



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 40

1st Session

36th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, October 7, 2026 — 1:00 p.m.

Whitehorse, Yukon

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

Wednesday, October 7, 2026 — 1:00 p.m.

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

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. 12, standing in the name of the Member for Klondike, has been removed from the Order Paper, as the action requested in the motion has been completed in whole or in part.

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 — Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I rise today in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Between 2013 and 2026, 1,923 new cases of cancer were diagnosed in Yukon. Behind every diagnosis is a loved one, a mom, a sister, a daughter, a friend, or a colleague. It affects families in every community. While awareness is important, it must also lead to action. Every detection saves lives, and screening can find breast cancer before symptoms appear.

I want to encourage Yukoners to make the appointment. Don't put it off because you're nervous or because you're busy. We're fortunate to have this care here. I can say from personal experience that we have exceptional health care when it comes to breast cancer awareness, and the staff there can make what will feel like an awkward experience surprisingly comfortable and filled with even laughter. This October, check in with yourself, talk to your health care provider, and encourage people you love to do the same. In honour of those who are touched by breast cancer and to all the survivors, thank you for your advocacy.

Statement — North Klondike Highway

Brent McDonald: The North Klondike Highway is the only road connection to central and northern Yukon. This summer, deep vehicle-damaging potholes and unsafe sudden dips put all highway travellers' safety and Dawson City's reputation as a tourism destination at risk. For all highway travellers, vehicle repairs costing hundreds or many thousands of dollars were a common theme.

For tourists, this experience now shapes how they remembered their long-planned Yukon holiday. No one should have to risk their personal safety or damaging their vehicle simply to reach all communities north of Carmacks on a supposedly government-maintained highway. The North Klondike Highway

should receive the same consistent and timely maintenance that Whitehorse-area highways receive on a regular basis.

Statement — Moccasin mobile outreach

Debra-Leigh Reti: Today, I wanted to use my time to recognize Moccasin mobile outreach. Their work is so important, now more than ever. This CYFN-led initiative is a service that provides clothing, harm reduction, snacks, hot drinks, and emotional and cultural support to some of the most vulnerable members of our community. They also provide harm reduction supplies, and their staff is trained to offer medical aid.

The program has been recognized nationally, earning the harm reduction award. This past May, staff members Laura Hoversland and Madison McKenna were recognized for their outstanding and compassionate service. This program shows how important and valuable it is to have Yukon First Nation-led services available to the members of our community that need them most.

Statement — National Family Week

Adam Gerle: I rise today to recognize National Family Week and the incredibly important role families play in our society. Families come in many forms, reflecting the diversity of our communities. No matter their size, structure, or background, families provide the love, support, and sense of belonging that help people thrive. They are often our first teachers, our strongest supporters, and the people we turn to in times of celebration and challenge.

This week is an opportunity to spend time with loved ones, strengthen connections, and recognize the contributions families make every day. It is also a reminder of the importance of ensuring all families feel supported and have the opportunity to succeed. To families across the Yukon, thank you for all that you do and care for one another to help build strong, healthy, and vibrant communities. Happy National Family Week.

Statement — Social assistance

Kate White: Today, a person receiving social assistance in Whitehorse receives just \$711 for housing, \$562 for fuel and utilities, \$335 for food, and \$72 for incidental expenses. Amounts vary in rural Yukon, but wherever a person lives, these supports are simply not enough to live. Those without stable housing receive hundreds of dollars less, despite often facing the greatest challenges. No one in this Assembly could realistically live on \$1,680 per month. Yet this government expects Yukoners who rely on social assistance to do just that.

Yukoners who rely on these social supports deserve better than the current system. While this government invests in policing the consequences of poverty, it continues to ignore many of its root causes. Poverty creates barriers that make it harder for people to achieve stability and wellness. Yukoners deserve a system that provides dignity, stability, and a reasonable standard of living.

Statement — Fall capital budget

Hon. Linda Benoit: Since the fall capital budget was tabled on Monday, we have heard supportive feedback from Yukon's business and contracting communities. The discussions that brought us here date back much further. The Yukon Contractors Association has advocated for a fall capital budget for a long time, and we have

delivered. Government and businesses will have more time for planning, design, permitting, procurement, and construction.

These businesses are vital to our economy and quality of life. They build our schools and hospitals, maintain our roads and other important infrastructure, and provide good-paying jobs. Earlier visibility can also support fairer competition and better value for money for Yukon taxpayers. Our government is committed to cutting red tape, making procurement more practical, timely, and responsive, and supporting our private sector. We're excited to see them continue to build our communities. Thank you to the Yukon Contractors Association for their advocacy and support on this initiative.

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Laura Lang: I have for tabling four legislative returns relating to matters outstanding from discussions during Committee of the Whole with the Member for Riverdale North on April 23, 2026 and April 27, 2026 related to Vote 8, Justice.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 11, *Yukon Firearms Act* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Laura Lang: I move that Bill No. 11, entitled *Yukon Firearms Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 11, entitled *Yukon Firearms Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for Introduction and First Reading of Bill No. 11 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills to be introduced?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Tyler Porter: I rise to give notice of the following motion: THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with municipalities and First Nation governments to reduce wildland fire risk by ensuring that community wildfire protection plans are in place and that the work identified in those plans is proceeding.

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

THAT this House shall stand adjourned from its rising on Tuesday, November 10, 2026 until 1:00 p.m. on Monday, November 16, 2026.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question — Vaccination program

Kate White: Flu season arrived early in the Yukon by about two months. The Chief Medical Officer of Health reported 19 lab-confirmed cases of influenza A as of September 23. In a typical year, the Yukon sees about half that number between September and December. Lab-confirmed

cases date back to mid August, but the government did not tell Yukoners about the outbreak until September 17, a month later. Since then, there have been hospitalizations and, again, another outbreak.

Yukoners were not told that vaccines were available at some locations, while others, like the Whitehorse Health Centre, would not have any available until near the end of October. With an early flu season and a recorded outbreak, why was there such a long delay before there were any communication to Yukoners about vaccination availability?

Hon. Brad Cathers: The timing of the announcement was a decision made by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. We issued the press release but through the government. But the timing of that was generated by the CMOH.

Kate White: People could get vaccinations at pharmacies in Whitehorse as of September 25, which tells us that the supply of flu vaccine was indeed in the territory by then. In its September 17 news release, the government said its own fall immunization campaign was only expected to begin in October, and as of 1:00 p.m. today, its clinics don't have bookable appointments until October 20.

If the flu vaccine was already in the territory and being given out at pharmacies by September 25, why wasn't the government's own clinic taking appointments until almost a month later?

Hon. Brad Cathers: To the best of my understanding, the vaccinations that would have been received by pharmacies were likely received through their own supply chains. I would have to check into that. As far as the timing of the Yukon seasonal vaccination campaigns, those decisions around the timing of that were made by officials. I can follow up with them regarding the member's concerns.

Certainly, no one anticipated an early outbreak of influenza, and we do make vaccinations for influenza and other seasonal vaccines available across the territory for people who choose to get them. As far as the timing of bookings, I'll have to look into that, because that is not something that I have been directly involved in. I certainly was aware of the press release before the CMOH sent it out, but the decisions around the timing of when to make people aware of an unusual number of influenza cases for this time of year was a decision made by the CMOH, not by myself.

Kate White: The minister's response there leaves lots of questions, like: Why would a private business have access to flu vaccines ahead of the Government of Yukon? Children under five cannot get a flu shot at a pharmacy; they have to get vaccines at a government clinic. Young children under five are among the most at risk of severe illness from the flu.

They can develop chronic health conditions, pneumonia, or bacterial infections. Families and early childhood educators are concerned about health and safety for children. Without vaccinations, they have limited options to keep children safe while they're in daycares and other public spaces.

So, what is the minister doing to make sure that children under five can be vaccinated before the flu season spikes?

Hon. Brad Cathers: Well, again, I would note I'm not a micromanager when it comes down to these types of things.

The decisions about the timing of when to open the government vaccination campaigns for seasonal vaccinations were not made by me personally. I will certainly look into the member's concerns and see what information we're able to find.

The outbreak of influenza in the Yukon — I shouldn't say an outbreak — or the earliest reported cases came earlier than they typically do. There were more hospitalizations than typically occur with influenza, as noted in the press release. But again, the decisions about the timing of the vaccination campaigns were made at a departmental level, not by me. I will look into that. I would note as well, as I have previously, that I would strongly encourage Yukoners to make use of other vaccinations, especially childhood vaccinations like measles, mumps, or rubella. It's an important measure to protect the health of your children. We've certainly seen a situation with vaccine hesitancy in other jurisdictions that has led to measles, which was once almost on its way to eradication, threatening Canada's measles-free status and creating a situation where there is a real risk to children. So, I would encourage parents to avail themselves of that. The timing of the seasonal vaccination campaign for flu — I will have to look into that and see what information I'm able to provide the member.

Question — Support for local business

Justin Ziegler: Local Whitehorse business owners are feeling the pressure from the ongoing tariff war. In a recent CBC article, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce said that the current federal tariff relief program is missing the mark on the needs of small and medium-sized businesses in the territory.

For businesses to be eligible for the federal program, they must have a minimum of \$1 million a year in revenue. As one can imagine, many small businesses in the Yukon do not meet these requirements. When these businesses are affected by a tariff war that they had no part in starting, it means higher shipping costs and rising prices, making it hard to remain competitive or even keep their operations afloat.

Will the Minister of Economy, Tourism and Culture tell this House what her plan is to make sure Yukon businesses that are left out of federal support get the support they need from the territorial government?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I appreciate the question, and I think this is an important issue for this House and for us to talk about.

We at the Department of Economy, Tourism and Culture have been working with the business community, and we've been working with the federal government on options around affordability. The fact of the matter is, right now, affordability is a really tough conversation, and we're all feeling it in many ways. The federal government has committed to working with us on how we can support Yukon businesses. Right now, we don't have any programs directly from the federal government to support tariff-related challenges. And quite frankly, we're not impacted the same way as some businesses in the South. However, that does not keep us from experiencing the ongoing pressures of affordability, and we're seeing that quite frankly at the pump. So, what I can commit to in this House is to continue to work with Yukon businesses as well as other entities in the territory to find ways to create some reprieve from the challenges with affordability.

Justin Ziegler: Eighty percent of the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce's members are small and medium businesses, and oftentimes for these businesses, margins are small. With higher shipping costs, higher cost of electricity, rent, and rising prices because of the trade war, the federal relief program could have lightened some of that load. The federal minister responsible has since admitted that the relief program does not reflect life and business in the Yukon. These are businesses that employ Yukoners and move our economy forward. These owners cannot wait months while officials in Ottawa study a problem they know already exists.

What specific things is the minister doing to support Yukon's small and medium-sized businesses?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I think it's fair to say — it's not fair to say — it's true that small businesses form the backbone of our economy here in the territory, and we thank owners for investing their livelihood and their time and their families into our community.

The government, as I've said, recognizes the challenges that have been identified by Yukon businesses and the challenges that the current economy is currently presenting, and we are working at ways to support them. And that's being done through a variety of programs that have been ongoing and are in fact moving forward.

