was briefing not on the content of the budget but on what the fall capital project or budget was and what it was meant to be and so on.

Oh, and all the briefings occurred on September 27, so I was off by a week.

Debra-Leigh Reti: In regard to the hospital expansion, what is the total budget for the hospital expansion project? Officials from the health department told us in a briefing that the cost was around \$1.1 billion. Can the Premier confirm that number?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I cannot confirm that number. I would defer to the Minister of Health and Social Services when we get to that particular line in this budget to provide further information about the budget for the hospital.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I guess I assumed that for such a huge project, the Premier would have that number on hand. What is the timeline for this project?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The timeline for the amount that's in the budget is to go through the procurement process between now and April 1, and then ideally the tendering would occur, as I said, sometime over the winter to allow for the work to begin early in the construction season next year. The \$14.4 million, as I noted, is for preparatory work related to expanding the Whitehorse General Hospital. That's the amount that's in this budget today. If the member is looking for further information about the hospital project, I'll have to defer to the minister.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you for that. What is the plan to finance this project? Is that funding all in place at the moment? Where's the money coming from? Can the Premier provide any documentation that lays out the financing for this project?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The \$14.4 million will be voted on and appropriated by this Legislature if it were to pass in the budget. Beyond that, for further information about the budget, I would have to defer to the minister.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you for that. Just referring to my community of Old Crow, is there a plan to fix that main road that runs along the river in Old Crow as part of this mini capital budget? Or will it be part of the capital budget being introduced next spring?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I can't answer about the upcoming budget in the spring, and when it comes to the specifics of a particular road in Old Crow, I don't have a particular line for it here in the budget today. However, it's possible that in one of the envelopes in Highways and Public Works, the minister may have some information about that. But I'm not aware of it today. If the member would like to ask the minister specifically what's in the particular transportation envelope where roads are typically funded, I would encourage her to ask the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you for that information. Has the Premier been to Old Crow since the election, or have any ministers been to Old Crow since the election?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I have not been to Old Crow since the election.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Why didn't the pre-session community Cabinet tour include a stop in Old Crow? That would have been an opportunity for my community to have input into the bill before us.

Hon. Currie Dixon: The pre-budget or pre-Sitting tour that we conducted throughout the territory occurred during the writ period of the Vuntut Gwitchin, and so once the new chief and councillors are sworn in, I look forward to visiting Old Crow, meeting with Vuntut Gwitchin, and hearing their priorities.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Well, thank you for that answer.

As I'd mentioned before, the constituents of Old Crow have been inquiring and asking — hearing about other communities being visited, and so not only is it chief and council to speak to but also the community of Old Crow.

What consultation was done with Old Crow residents or business owners about this budget and this list of projects?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I'll leave it to individual ministers to comment on their own projects, because I'm not sure exactly whether or not individual projects received any type of consultation. But we didn't do any broad or specific consultation on the budget as a whole. We obviously rely on the ongoing conversation we have with Yukoners, the engagement we have through business organizations, community groups, municipalities, First Nations, and others, but we didn't specifically consult in a capital-C sense with anyone about the creation of the budget.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you for that response. The minister of highways had referenced something about, I believe, the boiler system. I didn't catch that, and I didn't catch it again when the minister was speaking earlier about the project in this budget that's taking place in Old Crow.

Hon. Currie Dixon: As I noted, I don't have the full details on it, and so I'll defer to the Minister of Highways and Public Works, but my understanding is that the Chief Zzeh Gittlit School is having a boiler upgrade at the school, and so that's the limit of the information I have with me today. If the member would like further information, I'd direct her to the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

Debra-Leigh Reti: That concludes my questions.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Madam Chair, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Scott Kent: I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Patti McLeod: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Scott Kent: I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following written question was tabled today:

Written Question No. 4

Department of Economy, Tourism and Culture project funding allocation (MLA Ziegler)