Officials from the Department of Economy, Tourism and Culture meet regularly with the chamber of commerce and with businesses to understand the challenges that are being experienced right now and have plans to continue these discussions and find ways to support them. Right now, the realities are real, and we acknowledge that, and we will commit to working with businesses and supporting their needs to keep their businesses moving and to keep our economy moving forward and upward — looking at many ways of investing into the territory, including areas such as tourism and mining, and finding ways to keep Yukoners working, find ways to keep businesses thriving, and investing in the territory for the long-term benefit of Yukoners.

Justin Ziegler: Waiting on Ottawa cannot be the only plan to support local businesses. This government has its own tools, like procurement and small business supports, that have the potential to help right away — not to mention rebate programs and subsidies to support small businesses that are also facing a cost-of-living crisis. The federal plan has left them out, and they now need a plan forward. This Yukon Party ran on a promise to unleash the private sector, but Yukon businesses need a plan from this government now.

Will the minister commit to bringing forward territorial supports for small and medium businesses hurt by the tariffs?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: Once again, yes, we will commit to bringing forward options and programs that will continue to support our small business sector as well as our medium business sector. Like I said, we've been working with the chamber and we've been working with businesses; we've been working with the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce to ensure that we understand what the challenges are and how we can support them. We do have a variety of programs that support business development and investment in the territory, and we're looking at ways to enhance those options and to grow

opportunity to allow small businesses to move into medium and large businesses. So, all of this is on our list of things that we've identified as priorities, and we will continue to move forward to ensure that our business community has opportunities and options to thrive moving forward.

Question — Old Crow community engagement

Debra-Leigh Reti: We are approaching the one-year mark of this government being in office. That's plenty of time for the leader of the government to get out to every community to meet with Yukoners in different places to hear their concerns. Yet the Premier hasn't been to Old Crow since being elected to office. He's had time to go to Ottawa several times. He's had time to go to Prince Edward Island, Alberta, and Alaska but not Old Crow.

Have any ministers actually been to Old Crow since the election last year, and why not?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The member opposite is quite correct. I haven't had a chance to visit Old Crow yet since being elected last November. Vuntut Gwitchin has just gone through an election and elected a new chief and council. I look forward to meeting with that chief and council in due course, and I'll plan to visit the community of Old Crow as soon as we're able to find a time to meet with VGFN and the rest of the community. I hope to do that in the next few weeks or months, but I'm happy to let the member know exactly when we get that booked.

Debra-Leigh Reti: This fall, we are debating three budget bills. The Yukon Party government travelled to most Yukon communities as part of a pre-session community tour to gather input for those budget bills but not Old Crow. Yesterday afternoon, the Premier blamed this on the recent Vuntut Gwitchin election timing. There have been 146 days gone by since we last met in this Chamber. There are three council members. There are 256 constituents living in Old Crow that would have met at a community dinner and been happy to discuss priorities.

Why is it not important to get input from Old Crow residents on budget priorities?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The member opposite is correct. We haven't been able to host public meetings in every community. That's unfortunate. In some cases, we haven't been able to find a day yet. In some cases, we had to cancel meetings. I had planned to go to Dawson to host a public meeting there. Unfortunately, my travel prevented me from making it on time; we had to cancel. So, we owe the community of Dawson a public meeting. We haven't been able to schedule one in Teslin yet, and we haven't been able to schedule one in Old Crow. We certainly will. We appreciate the value of Old Crow and the residents who live there, and I would ask the member to convey to our constituents that I certainly care about the issues that are affecting that community. I look forward to visiting Old Crow and hearing directly from residents when I get the chance.

Debra-Leigh Reti: In a pre-session interview last week, the Premier criticized Prime Minister Carney for not having visited the Yukon yet. He said that it's not lost on a lot of Yukoners that this is the last jurisdiction the Prime Minister

hasn't visited. I'll let the Premier know that the residents of Old Crow have asked me the same question. Sadly, they are feeling ignored by this government and with good reason.

They have concerns about the cost of living, about Arctic security, about climate change, about caribou and salmon, and they deserve to be heard by the people who are running the government. When will the Premier be visiting Old Crow, and can he commit to a more secure timeline?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Old Crow is an important part of the Yukon. I look forward to visiting that community as soon as I can. I look forward to meeting with the new chief and council and hearing directly from residents when I get the chance. Like I said, we haven't been able to get to every community yet. We haven't been able to host public meetings in every community yet, and Old Crow is one of those ones.

Obviously, there are additional logistical challenges with planning a public meeting in Old Crow, requiring us to get up there, but we're happy to overcome those and make sure that the residents in Old Crow know that their voices matter as well. I look forward to hearing from them as soon as I'm able to get to the community.

Question — North Klondike Highway conditions

Brent McDonald: Tourism is a critical part of Dawson City's economy. This summer, visitors described travelling the North Klondike Highway as the worst and most painful part of their trip. Some had to leave their damaged RVs behind and fly home. Deep potholes, sudden dips, and long stretches of rough, uneven road made for an unnerving travel experience. One repeat visitor said that this would likely be their last visit to the Yukon after travelling this section of highway.

Terrible road conditions not only damage vehicles; they have now significantly damaged Dawson City's carefully cultivated tourism industry, and this will continue to have repercussions on the industry for years to come. What will the Minister of Economy, Tourism and Culture do to repair Dawson City's wounded reputation as a tourism destination?

Hon. Linda Benoit: I thank the member opposite for the question. We recognize that tourism is very important to the Yukon and especially to Dawson City and the Klondike area. I'm acutely aware of the conditions on the highway early this summer. I can say that over the winter, there was a lot of extreme weather on the North Klondike Highway. It led to a quicker deterioration of BST than what we saw down here in southern Yukon.

We did increase maintenance capacity this season, including employing additional crews and seasonal staff and authorizing overtime to accelerate repairs. I will recognize that we did start later than we should have, and I look forward to us getting started on that work earlier next year.

Brent McDonald: Hopefully, we can hear from tourism on the subject later. The condition of the North Klondike Highway also comes with another cost. Many Dawson residents have reported several thousands of dollars repairing vehicle damage from potholes, and repair shops tell us the damage they are seeing this year is much more significant than previous years. For people travelling to Whitehorse for medical

care and treatment, these costs come on top of rising fuel, meal, and accommodation expenses.

Dawson City residents cannot choose another highway. If their vehicle is damaged, they may be left with a repair bill they cannot afford. Will this government consider adding reimbursements for vehicle repairs from unsafe road conditions to the medical travel subsidy?

Hon. Linda Benoit: Again, I thank the member opposite for the question. I did hear from a number of Dawson residents this summer who did have some damages to their vehicles. I did encourage them to go through the government insurance claims process. Again, I recognize how important the North Klondike Highway is to Dawson and other areas in northern Yukon. We did fill over 7,000 potholes on the North Klondike Highway this summer by our best guess, so we did invest a significant amount of work there.

I am aware that some sections are going to require more substantial reconstruction due to aging pavement, permafrost degradation, and that kind of thing. That is why we are investing the money from the national trade corridors fund with the Government of Canada into the North Klondike Highway. There will be another section of North Klondike Highway reconstructed next year. There are 17 kilometres around Gravel Lake that are due to be done as well as the section that is still unfinished this year will be finished next year.

Brent McDonald: This is not only an affordability and tourism issue; it's a serious public safety issue. Experiences of broken vehicles, vehicles swerving or being forcefully tossed into opposing lanes by unsafe road conditions are now a common experience.

It's not only vehicle damage. I've also heard from people who have experienced significant injury from accidents caused by poor road conditions. These hazards have put everyone using the highway at risk. New potholes are growing as I speak, especially at a 20-kilometre section just south of Dawson City. What immediate actions will the minister take to repair these potholes and clearly mark the remaining dangerous sections on the North Klondike Highway before this winter sets in full force?

Hon. Linda Benoit: Again, I thank the member opposite for his question. I assure you that the safety of North Klondike Highway users and all highway users in the Yukon is our top priority.

I will commit to taking a look at the section that the member mentions and have my crew take a look and see what we can do to improve signage and marking there. I would encourage all highway users in the Yukon to ensure that they're following suggested speed limit signs and driving to road conditions and checking 511 Yukon.

Question — Firearms control

Doris Anderson: Firearms are an important part of life for many Yukoners, particularly those who hunt, trap, harvest, and spend time on the land. Many responsible firearm owners have expressed concerns about the direction of federal firearms policy and its impact on the North.

Our government committed to standing up for responsible firearm owners and ensuring Yukon voices are heard. Can the

minister update the House on how the government is following through on that commitment?

Hon. Laura Lang: Our government is committed to making Yukon communities safer. The federal government's Assault-Style Firearms Compensation Program distracts from this goal. It targets licensed, trained, vetted, and responsible Yukon firearms owners, and it's costing taxpayers the better part of a billion dollars. Our government has consistently stood up for responsible firearm owners and opposed federal policies that reduce our private property rights and our way of life. Thousands of Yukoners, including Yukon First Nation citizens exercising their subsistence rights, hunters, outfitters, and sports shooters are facing the brunt of this program.

Firearms are vital in the North. They are part of our northern way of life and should be promoted, not punished. During the election, we committed to standing up for responsible firearms owners and Yukoners in general, and today, we are following through on that commitment. I am pleased to say we have introduced the new *Yukon Firearms Act* to deliver on that commitment. The legislation will establish a Yukon Firearms Advocate and create a stronger, more direct voice for Yukon firearms owners and all Yukoners.

Doris Anderson: Changes like these are strongest when they are informed by the people most directly affected. Throughout the development of this legislation, Yukon firearms owners, businesses, organizations, and other stakeholders had an opportunity to share their perspectives.

Can the minister tell the House what engagement informed this legislation and how that feedback helped shape the proposed *Yukon Firearms Act*?

Hon. Laura Lang: And with pleasure, I would like to tell you what we've done. I'd like to share that it's starting from the premise that it's clear that across Canada there is mounting opposition to the unreasonable, ineffective, and costly firearms policy and programs coming out of Ottawa. This is why we decided to engage with Yukoners to hear their views on the importance of firearms to the northern way of life and what legislation could look like in our territory.

Over the summer, we heard directly from hundreds of responsible firearms owners, businesses, stakeholder organizations, First Nations, and other Yukoners through surveys, written submissions, and in-person engagement sessions. Feedback showed strong opposition to the federal firearms policy and a desire to help shape the proposed legislation before the House today. It also reinforced the need for a dedicated Yukon Firearms Advocate.

This legislation builds on our government's continued advocacy on behalf of responsible firearms owners. We have raised concerns directly with the Government of Canada about the impacts of federal firearms policies on Yukoners. We have also worked alongside other territories to advocate for northern interests, and we have secured confirmation that the territorial-funded policing resources will not be used to administer the federal program. The proposed *Yukon Firearms Act* continues this work. It will help ensure the voices of Yukon firearms owners continue to be heard.

Doris Anderson: Yukoners will want to know what this legislation means in practice and how the new advocate will

support them. Can the minister explain what role the Yukon Firearms Advocate will play and what Yukoners can expect as implementation moves forward?

Hon. Laura Lang: The Yukon's Firearms Advocate will provide advice to government, to me as Minister of Justice, and will serve as a direct point of contact for firearms owners, businesses, and organizations with concerns, questions, or suggestions. The advocate will also support education and outreach efforts and help ensure Yukon's perspectives are represented as firearm issues continue to evolve.

We will share additional details regarding the position as implementation proceeds. Again, I'm looking forward to hearing from Yukoners on areas of interest or concerns that they think the advocate should be specifically paying attention to. And with that comes the relationship also with the new Chief Firearms Officer and continuing to advocate alongside other northern jurisdictions for policies that recognize the Yukon realities but also the northern and territorial realities.

Question — Old Crow fire equipment

Debra-Leigh Reti: This summer, there was a major house fire in Old Crow. The house was completely lost, but thank the Lord, everyone was safe. When there is a house fire in Whitehorse, a person can expect a paid fire crew and up-to-date equipment to show up at their house and help put the fire out.

That's not how it works in Old Crow. Our community currently has a fire truck that has been decommissioned and is not allowed to be used. The fire this summer highlighted the basic need for an up-to-date fire truck to be in the community. Each year, the Government of Yukon helps small communities with big purchases like fire trucks. There was one delivered recently to the community of Champagne last year, for example. Is Old Crow going to get a new fire truck this year?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I really appreciate the advocacy from the member opposite on the needs for fire service in her community. It's needed in all communities in the Yukon, and the best way to ensure that we have adequate fire services is for members of the communities to stand up and become volunteers and join those fire departments to make sure that when the accidents and fires do happen, people are available to respond.

We have included a fire truck in the fall capital budget as an item that we could potentially move forward early. It is not designated specifically for a specific community at the moment that I'm aware of, and it will be placed where the needs are most required at this time.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I believe a new fire truck to replace the one that is 30 years old and has been decommissioned would be at the top of the priority list for my community. The fire this summer highlighted the need for a working fire truck and the need for improved training and equipment for volunteers.

I want to encourage the minister to visit Old Crow to see first-hand the needs of the volunteer firefighting community. What is the government doing to ensure community volunteers have what they need to fight residential fires in Old Crow?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I do know that Old Crow and many communities in the Yukon have various different levels of firefighting capabilities. Old Crow currently has a SSRU, as was indicated yesterday, and several volunteers to operate that system in that community. I do understand that the number of volunteers has been growing, which is great. And I definitely look forward to visiting the community, seeing what this fire service looks like in Old Crow, and seeing what we can do to help make sure people are safe.

Debra-Leigh Reti: The fire this summer highlights how vulnerable my community is with its limited resources. It takes dedicated local volunteers and proper training and equipment being in place to ensure there is a proper response ready when needed. One item that has been under discussion is installing some small pump stations and warming sheds to improve access to lake water in the different subdivisions.

Is this or any other service improvement being looked at by this government to ensure Old Crow is in the best position it can be if and when — and we pray not — the next house fire happens?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I'm happy to take into consideration different ideas in communities that might create more sustainable and effective fire service. Currently, we are doing the best we can and look forward to talking to anybody interested in providing advice for their communities for safety.

Question — Mining legislation

Carmen Gustafson: The Yukon Party, like the government before them, committed to developing new minerals legislation for the territory. It's widely accepted that the current legislation is long past its best-before date. If it were a piece of fruit on the kitchen counter, we'd have been so inundated with fruit flies that we'd have already sent it to the green bin.

However, it is imperative that regulating mining in the Yukon is done right. So, it may well be that we are stuck with this rotting banana a little longer than is comfortable. The minister has now been in his role for nearly a year, so I'm sure he is better acquainted with this file and the challenges than last time I asked. Can the minister please update Yukoners on his anticipated timeline for new minerals legislation?

Hon. Ted Laking: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for asking a question on this important topic. As indicated last time, we are moving forward on a collaborative process with First Nation governments to develop new minerals legislation. We're committed to that, and the meetings are now ongoing between the Government of Yukon and First Nation government representatives.

Carmen Gustafson: This government prioritized issuing permits particularly for placer mining, and the minister was happy to notify Yukoners that work to address the placer mine permit backlog is getting results. However, many Yukoners are also waiting for some tangible updates on new minerals legislation. Whether they work in an industry looking for certainty, are hoping that the new legislation will better protect the environment, or they're an investor looking for a

solid mining jurisdiction to invest in, sharing information about the development of this critical legislation is important.

There was an announcement of a new process for developing the legislation in June, and several new groups were being formed to do the work. There hasn't really been an update since. When will the minister provide Yukoners with more information about the process being used to develop the new legislation, and what priority areas are being addressed?

Hon. Ted Laking: What I announced was a collaborative process, and what that means is that we need to work together with First Nation governments. So, I can't on the floor today here announce timelines, just pull them out of my hat as the NDP did when they signed a confidence and supply agreement with the Liberals committing that this legislation would be done on a certain timeline — that they missed, by the way.

What we're going to do is work with First Nation governments collaboratively, and we're going to communicate collaboratively as this process develops. As we do have deliverables on this, we will for sure update the House and Yukoners.

Carmen Gustafson: New minerals legislation will only be successful if it is co-developed with Yukon First Nations and respects the final agreements and Indigenous rights. Shortly before this government was elected, there was a framework for new minerals legislation created through a legislative development process that involved many First Nations and other stakeholders. It is not clear whether the new process is going back to the previous framework or if it's starting from scratch.

It's understood that there is general agreement or even consensus on some aspects in that framework. Not all Yukon First Nations and transboundary Indigenous groups are represented at the tables in the new process. Neither are industry or environmental groups. Can the minister explain how the new minerals legislation development process will safeguard and respect Yukon First Nation rights and uphold the final agreements?

Hon. Ted Laking: The way that we are doing that is by following the devolution transfer agreements requirements for collaborative development of this process, and that's why it was so important for us to work with First Nations to get to this point where we could agree on the process and how we would engage with each other beyond just the collaborative process that was announced for the oversight group that involves me and the Chiefs Committee on Mining. We also have a bilateral process with transboundary First Nations and unsettled First Nations.

Question — Teslin infrastructure funding

Tyler Porter: I have questions related to my community of Teslin.

Good maintenance is usually the kind nobody notices. A roof is repaired before it leaks. A problem is dealt with before it becomes an emergency, and taxpayers avoid paying more later for something that could have been addressed sooner. That matters in a rural community where delaying a major repair can easily mean losing another construction season. The fall capital budget includes \$1.35 million for the roof at the Khâtinâs.âxh

Community School in Teslin. Can the Minister of Education tell this House how this funding will help move the project forward now rather than allowing another construction season to pass?

Hon. Scott Kent: I had the opportunity to tour the Khâtinâs.âxh Community School in Teslin earlier this year and, of course, during my time in Opposition as well. The member is right to highlight this project. The roof at the community school in Teslin is in poor condition and requires significant work to improve its condition and learning environment for students and staff alike. That's why our government has included \$1.35 million in this fall capital budget to advance this important project and get that work underway.

By bringing capital funding forward earlier, we can begin planning and procurement sooner, make better use of Yukon's short construction season, and reduce the risk of delays. So, this investment is just one example of how the fall capital budget is advancing our commitment to maintain school infrastructure and ensure students have the facilities they need to learn and succeed.

Tyler Porter: Well, that is good news so that the community can use the school a bit longer. The reality is that the school was constructed in 1963 and is approaching the end of its life. There is \$50,000 in the current budget to initiate the development of a new school facility. Earlier today, the Minister of Education followed up with Teslin Tlingit Council about the status of this work. Can the Minister of Education update this House on the status of the planning for a new community school in Teslin?

Hon. Scott Kent: I'd like to thank the member for raising this important issue and also for joining me for the meeting with the Teslin Tlingit Council earlier today. It's clear that this is an important priority for the community, and I want to assure the member that this government is committed to start planning for a new school in Teslin. As mentioned, there is \$50,000 in the current budget. We are committed to working with the Teslin Tlingit Council, Village of Teslin, and the school community to verify long-term planning assumptions, assess site-related considerations, and determine through negotiations whether an accelerated school replacement is the preferred option. So, should the acceleration of the school be the community's preferred path forward, we will then assess land availability and acquisition options, advance capital planning requirements through our multi-year capital planning process, and develop a coordinated approach for working with the Teslin community and school stakeholders. So, this is a community priority, and I want to assure the member and his constituents that his community will be involved at every step of the way as we work to advance a new school in Teslin.

Tyler Porter: There is a simple problem facing many rural communities. We can attract a nurse, a teacher, a tradesperson, or a new family, but attracting them is only half the job. They also need somewhere to live. Without housing, job vacancies stay vacant, businesses struggle to expand, and communities have a harder time growing. The fall capital budget includes \$4.5 million for the Teslin community housing project. Can the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing

Corporation explain how this project will help solve that missing piece for Teslin?

Hon. Scott Kent: The member is correct to point out that access to housing remains a significant challenge in Teslin and other communities throughout the Yukon. Teslin needs more housing options to support families, attract workers, and ensure the community can continue to grow and thrive. And that's why our government has included \$4.5 million in the fall capital budget for the Teslin community housing project.

By approving funding earlier, we can provide greater certainty for planning and construction and help move this important project forward more efficiently. So, this investment will help address a real community need while creating more housing opportunities for current and future residents of Teslin. It's another example of our commitment to working with communities to increase housing supply and deliver the infrastructure needed to support growth across rural Yukon. We look forward to holding a public meeting later this month in the community to discuss this project further.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Motions Other than Government Motions

Motion No. 168 — Substance use health emergency funding

Clerk: Motion No. 168, standing in the name of Debra-Leigh Reti.

Speaker: It is moved by the Leader of the Third Party:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use the voted contingency in the 2026-27 budget to expand funding for its commitments to address the substance use health emergency, including expanding access to addictions treatment options, delivering prevention initiatives in the communities where they are most needed, and establishing effective enforcement measures against the illicit drug trade.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I rise today to speak to my motion asking the government to use the voted contingency in this year's budget to take action on the substance use health emergency. My argument on this is pretty straightforward. We have an emergency. People are dying. More can be done, and we have the means to do something about it.

Since 2016, 149 people have died in the Yukon from toxic drugs. The Yukon declared a substance use health emergency in January 2022. Since then, 73 more Yukoners have died. We all know that communities across Canada are dealing with the toxic drug supply. This is not a uniquely Yukon problem, but the Yukon has been among the hardest hit for years. In a territory this small, most of us know someone who has been affected.

Earlier this year, things were looking a bit better. There were no deaths reported in the first three months. But even at the time, the chief coroner warned that the drug supply remains unpredictable and that outcomes can change quickly. I suspect

that was not something that they wanted to be proven right about.

In a single week this past August, four more Yukoners died. Our entire territory has been losing people to the toxic drugs. We have lost many people in my own community of Old Crow. We've lost people of all ages, from youth to seniors. Our graveyard is full of recent burials, and we just lost a 16-year-old boy from Old Crow this past August. How devastating for our entire community and for the youth of Old Crow and beyond that have been watching our people dying around them from toxic drugs.

You would hope that these examples would scare people enough to not use or test their drugs first, but the problem is bigger than these decisions when you are lonely, living with trauma, needing supports, needing treatment, et cetera. I spoke to a former heroin addict four days ago, and she advised me that more than anything, supports for trauma, healthy drug-free surroundings for housing, counselling, treatment, thoughtful aftercare, and exposure to healthy people, healthy recovered addicts, involvement with community projects, and supports where people feel valued, loved, and useful are needed.

We ask: Do we need more money where there is already money? Do we need more options created, spaces created? Do we need to rethink what's not working and create more successful options? What task force can be created to target these questions and reach our people and start to change and save some lives? This is where we need more money to drive these initiatives.

I ask how the government can work with CATSA to change our airport designations in order to create security for northern flights. Work with NWT and our borders. Work with each First Nation and inquire what will work for each of their communities. This motion — it's for my brother Tyler who died from an overdose. It's for my many cousins that I've lost since before even 2016 to overdose. This is for our friends and relatives that are struggling against these new drugs that are so addictive they cannot fight it.

If you are a Yukoner today, you are not removed from the impact of drug use, drug dealing, death by overdose. And the government has recognized the seriousness of this. Last December, the Minister of Justice told this House that it truly is a crisis in our territory and it is affecting every single community. This year's budget included funding to continue work on addressing this emergency and fulfilling the actions in the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*. I'm grateful for that, but despite the funding commitments and the work that has gone on, people are still dying and dying at a higher rate than elsewhere in Canada.

This year's budget also included \$100 million in voted contingency. Under this year's amendments to the *Financial Administration Act*, the government can move that money as needed. That gives the government flexibility to address unforeseen and urgent issues. I do understand that the contingency is there for emergencies and that it isn't meant to be spent just because it's available. I also understand, because we've heard it again this Sitting, that we are still in a dire economic situation that is the fault of the previous government. But in some ways, we have been fortunate this year. The wildfire and flood seasons were relatively quiet, and from what we see in the supplementary estimates, not much of the

contingency has been used. So, we have approved money sitting unused that — while we are practising fiscal constraint — we were comfortable with using if the need arose, and at the same time, Yukoners are dying.

If this is not an emergency, I don't know what is. We have money ready to use, and it can save lives. If there was a fire racing toward a community in the Yukon, we would not hesitate to spend the money to save those homes and the lives of the people in them. In the motion, I pointed to three areas for action, and I took them from the Yukon Party's own platform, which committed to increase addiction treatment options, enhance prevention, and provide the necessary resources to crack down on illegal drug dealers — those three. I did that because I think they are reasonable places to start. They are not everything that I may call for or like to see, but since the government has already committed to them, we shouldn't need to spend today's debate on whether it supports them. What I'm asking instead is that the government put more money behind the work it has said it will do to take real action on this emergency. What the right amount is and what this House is comfortable putting toward that work is, I think, a matter that we can discuss today. But whether we support that work is a straightforward decision to me. As we move forward in this discussion, I would ask that we start focusing on the people who are struggling most and doing what we can to save those lives. I hope today that all members will support this motion.

Màhsi' cho.

Hon. Brad Cathers: I'd like to begin by thanking the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for her remarks and express my personal condolences to her for her own loss as a result of this crisis. Substance use, including opioid use and the toxic drug crisis, has touched the lives of many people across the Yukon, and we recognize that many people are still grieving as a result of the loss of life of members of their family or friends or members of their community. Every life that has been lost is a loss to someone, including the person who has passed away, and we recognize that.

We also want to note we have continued the resources that were in place upon taking office, including for addictions treatment — as well, the harm reduction programs are in place, and we are in the process of developing more actions that we intend to take, including work underway to develop second-stage treatment options. The illicit drug supply remains highly toxic and unpredictable, and the Department of Health and Social Services is responding through steps including prevention, harm reduction, overdose response, treatment, and recovery. The department also provides services and funds community partners to provide a range of substance use and harm reduction services, including the supervised consumption site, drug checking, naloxone, opioid treatment, withdrawal management, counselling, and regional mental wellness and substance use supports.

We are focused on improving access to substance use treatment, aftercare, and healing supports for Yukoners and know that recovery requires more than treatment alone, which is why work is underway to strengthen the continuum of care, including development of second-stage treatment options and supports to help people achieve long-term wellness. Because, again, it's important to emphasize that while we recognize the

role of harm reduction measures, there is no such thing as safe use of illegal drugs, and we encourage people who are addicted to seek help and want to help people who are struggling with that get on the road to recovery and live healthier, safer lives.

The government recognizes the significant impact substance use has had on individuals, on families, and communities, including the loss of community members, as the member mentioned in her statement — the number of people who have been lost as a result of drug overdoses and toxic drugs. We are, as I mentioned, working on practical solutions to improve access to treatment, recovery, aftercare, and healing supports as well as strengthening community safety and well-being. I would note that there is funding in the budget this year, including money which has not yet been expended, to do more in this area. So, I would note that we were generally in agreement with the intention of this motion. I would note that, as the Premier mentioned earlier in talking about this issue, it's not just a matter of putting more money toward a problem. We need effective solutions that meet the needs of Yukoners, and as I noted, we are indeed working on that right now, including with money in this year's budget that has not yet been expended but that we plan to use in the remainder of the fiscal year.

Available programming through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services supports people at different stages of substance use and recovery, from immediate harm reduction and stabilization through treatment, ongoing care, and connections to other health and social supports. That includes withdrawal management services, intensive treatment services, outpatient group counselling, the alumni program, managed alcohol program, the opioid treatment services, supervised consumption site services, access to naloxone, and harm reduction training, the youth outreach clinic, Car 867, as well as group programming for inmates at Whitehorse Correctional Centre. As I mentioned earlier, the department is currently working on options for second-stage addictions treatment and improving access to recovery, aftercare, and healing supports as well as discussing with First Nations and other partners additional options which may be implemented for recovery programs. So, those discussions are actively ongoing right now, and we appreciate the importance of doing more in this area, because again, every death due to toxic drugs or overdoses is a tragedy not only for the person who loses their life but for anyone who loves that person, and this has had an impact in every part of the Yukon.

I would also note that among the actions that we have this year, there is \$219,000 for education and prevention initiatives; as well, we're investing \$2.3 million over five years in the planet youth project, a community-driven, data-informed prevention initiative that works with four Yukon First Nations to identify local risk and protective factors and develop targeted approaches to prevent youth substance use and strengthen youth well-being. And we're supporting culturally grounded treatment and recovery, including \$400,000 set aside in this fiscal year for the Kwanlin Dün First Nation Jackson Lake healing camp, and discussions between the department and KDFN regarding this are still in progress. So, again, I will not be too long in speaking to this. I know that there are other members who wish to speak to it.

I would note that we are generally supportive of the intention of this motion, and by that, I want to specifically note

that includes taking additional actions this fiscal year to address this issue. However, as I mentioned, we do have funding that is already allocated in the budget, and we may not need to use funding from the contingency fund. However, we are open to considering it should it be necessary.

Amendment 1 proposed

Hon. Brad Cathers: So, with that in mind, I move:

THAT Motion No. 168 be amended by replacing the word “use” in the phrase “the Government of Yukon to use” with the phrase “consider using”.

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Hon. Minister of Health and Social Services:

THAT Motion No. 168 be amended by replacing the word “use” in the phrase “the Government of Yukon to use” with the phrase “consider using”.

Hon. Brad Cathers: I do want to note in proposing this amendment that we are committed to taking additional action this fiscal year and open to considering, if necessary, using the voted contingency, but again, depending on the details and the costs and whether it exceeds the amount that we already have in the budget, we may not need to dip into the contingency. I would also note that I was pleased as well in August jointly, along with the Hon. Marjorie Michel, Minister of Health for Canada, and Dr. Brendan Hanley, Yukon’s Member of Parliament, and Bringing Youth Towards Equality Yukon to announce additional measures to strengthen and expand access to integrated mental health and wellness supports for youth and young adults aged 12 to 30 across the Yukon.

And while I would note that is not specific to addictions treatment, it is directly related to prevention in that improving access to mental health and wellness supports for youth and young adults are intended to help those young people, especially those who may be struggling with mental health issues, to live healthier lives and to avoid falling into behaviours such as addictions that are problematic and unhealthy.

I would refer members to the announcement we made August 19 where we were pleased with the announcement of over \$6.6 million in funding from the federal government to strengthen and expand access to integrated mental health and wellness supports for youth and young adults aged 12 to 30 across the Yukon: “Delivered by BYTE – Empowering Youth Society, the Yukon Integrated Youth Services (IYS) project will bring together health, social service, education, and community partners to create a more coordinated and accessible approach to youth mental health care. This project marks a significant milestone with the first IYS hub in the territories being opened in Whitehorse. The IYS model provides youth with access to a range of services in one place to support their mental health, well-being, and overall health, making it easier for young people and their families to find the help they need.

“A mobile wellness unit, staffed by mental health professionals and peer supporters, will also travel to rural and remote communities across the Yukon to provide mental health and wellness services and programming.

“Supported through the Youth Mental Health Fund (YMHF), this project is part of the Government of Canada’s commitment to improve mental health outcomes for youth across the country by enhancing access to, and navigation of, mental health services with a focus on underserved, rural and Indigenous youth.”

And as I noted in the press release — and for the reference of Hansard, I was quoting from that earlier — “We welcome the Government of Canada’s commitment to supporting youth wellness in the Yukon, and we look forward to seeing the results of this new funding.”

As the Yukon’s Member of Parliament noted in that release, “This investment is about building a stronger and more hopeful future for Yukon’s young people and for the families and communities who support them. BYTE understands the unique needs of youth here in the Yukon through Health Canada’s Youth Mental Health Fund. BYTE will expand integrated and accessible mental health services across the territory, helping young people and their families feel seen, heard, and empowered.”

And in a quote from the director of Integrated Youth Services for BYTE, she notes that “BYTE is proud to support the backbone team that will work alongside youth, families, and community partners to design a model that reflects the unique needs and strengths of the Yukon. This investment allows us to build a more connected system, where young people can access the right support when and where they need it. We are excited to work with youth, families, Indigenous governments, service providers, and community organizations over the coming months to build meaningful partnerships and co-create a model that is youth-centred, collaborative, and accessible.”

My point in making reference to that is that there is funding available, both money within the Yukon Government’s budget that we approved earlier this year and have not fully expended but do plan to use in the remainder of this fiscal year, plus the federal money to which I referred that provides us some resources. That is why I made the amendment that I hope the member will consider friendly where we are indeed open to consider using money from the voted contingency if the programming and steps that we take between now and the end of the fiscal year exceed the resources that we have available.

But we are not yet at the stage of knowing whether we would need to dip into that contingency fund or whether the resources that I mentioned, including the increased resources from the federal government and what we included in the mains earlier this year, will allow us to fully fund the initiatives that we are already working on both within the government and in cooperation with community partners as well as other orders of government.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Just to be blunt, I don’t like the word “consider”. I don’t find that’s a commitment. With the time spent here right now — I mean, I appreciate everything that was listed of all the work that’s already being done and has been ongoing. I appreciate hearing the numbers and the money that’s there.

But I’m not sure if everyone heard me speak about the numbers that are increasing and the numbers that are still rising. And there is something not working. There are a lot of things not working. I don’t know everyone’s lives here — I know my

life. But until you lose family — it pushes you to fight for something.

I'm only one person, Third Party, put here for a reason. And if that's the fight for First Nation and non-First Nations that are dying in our beautiful, beautiful little territory, then that's why I'm standing here right now. And the word "consider" to me personally does not sound like it's a priority.

And the list is wonderful. I'm so grateful for the work that's being done. I'm so grateful for everyone that's working hard in their own little areas and all these amazing, courageous organizations that are out there with our street-involved people, with my relatives, my family, your family. But when I put this motion forward, I put it forward because I know what we're doing is not enough. I know what we're doing is not working in many areas, and I know that the numbers are not going to stop rising.

That's why I put this forward, and that's why I asked about using the contingency fund. I'm asking for Yukoners. I'm not asking just because Debra-Leigh lost her brother and lost some cousins. No, I'm asking for the entire Yukon so we can stop losing our youth. Who's going to be sitting here soon? Who's going to be the next chief and council to be sitting at the tables with government? They're not going to be here. They're not going to be in our seats. Who's going to represent my riding?

I'm disappointed — and maybe I'm just so naïve — and I just see such good. I really thought there was not going to be — I mean, I'm not ignorant — I know there are going to be amendments. But I really thought: Fine, put a stipulation on the amount or whatever. I don't know what you can do. But "consider" is not a commitment of a priority, and I'm disappointed, and I'm not agreed with this.

Lane Tredger: Thank you, Chair, and I want to thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin again, because every time she's spoken today, I just see this in a new way and think about it in a new light and with more impact. The NDP caucus will not be supporting this amendment. The government can already consider doing whatever they want; they don't need a motion to tell them to do that.

This was asking for a commitment, and the Minister for Health and Social Services said they might already have the resources to do enough. What does "enough" mean? Does he mean they already have the resources in their currently voted-on budget to bring overdose deaths to zero? To reduce it by half? What does "enough" mean?

This motion is asking us to go above and beyond, to leave no stone unturned, to throw everything we have at that problem. And we all know that if we throw everything we have at this problem, we will still not bring it to zero this year. I don't think that's an unrealistic or jaded thing to say. I don't think we have enough resources in the territory to completely solve the problem this year. So, asking for more resources is going to help.

No matter what's already in the budget, no matter what they already have planned, more can be done. More needs to be done. And that's why considering is not good enough. It's time for action.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

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 yeas, seven nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the amendment carried.

Amendment 1 to Motion No. 168 agreed to

Kate White: Just as I get started, I'd like to thank the member for the Third Party for speaking very personally about how the substance use emergency continues to impact Yukoners across the territory. I know that in particular, the impacts in her community of Old Crow have been devastating. I extend my condolences on your recent loss.

I know about the devastation in Old Crow because the previous Member for Vuntut Gwitchin spoke about it a lot in this Assembly and what needed to be done. I know this motion likely comes from countless conversations, conversations with people asking for support, conversations with people running out of ideas, conversations with people fighting for a future where their communities are no longer forced to carry the grief, the crushing weight of grief.

I know this because over the past 10 years since this crisis began, I've also had many, many, many of these conversations with Yukoners. I remember my first one in 2016 where it became apparent that something was changing, that something was changing in the territory. There have been so many losses over the last few years, and I just think about that recent memorial that was placed by Blood Ties outside this building to honour the 151 Yukoners lost to the overdose and toxic drug crisis.

I think about those tea lights, and I think about the words on the board. I think about the children. I think about the families. I think about the parents. I think about all that, all that

loss. And that memorial felt especially significant, because over the last two months, we've seen an increased number of Yukoners lost to the toxic drug crisis. We've seen a spike.

It's a stark reminder that this crisis is still ongoing, that it never stopped, and we can't forget, we cannot turn our backs, and we must remain focused on the life-saving measures that require continued investment. Substance use is closely tied to the socio-economic factors that shape people's lives. These include housing conditions, access to food, health care, education, affordable transportation, and safe and affordable housing.

The impacts of the toxic drug crisis stretch across our communities, and the grief and the weight of this crisis is immensely heavy. Yukon First Nation communities have been disproportionately affected by the substance-related harms and loss for lots of different reasons. But the crisis — it doesn't care where you come from or what you look like or how much money you earn, because it has hit across every aspect of community in the last decade.

So, what Yukoners need is they need this government to continue treating these losses as the crisis that they are, to recognize it as the crisis that it is. So, this is a crisis of affordability, of quality of life, and the systemic underinvestment in health care, housing, and mental health supports. It's the result of ongoing trauma, the effects of colonization and the ongoing impacts of residential schools, the Sixties Scoop and the child welfare system. And so I think it's important that we note that the substance use-related harms are not the result of a person's individual failure. The harms we see from substance use are the result of chronic under-resourcing and unmet needs. So, that's why Yukoners need action now.

People who are coping with poverty, trauma, a lack of available resources, and harms caused by systems — those people are strong and they're resilient. They are not weak. Using substances isn't a moral failure. Folks who are using substances are capable, and they're surviving in ways that make sense given their circumstances. Again, they're our family members, they're our friends or neighbours and valued members of our communities. I'll note that they are also often first responders to this crisis, providing life-saving care to their fellow community members. So, I see that strength every day in the solutions that they put forward, in the ways that they advocate for themselves and for others, and in how they support community members in the hope they continue to hold to the future.

The vigil outside the Legislative Assembly was organized by the lived experience advisory group of Blood Ties Four Directions. These are folks with lived and living experience of substance use, and they use their voices to advocate to honour those that we've lost and to demand action. Their message to government was very clear, and I want to thank them for their continued advocacy and work.

So, we all recognize that there has been no shortage of reports or recommendations, consultations, and action plans. There has been no shortage of community voices in sharing what is needed. This government has many of the solutions before them. They need to listen, but most importantly, they need to act like it's a crisis and an emergency. My hope is that the government will implement the recommendations put forward by peers and community members and continue to

advance the actions identified in the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*.

I'll remind folks that the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* was built around four pillars: the pillar of prevention, to strengthen communities across the Yukon, focusing on preventing substance use and related harms while promoting connection, well-being, and healthy communities. The pillar of harm reduction addresses the substance use health emergency now by keeping people safer through progressive, accessible, and responsive harm reduction services. The pillar of treatment and recovery support — to support Yukoners who want to change their relationship with substances by ensuring timely and quality access to services and supports. And the fourth pillar, the pillar of community safety and well-being, to work across systems to support, maintain, and improve the safety and well-being of Yukon communities.

This framework recognizes that overdose risk is shaped by interconnected social, economic, and health factors, and each pillar has merit. However, there are areas where government is not engaging or investing as seriously as this crisis requires. I believe that there are so many other areas that require continued investment.

In prevention, I think about the pillar of prevention, and it recognizes that addressing substance-related harms starts long before someone experiences an overdose. It includes commitments to co-locate child and youth health services, increase funding for substance use and mental wellness education, expand youth prevention initiatives, continue investing in Indigenous mental health, expand life promotion and suicide prevention initiatives, improve cultural safety training for health and social service providers, embed mental wellness across the lifespan in government services, increase investment in family-based initiatives, particularly in the first five years of life, explore housing and support options for parents living with addiction, prevent alcohol-related harms through balanced regulatory approaches, and continue public education and awareness campaigns.

Harm reduction. Well, the harm reduction pillar focuses on keeping people alive and reducing the risks associated with substance use. This included commitments to expand access to opioid treatment services, including safer supply and opioid agonist therapy, improve access to drug-checking services and harm reduction supplies, increase naloxone availability, support alternative approaches that help keep people safe while using substances, commitment to opening a sobering centre, to opening a sober shelter.

People seeking support deserve a full continuum of care. When we talk about treatment and recovery support — expanding live-in treatment options, exploring Yukon-based youth and family treatment models, improving financial accessibility of addiction medications, ensuring opioid agonist therapy is available wherever people seek help — I'll note that would mean outside of Whitehorse — exploring the creation of a rapid access addiction medicine clinic, expanding education and supports for chronic pain management, increasing housing options across the territory, supporting Yukon First Nation-led land-based treatment initiatives, investing in community-based recovery programs, and developing a centralized and accessible treatment directory.

When I think about the pillar of community safety and well-being, it's important to recognize that people are safest when communities are supported, connected, and adequately resourced. And so, commitments under that pillar included funding Yukon First Nations and local governments to address community safety priorities, supporting community-led responses through dedicated funding streams, investing in the prevention of gender-based violence, improving supports for victims, expanding safe and sober housing options for people transitioning from the justice system, supporting therapeutic courts and restorative justice approaches, ensuring policing and enforcement are responsive to community needs, expanding the mobile crisis response team, increasing the territory's capacity to disrupt the distribution of toxic illicit drugs and organized crime, examine the approaches to criminal law enforcement that prioritize community safety and violence prevention, and finally — this is a really big one: investing in Yukon youth, families, and communities.

The challenge before us is not identifying what needs to be done. Community members, peers, service providers, Yukon First Nations, and advocates have been clear about the actions that are needed. The real question is whether this government is prepared to invest in these solutions at the scale that this crisis demands. Every overdose is a reminder that the work remains unfinished. I believe that we owe it to the people that we have lost, to their families, and to every Yukoner still struggling today to move beyond planning and into action.

I think about the families that have spoken at press conferences and who shared their stories, who said that they don't buy into the stigma associated with a death due to overdose. I think about them calling for help and asking for more. I reflect on the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin as she shared the story of her community and the loss of a young person and what that does.

So, in thinking about the motion that was put forward by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, I reflected on the investments that were made before this government and that have been made since this government took office. I think about the things that have been left out.

So, we know that the supervised consumption site in Whitehorse has responded to over 439 overdoses and has never had a single fatality. That's incredible. It's incredible, because when I talk about harm reduction, I talk about preventing death. So, when I think about the supervised consumption site, I think about how that service is life-saving. And hearing those numbers, I know that they still feel so devastatingly high when we talk about the 151 deaths but that they would be much higher still if it wasn't for the supervised consumption site.

I think about the importance of harm reduction services, services that keep Yukoners alive. They prevent infections, they provide education and prevention, and they ensure that Yukoners who use drugs have access to dignified and quality care. And how important harm reduction is.

So, I support this motion. The NDP, we support this motion and what it includes, but I recognize a gap in the supports and services it lists. And so, I had a conversation with the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin ahead of time. I believe that we need to invest in prevention and treatment, and equally, we need to invest in harm reduction initiatives. So, this is why I'm going to put forward an amendment to the amended motion.

Amendment 2 proposed

Kate White: I move:

THAT Motion No. 168 be further amended by adding the phrase “and harm reduction supports and services” after the word “options”.

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Member for Takhini:

THAT Motion No. 168 be amended by adding the phrase “and harm reduction supports and services” after the word “options”.

Kate White: Just quickly on this amendment, it just expands and it makes sure it brings in that additional pillar. I think when we talk about harm reduction supports and services, it's important. I'd like to see it included in this motion.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I appreciate this phrase being added and I support this.

Hon. Currie Dixon: We support the amendment as well.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

Amendment 2 to Motion No. 168, as amended, agreed to

Speaker: Is there any debate on the motion as further amended?

If the member now speaks, she will close debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Debra-Leigh Reti: Sorry, am I speaking on the amendment to the amended? If I'm closing debate and speaking on the total motion amended as amended, I'll have to vote against my own motion, as I do not agree still with the “consider”. I don't find that a priority or a commitment by a government.

Like I said, I brought this motion forward for many reasons: the rise in our opioid deaths, the impacts on our communities, and I really believe investing in those that are alive today. If we look at our children and they're growing up and we think about — and I'm not saying this as guilt — I'm saying this just as fact, and this is what we do as adults.

We have children. We raise them. We take out RESPs. We do all that. We donate to college funds. We work with our children as they're growing to choose the right high school, choose the right post-secondary education. We encourage them to do that. We invest in our own children in our home. My parents did that for my brothers and I. They invested in us. I stand here today because I was invested in. I'm alive today because I was invested in. And so that's why I brought this motion forward.

No money, no amount of money, really, can replace the life of one person, honestly. This beautiful boy that died, he lost his grandpa to cancer. He lost his uncle and auntie within the same two years to opioid overdose. And what's left of his immediate family? They're struggling. They're trying.

I sat at a table with about eight children in Old Crow when we opened the community hall doors so that people could just come and gather. That's what we do when there is a death in Old Crow. I thought I'd better go down and see how I can help,

whether I'm washing dishes, serving food — I don't know. And, of course, my nine-year-old granddaughter was there at the table with all her friends. I thought I was just going to leave her there to colour and stuff, and then I passed two little girls that said that when they announced the child's death, the little eight-year-old said, "I didn't know. I couldn't scream. I couldn't cry. I had no emotion. I didn't know what to do."

So, I sat down with those children at that table and I said, "Look at all these crayons and markers we have in front of us and paper. Why don't we start drawing and colouring what we remember about this beautiful boy? Let's do this together." And I sat there and did it, and I learned from them. I had my own points and things that I drew that I remembered about him. He always wore his hat to the side. He was quiet. He was polite, but he had struggles just like all of our youth at 16. I'm just saying; I'm just asking.

This is real, and I see how it's going today. I see it. I saw it last year. But what I always bring to the table is real, so real, and so impactful to our communities. I'll just thank my colleagues and friends here for supporting me on this. I believe that others do support too, but I understand that there is always a collective agreement. But I'm disappointed. I feel with the word "consider", my motion is watered down and there is not a commitment at all. And that's why I'm voting against the entire motion as amended.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the motion as further amended?

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. 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 12 yeas, seven nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.
I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 168, as amended, agreed to

Motion No. 161 — Witnesses appearing in Committee of the Whole on electrical infrastructure and services

Clerk: Motion No. 161, standing in the name of Lane Tredger.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre:

THAT witnesses from ATCO Electric Yukon appear before Committee of the Whole during the 2026 Fall Sitting on Tuesday, November 3, 2026 from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. to answer questions regarding electrical infrastructure and services.

Lane Tredger: I want to start by just acknowledging that this is a difficult tone shift. We've just been talking about some really hard topics that affect many Yukoners and many people in this Legislature, and it is hard to go from that to what is, in some ways, a bit of an administrative motion. So, I just want to take a moment to say that all the emotion and the importance of what we've just talked about — I don't want to brush that aside. I don't want to just move on to the next thing quickly, but this is the structure of the Legislature. So, I'm just going to take a moment to of silence to think about that, and then I'm going to come and then I'll speak to the motion at hand.

The motion that I'm talking about now is about ATCO. Thank you to everyone for giving me the moment to take that moment. This motion about ATCO is at its core about electricity bills and people's ability to pay them. Me and my team, we've been hearing from Yukoners all spring, all summer. We've been hearing from Yukoners about their electricity bills with I think more intensity than I ever have before. We've heard from people who are hurting, people who are frustrated, people who are angry, people who are panicked, who are just not sure how they are going to make this work.

Usually, summer is the easy time when it comes to electricity bills. It's light long; it's warm weather. People can count on that being something they don't have to worry about too much in the summer, but not this year. All spring and all summer, people were getting electricity bills that were sky high, just out of proportion with anything they had ever seen before. Their bills swung wildly from month to month by thousands of dollars at times, hundreds and thousands of dollars, and they were getting bills that just didn't make sense. We've been hearing this from people across the Yukon, across communities, across income brackets.

This isn't something that's just affecting people on fixed incomes, though that they're certainly being hit very hard. We've been hearing this from people across political affiliations; people who don't normally share a lot of viewpoints with me are coming up to me in the grocery store and saying that this has to change; this just isn't working. They're talking to me at the farmers market, at social gatherings. They're saying that they need help; we cannot afford our bills, and something's wrong. We've been hearing stories of people going into debt to pay their electricity bills and then risking losing their housing because they can't afford to pay both their electricity bills and their rent.

We've talked to seniors who've given up baking so that they can save money by not using their ovens. As I'm sure everyone in this House knows, the Yukon NDP started a petition calling for action that will be tabled later this Sitting, and it currently has thousands of signatures from across the Yukon. There has been a lot of speculation about what's going on with these erratic and incredibly high bills that people are facing. There are certainly the recent rate increases that are part of the problem, but it seems pretty clear that the rate increases alone aren't responsible for the erratic and expensive bills people are facing.

We believe that some of it may be due to billing issues. We understand that there is a practice sometimes of not reading the meter every month and using estimates, which can result in very high bills if those estimates are low. So, people are getting estimates after three or four or five months of not having their meter read that suddenly they have to make up all those months, and that's unaffordable and something people can't budget for.

Yukon Energy did an audit into their billing system and, in a press release in August, said that they had an error rate that was almost three percent, which is pretty astonishing when you think about it. That means that for every thousand customers, 30 of them every single month are getting a bill with mistakes in it. So, we're pretty confident some of these bills are mistakes, but it is very hard to know without being on the inside of the system and without going through everyone's bills what exactly is going on. And so we've been calling for an investigation.

What is going on with the bills? So, we would like to ask some of these questions to ATCO directly, especially because since we started that petition, the Yukon Party and ATCO announced that they would be doing a third-party audit. We've had that information from them, but it's been in the form of releases, and we and Yukoners have not been able to ask follow-up questions about that audit. We've heard a lot of concerns from Yukoners that ATCO is directing their own audit instead of having a neutral body do it. We would like to ask about that.

We have heard assurances from the Yukon Party that the cost of this audit won't go to rate. Usually, when ATCO spends money on the Yukon electricity system, it's then put into future requests for increasing the rate, so charged back to Yukoners through their electricity bills. The Yukon Party said that won't happen. We'd like to ask some more questions about how we know that's not going to happen.

Not everyone in the Yukon receives their electricity bills from ATCO. Many, especially in communities like Dawson and Mayo, get their bills from Yukon Energy. They share a billing system, so we're curious how much of what ATCO learns through their audit will be transferable to Yukon Energy's billing, and can those customers expect improvements?

We'd also like to hear ATCO's insights and ideas that they already have. I mean, they're already looking at the system. I imagine they have some ideas about what's going on. Do they have plans to address whatever comes up in the audit? How long do they think it will take? What are they imagining they might hear? There are a lot of questions we have to ask about this issue, because it is directly affecting Yukoners across the board. Ultimately, we also want to know.

The main question is: How will they restore trust with Yukoners and make sure that Yukoners are getting reliable, affordable bills? These are all questions that's really important to hear directly from ATCO on not just in a press release but in a dialogue where follow-up questions can be asked, where they can be pressed on points that don't make sense to every Yukoner, and we can really cover it in a thorough way. There is also the issue of a possible merger or a certain merger, I believe, with Emera and Canadian Utilities. Yesterday, that was announced. That raises many questions about the future of the Yukon's utility and how it will affect decision-making, mandates, processes for billing and repairs, and, of course, prices here in the Yukon.

I want to speak briefly to some of the specifics of this motion to ask ATCO to appear as witnesses so that we can ask them questions. We provided a specific date that's nearly a month away, and we chose that date because we hoped that would be enough time to give both ATCO as well as the government time to plan around it so that ATCO could make sure they were free to be here and that the government could make sure that they weren't planning to bring some other issue on that day.

I indicated to the other party House Leaders that we are open to changing that date. It is a little bit arbitrary. We're open to changing that date to another date that's during this Fall Sitting, so before approximately the end of November. But we put the date in because we wanted this motion to be concrete and enforceable by the House rather than aspirational, something we hoped would do. We wanted to say that it's going to happen on this day. We can choose another day. We don't mind supporting an amendment to choose another day, but we want it to be concrete.

I also reached out to ATCO to let them know about the motion and gave them the same offer that if there is another date they would prefer that is before the end of the Fall Sitting, that we're happy to work with them to amend to that date. At this point, I haven't received a request for another date from them. It is a bit unusual to call a private company in the Yukon to the Legislature as witnesses, but it's by no means unprecedented.

The last Assembly did this with PricewaterhouseCoopers, and in this case, we have somewhat of an unusual situation with this utility compared to other companies, because they don't have competition from other companies in the same way that say the grocery stores do or the banks do, but they aren't a public utility. So, they play a very important role for the Yukon public, and it's important that we can make sure that's happening in a way that works for Yukoners.

It's critical that as a key component of our electricity system, ATCO is meeting Yukoners' needs, and we need more information from them to find out if and how they're doing that, to hold them accountable, and to figure out what needs to change so our electricity system does work for Yukoners. I hope all the members of the House will join me in supporting this motion to have ATCO come as witnesses so we can ask them questions.

Hon. Ted Laking: I rise today to speak to Motion No. 161. Just before I get started, not to correct the member on their own motion, but the crux of the motion is actually — it

states to talk about “electrical infrastructure and services”, and I note the member opposite did not talk about electrical infrastructure at all when they highlighted what the point of this was. So, all that being said, this motion can be improved; I believe that it can be strengthened to give Yukoners more transparency, clarity, and a more complete picture and discussion about the challenges facing our electricity system.

We believe that ATCO Electric Yukon should appear before Committee of the Whole to answer questions regarding electrical infrastructure and services. But if we’re going to have this conversation, I think we should do it properly. ATCO is an important part of Yukon’s electricity system, but it is only one part of that system.

Yukon Energy Corporation generates the vast majority of the electricity used on Yukon’s integrated grid and owns and operates significant amounts of the generation and transmission infrastructure. And Yukon Development Corporation, as the parent corporation of Yukon Energy, has an important role in the broader direction of our publicly owned energy system and infrastructure. In order to allow members of this House to ask serious questions about the stability of our electricity system, the limitations that we have in generating enough electricity to meet expected peak demand, electricity rates, reliability, infrastructure investment, and the future of our electricity system, then I think Yukoners deserve to hear from all three corporations. In that spirit, our government proposes giving Yukoners insight into the full picture. Rather than hearing from just one piece of Yukon’s electricity system, let’s hear from ATCO, Yukon Energy, and Yukon Development Corporation.

Our government has made a deliberate choice to be open with Yukoners about the challenges facing our energy system. We have been forthcoming about the lack of infrastructure investment in our energy system over the last decade. We have been forthcoming about how the decisions made by the previous Liberal and NDP government have led to an electricity system that is in disrepair and woefully inadequate to support the needs of a growing territory. We have been forthcoming about how inaction by the previous government has driven up the cost of electricity and ultimately made life more unaffordable in the Yukon.

We have been forthcoming about the infrastructure investments that are needed to address these challenges, and we have been forthcoming about the billing problems Yukoners continue to experience with the utilities. And rather than have ratepayers or taxpayers pay for an investigation as the Official Opposition demands, we’ve asked ATCO to investigate these problems at their own expense. In fact, no government in Yukon’s history has been more upfront with Yukoners about the challenges facing our electricity system than this government. So, let’s go further today and bring everyone to the table.

Finally, I think that if we are to facilitate this discussion, then we will need to coordinate availability of these groups to appear at once. That is simply practical. So, we are now proposing appearances from all three corporations. We need to work with those organizations to identify a time during this Fall Sitting when the appropriate representatives from all three can be here and can provide members with meaningful answers.

Once that is done, we will put forward a new motion with a specific time and date for an appearance during the Fall Sitting.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Ted Laking: With that, I move:

THAT Motion No. 161 be amended by adding the phrase “, Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation” following the phrase “ATCO Electric Yukon” and removing the phrase “on Tuesday, November 3, 2026, from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.”

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation:

THAT Motion No. 161 be amended by adding the phrase “, Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation” following the phrase “ATCO Electric Yukon” and removing the phrase “on Tuesday, November 3, 2026, from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.”

Hon. Ted Laking: As explained in my earlier remarks, the point of this amendment is to ensure that Yukoners can get insight into the full and comprehensive picture about the state of the electricity grid in the territory. It allows members of this House to ask questions about everything, including the challenges we have with grid stability, the decade of underinvestment by the previous government, which has led to an electricity grid that has put the territory into a crisis, understanding how decisions that were championed by the Liberals and NDP, such as cancelling a new thermal power plant several years ago, led to these challenges, and how the poor planning by the previous government has led to increased costs for Yukoners.

The objective of this amendment remains exactly the same: giving members of this House and more importantly Yukoners an opportunity to get direct, accurate answers about the state of the territory’s electricity grid and what led us here and what may be required to address these challenges. We are making the proposal more comprehensive, more useful, and ultimately more transparent. I hope all members will support this amendment.

Lane Tredger: Well, you might not know it from all the comments from the member opposite directed at us, but I actually do think this is a pretty good amendment. I won’t quibble over whether electricity infrastructure includes billing or services, whether they include exactly what I spoke to, but I will focus on the substance of this amendment. I actually made the request to at House Leaders earlier this year that we have Yukon Energy Corporation and the Yukon Development Corporation in as witnesses, because I do think it’s really important that we talk about all aspects of our electrical system.

My one concern about this piece is that we don’t typically we have witnesses in for two hours. That is a lot of material to cover in two hours, to ask questions of three different entities covering everything from billing to generation. And so my request to the minister would be that as they work toward scheduling this, that they consider doing it on different afternoons so that we have a two-hour period to ask questions

of ATCO and a separate two-hour period to ask questions of Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation.

It's a pretty big scope that we are covering and I think it's important to Yukoners to get fulsome answers and that will take some time. So that's my request: that when this is scheduled, they're done separately. I'm a little apprehensive about removing a date altogether, because when there is a specific date in the motion, it means that the Legislature has the ability to enforce that. When it says just during the Fall Sitting, that's more difficult for the Legislature to enforce, and we'll have to rely on the commitment of this government to in fact bring forward the witnesses.

But I think I heard that commitment in the minister's comments, so I'm hoping when he closes off debate, that he will reiterate that they are committing that, during this Sitting, they will bring those witnesses and they're just waiting to finalize a date. I understand that scheduling is complicated, so we're happy to accommodate that.

In summary, we will be voting for this amendment to the motion. We do think it's good to be talking to Yukon Energy and Yukon Development Corporation as well and in fact had requested it. We hope that enough time can be allotted to cover both those purviews adequately, and we look forward to this coming up this Fall Sitting.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

Amendment to Motion No. 161 agreed to

Speaker: Is there any debate on the motion as amended?

Are you prepared for the question on the motion as amended?

Motion No. 161, as amended, agreed to

Motion No. 160 — Robert Service School industrial arts educator position

Clerk: Motion No. 160, standing in the name of Brent McDonald.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Klondike:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide Robert Service School with adequate funding to restore the school's full-time industrial arts educator position.

Brent McDonald: Of the many things that I could have motioned to bring into the House, to be quite frank, this is one that I never expected. I actually thought that in the second biggest community in Yukon, co-governed by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Robert Service School, a kindergarten to grade 12 school, having a full-time shop teacher would never have come up at all. It should be just considered a part of essential basic education. On June 17 of this year, I wrote a letter to Minister Kent and made the letter public. Oh, Minister of Education, sorry.

In the letter at that time — I'll read: "Robert Service School, a co-governed school operating in formal partnership with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, is facing the very real prospect of having no trades teacher in the upcoming school year. The current trades teacher, a 28-year veteran, retired as a full-time trades teacher, and that position was only replaced by a 0.5

position offer of a position." In the letter, I stated the result: "Unless your department acts now..." — and this letter was written four-ish months ago, "...is a complete loss of trades programming at Robert Service School, not a reduction, not a temporary gap, but an elimination. It's no longer a prospect; it's reality."

This year, Robert Service School started the school year with no trades teacher. Now, trades and trades teaching in school, it has effects in the school that I'll get to, but it also has effects in the community. A trades program is not simply just another class. The trades program has been a factor keeping families in Dawson City, and now what we're seeing too frequently is families with school-aged children, especially in the higher grades, are moving because of the lack of opportunity in our community and most importantly in our school.

Now, I know that rural schools can't offer all the programming that can be offered in bigger centres like Whitehorse. That's not what I'm getting at, but rural schools should not be disadvantaged by the lack of basic programming. And it's come to fruition that families are leaving, and it's not just students; it's community members; it's other family members that leave with them that contribute to social aspects like community sports and kids' hockey teams. So, it's bigger than just the school; it's our whole community.

A full-time trades teacher at Robert Service School would also offer Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in youth a direct pathway to economic self-determination, apprenticeship opportunities, connections to local industry, and careers that allow them to remain on their traditional territory and build prosperous futures there. Removing that pathway is not consistent with the spirit of co-governance, and it's not even consistent with the Yukon Party's stated commitments to working with Yukon First Nations on skills and economic development.

Staffing at schools is determined by a funding formula, and many factors go into that formula, but number one is student numbers. Those numbers get entered into the school, and the administration gets to choose how to allocate their staff. And their first basic concern is to make sure all the positions, grade levels, basic programming is covered — important, critical basic education. Once that's done, they look at if there is any allocation left for other positions — in this case, an industrial arts or shop teacher.

The minister does not choose what positions go where, but he does control the purse strings. In the last Sitting, I mentioned — and at all the school council meetings I attend and the association of Yukon school boards and committees that I attend, it's been recognized that this staff allocation or funding allocation formula needs to be updated, because it no longer meets the needs of especially rural schools. This is an issue that involves the whole community.

I'd like to explain what's there now and what's happened in the past. We have had Peter Menzies, a very well respected and dedicated community member and teacher, run the shop program for the last 28 years as a full-time teacher. In that time, by having shop classes there, he has kept hundreds of students in school and engaged. They would likely have otherwise left. He's created a program that allows students in that program to achieve apprenticeship hours while they're in school, working with local contractors so when they graduate, they can walk

right into trades jobs, go to further trades education with that base already in place.

It's been happening there for generations. Hundreds of children, hundreds of students. It's gone because this government could not allocate a 0.5 position out of a \$2.5-billion budget for our students. Now local industry supports the shop class and the shop teacher at Robert Service School. The Klondike Placer Miners' Association donated \$10,000 for equipment so that it could be utilized for students in the school.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Brent McDonald: Excuse me; I'm speaking.

And I'm sure that donation and that organization would be disappointed to hear that it's not being used anymore. And it's not just the shop class when it comes to how education is being funded. Last year, once again, the Klondike Placer Miners' Association contributed to keep the food program running at Robert Service School — a very generous donation.

As part of the food program, the kitchen in the school needed certain upgrades. By their own press release here, it says phase 1 of the upgrades to the kitchen was provided by the Government of Canada, \$435,000, building on a previous \$100,000 for planning and design to support phase 2 of the project. Once again, our school has had to rely on donations from two mining companies to provide basic infrastructure in a government school in the second largest community in the territory.

So, it's not a question of if there is enough money in the territory. I bet if you would ask the mining community if they could spare an estimated \$50,000 or \$60,000 out of the budget to open the mining roads early, they would have thought that money would be better spent to support a shop industrial arts teacher in the school. And today we learn — as well as a previous press release — we learn that this government is prioritizing a new firearms advocate position while they can't even fund a shop teacher in Robert Service School. Now, I think that's a disservice to firearms owners, of which I am one. Because if I need to advocate for my firearm or any of these responsible firearm owners, all they have to do is pick up the phone, call their MLA, send them an e-mail, a text, arrange to have a conversation. But prioritizing firearms over a shop teacher, an industrial arts teacher in a school, that's something that I don't think anybody could really support, to be honest.

Now, during the campaign, the Yukon Party told the Yukon public they were launching a robust recruitment campaign to attract teachers to rural Yukon, offering incentives for them to establish roots and access education. We had a candidate interested in being the shop teacher at Robert Service School who already lives in the community, already has their own place to live, doesn't need any extra supports to be there. He's already involved in the community but couldn't live on a .05 position at the school as a shop teacher.

Also in their campaign materials: examining opportunities for expanding apprenticeship to other careers and occupations and identifying how to promote apprenticeship education as a valuable alternative. We had that. It was working. It's gone. It's gone — not happening. Also in their campaign materials: developing hands-on programs to connect students with local industries to foster pride and practical skills and entrepreneurship. That existed through the hard work of the

retiring shop teacher. That was happening. I personally gave an award as co-chair of the Robert Service School Council to a student graduating that had several hundred hours of apprenticeship accumulated during the time they went to high school.

Also in campaign promises: exploring opportunities to expand the student training and employment program. Exploring opportunities to expand the student training — we had all those opportunities. They existed. They're not — they're gone, for Robert Service School anyway.

I can tell you from my own personal experience that when I went to high school, we started at grade 9 and back then it went to grade 13. Our school was lucky. We had a population in our town of about 5,000 people — so not a large town. But in our high school, between the grades 9 and 12, we had woodworking shop, a machine shop — two machine shops, actually — we had a three-bay autobody, and we had an electric shop. Those trades classes kept so many people in school. They kept me in school. In grade 13, trades were not offered as a subject, because grade 13 was more academic-streamed. Well, I made it halfway through before I quit because the engagement wasn't there. And here I am, a Red Seal tradesperson because of that early experience. I know when I look at my friends and I look around and I see kids from our community that have graduated from the shop program, how important that is for them.

About four or five years ago, in a student population of around 200 children, we lost 14 students who were unengaged and left. The program that Peter Menzies created and operated kept so many students since then engaged, active, career-focused. And it's not happening because the department can't come up with a .05 extra position in the school.

Our school, Robert Service School, needed a storage shed to store some of their gear. There was just not enough space within the school. They couldn't get it from the department. They had to rely on the generosity of Van Fleet Construction and Gammie Trucking to make that happen. Is it the will of the government? Like, are we going to have to start a GoFundMe campaign to get a shop teacher? I don't say that to be joking, because that's where we're at. You know that funding formula. It's numbers. It's numbers; I get it, and I understand that. But children are not numbers. Children are the most important people in our community, our families. That's what we're talking about here.

So, I know within the system, this ask is a bit different because it doesn't fall — it falls outside normal funding formulas and streams. But the importance to our community, our industry, to have local knowledge of people skilled in the trades who want to progress with that, who, if they need to go out and get further education but want to come home — they want to have service trucks that can go out and service remote mines. They want to be electricians that can work at Yukon Energy and elsewhere to help maintain our critical infrastructure, carpenters to build houses. And even beyond all that, even children who advance and go through the trades program at school, they may not choose the trade as a career, but when it comes to hands-on learning, when they get out, I'm sure they would enjoy having the skill of being able to use a saw and a hammer, to build a shed in their backyard, to build a birdhouse with their own children, to be involved in building

their new house to help make it new affordable using sweat equity.

I'm actually pretty sure everyone on the other sides of this House understands the importance of those skills and basic knowledge of trades to help them in their lives — something as simple as how to change a flat tire. Those skills are going missing. We need to support hands-on learning. Not everybody, not all students follow the academic stream. Trades teach math, English, communication, using real practical applications with an end result that can get you a trade that you can work anywhere, anywhere on the planet, actually, but especially where it's needed. In communities and in you and especially in rural areas, how great would it be to have our children back in those communities with the skills in trades that are needed in all the industries?

This is a really small ask, but the importance and the effect of supporting this motion are huge. Our community needs this. I think it's a reasonable expectation. The benefits far outweigh the expense. The future of the students at Robert Service School is going to depend on it. Earlier today, we debated another motion, very passionately communicated about the effects of toxic substances on our population. Education is but one of the tools we can use to help break that cycle at its earliest moments. Trades programming is critical and can help every child achieve that. Those benefits alone are worth it. It's probably the most cost-effective dollar-for-dollar program to outcomes that exists within the government. I expect the return on a 0.5 position can save this government millions in the future. I hope everyone here takes this seriously.

Hon. Scott Kent: I appreciate the motion brought forward by the Member for Klondike as well as his advocacy on behalf of his constituents. From his remarks today and from previous correspondence with me, I know how important trades training is to him and his community, and I think that's something that I also recognize is shared across all members of this House when I have interactions with them. Just in responding to this motion today, I want to take the House back to what it was like, from what I've heard, to be the Minister of Education prior to the staffing allocation formula being put in place, talk a little bit about where we are currently, and then also focus in on the early recommendations of the Yukon education independent review panel, the first status report that they put out, because I think that will help to inform the discussion that we're having here this afternoon and why it's important for me as a minister to not interfere with these types of decisions on things such as staffing allocations.

The member opposite cited some of the commitments that we had made in the platform and around trades training, and certainly obviously, there is more work to be done, but I think we've made some important first steps, including what we call the STEP into the Trades program, which was a pilot program we launched earlier this year to provide trades training opportunities for secondary school students. There were 13 positions that were identified — two in the member's home community of Dawson City. We're currently evaluating that program, but for those 13 positions, there were 55 applicants. So, I mean, early indications, of course, prior to the summer of work. It was a program that provided a wage subsidy to those employers to hire those students to start working in the trades

at an early age. As I said, the early returns were very positive and I await the final review of the program and then we would hopefully look to expand it for next year and include perhaps more positions in communities outside of Whitehorse like Dawson City and other communities across the territory.

I just wanted to give the House a brief update on where we're at right now respecting the Robert Service School industrial arts teacher. I too, like the member opposite, want to extend my thanks for the many years of service that Mr. Peter Menzies did in that role in Dawson City — I think everybody that has been in education circles over the past number of years would recognize what Peter did and what he was able to accomplish for that community. I thank him for his service in that role, and I wish him well in his retirement or whatever opportunities and endeavours he is now pursuing.

Again, this is my understanding of where we're at right now with respect to the trades teacher in Robert Service School. They are in the process of hiring a trades teacher that will start in the second semester of this school year. That teacher will deliver a full-time program for the second semester. Again, that is the equivalent of a 0.5 FTE, which was what the school administration determined for that position after they got their staffing allocation allotment. Of course, the Department of Education is committed to working with Robert Service School on staffing plans for the next school year, including options for having a full-time trades teacher throughout the year. The Department of Education supports trades programming for all schools, including Robert Service School. The rural education model for rural Yukon students is a program that offers experiential learning for high school students to earn credits. It will be delivered in April of 2027 and includes a number of trades options for rural students, including those from Dawson City.

The trades consultant for the Department of Education continues to work with community partners and schools on developing trades programs and opportunities for all Yukon students. I spoke about the STEP into the Trades program. There is also dual credit for trades that is offered for high school students who are interested in the early apprenticeship. The Minister of Economy, Tourism and Culture and I are both exploring other opportunities on the trades given some recent opportunities with federal funding, and we're hoping that can also include secondary students.

I too, like the member opposite, am appreciative of all of the investments that the placer mining community has made. I also should commend them on the establishment of their endowment fund or trust fund. I believe the number was \$3 million that was announced to fund community projects in the communities where they operate.

I know many of those placer miners personally from my time a number of years ago as executive director of the Klondike Placer Miners' Association. Many of those individuals are still around and still working and contributing so much not only to the community of Dawson City but to other communities in which they operate.

As I mentioned — just to go back to what it was like for ministers of education before the staffing allocation policy and handbook were put into place — and my understanding from talking to colleagues and listening to stories about that was, when school enrolment went down, obviously there were less

teachers in those schools. That was one of the factors. But then, of course, the lobbying of the Minister of Education would begin at that time — from other MLAs, from communities, from school councils, from a host of stakeholders that are involved in the education system. Numbers went up and down, and there was no real there was no real process or policy around it. I think that was what led to the introduction of the staffing allocation policy that we see today.

The school staffing allocation handbook aims to provide sufficient school staffing for the delivery of quality educational programming, guide school authorities in staffing and managing schools. Positions are calculated based on the formulas in the allocation handbook, and for core programming and student support such as learning assistance teachers, or LATs. School administrators work within the allocated positions to assign and schedule staff for their school. Changes in school and in student enrolment across the school system can result in some schools receiving additional staff while other schools, unfortunately, will experience staffing reductions as a result of that.

Again, this staffing allocation handbook was brought in to eliminate that lobbying of the minister based on school obviously decreases in enrolment and decreases in staffing. I applaud those who brought it in initially. I know it was a number of years ago, but those who worked on that at the time did a tremendous job of bringing this forward.

Some of the staffing allocation — not all of it — is also part of the Yukon Association of Education Professionals collective bargaining agreement. I don't think the member opposite mentioned that in his initial remarks. Some of this is bargained in that agreement, not all of it, but some of that allocation is bargained in there. So that's an important factor to consider when we're talking about making changes to the staffing allocation model.

I looked at the allocation handbook itself and it says that the purpose of the staffing allocation formula is to provide sufficient school staff to deliver quality educational programming, strive toward equitable staffing from school to school, and provide comprehensive information to principals and school committees on how staff are allocated. I think the important piece there is the equitable staffing from school to school. This motion deals specifically with Robert Service School. It doesn't deal across the entire staffing allocation. It's specific to the school in the member's riding. As I mentioned, I applaud him for advocating on behalf of his constituents, but essentially, what this does it takes us back to the time before the staffing allocation handbook was in place, and on the floor of the Legislature, the Member for Klondike is lobbying me to go outside of that staffing allocation formula and put an additional 0.5 position into the staffing allocation for Robert Service School without considering any of the other schools across the territory and what their needs might be. I think that certainly is a challenge when it comes to what this motion is asking us to do here this afternoon.

I also want to talk about the Education independent review panel and their status report. The first in their summary of recommendations that they gave to us was around addressing political interference. What I believe the Member for Klondike is asking me here today is to politically interfere in the staffing allocation, and it's something that I'm not prepared to do. I

hope he addresses that issue in his closing remarks on the motion here today.

What the summary of that recommendation is — and it's on page 11 of their status report under "Addressing political interference", at the very bottom it says, "While the Minister could establish overarching policies or issue certain directives to the Ministry, the Minister should not overrule or dictate the day-to-day operations or decisions made by the various levels of governance within the education system." To me, this is exactly what this motion is asking me to do. It's a significant departure from what we do.

Would I like to have shop teachers and full allocations of teachers across every school in the Yukon? You bet. But obviously, the allocation formula is based on enrolment. The member opposite can find the school staffing allocation on the government's website, and if he can't find it, I'd be happy to send him a copy. He can get into some of the details there. The guiding principles for the staffing allocation decisions in the documents are around equity; they're data driven, transparency, predictability, timeliness, responsiveness, sustainability, accountability, and collaboration. So, I think are those are important guiding principles that we need to stick to when we're talking about the staffing allocation.

Again, I share with the member the importance of the trades. When we do these staffing allocation formulas, as I mentioned, there is work with the principals, administration, and the school committees to establish where those different positions will go. We continue to work with Robert Service School and schools across the territory on how to address some of the challenges that they feel are in that staffing allocation model.

Just to wrap up, I think obviously we want to make sure that we're free of any perceived or actual political interference when it comes to schools, because I'm sure every member in this House with schools in their communities that are short a shop teacher or short a music teacher or short a drama teacher or any number of teachers, that is based on the staffing allocation formula. If we were to vote in favour of this motion today, I'm sure there would be many more motions and many more e-mails to me to look to increase the staffing allocation across individual schools. But I think that would take us back to the time prior to the staffing allocation.

The staffing allocation policy and that formula is in place for a reason, and it's something that I take seriously. There are some difficult choices that have to be made based on enrolment, but those choices shouldn't be made by the minister, and quite frankly, shouldn't be made in a motion that is debated on the floor of the House. With that in mind, we will not be supporting this motion brought forward by the Member for Klondike, but again, I want to thank him for his advocacy. I'll continue to work with him and his community and communities across the territory when it comes to the programming and the success of students in our schools.

Debra-Leigh Reti: That was quite a lot on both sides. I mean, I rise today for sure, and I support this motion, and I also thank the Member for Klondike for bringing it forward. I understand, to a point, both sides. I was previously on chief and council, and I understand about political interference, but I also understand about advocating and that there are ways to have

conversations and get better understanding and work together. That's also possible. I'm hoping that — I mean, I'm not going to read the rest of my speech because I've been here so many times already and I understand where the Member for Klondike is coming from. When we come from our smaller communities, we have to advocate and for these things because we can't just choose a high school. The high school that is in the community is what we have.

There were a lot of really great points brought forward, and we know how important trades are. I know in Old Crow, I'm always so proud of our Vuntut Gwitchin members who are Red Seal carpenters, plumbers, and electricians. I'm so proud that they are ours and that they have the training and what it took to get them there, and I'll tell you, they didn't get that in Old Crow. They had to go Outside to get it. So, I value the Member for Klondike advocating for this.

I'm hoping that going forward — I understand how the vote's going today, but that there can be, without political interference — I know as a council member that I can still have conversations with the executive director, and we can hash things out with the one concerned about something, and change can be made. It doesn't have to be political interference. It can be about "what are some decisions that can be made for the greater good of the school, of the community." So, I hope that going forward maybe this can happen with the decision that happens today.

Justin Ziegler: I've heard a few things that I want to talk about. I have also a lot of notes.

I just noticed that the minister mentioned that if he says yes to one then there are going to be requests for an art teacher here and a music teacher here and a drama teacher here, and all of these things, and I want to say that maybe if there are requests like this, it's because there is a need. So maybe it is okay to receive some requests, because if the need is here, then why not request it?

I also want to speak about this motion from the heart. That's what I try to do most of the time. I've heard the minister talking about funding formulas and millions here and hundreds of thousands there, and I want to say that sometimes it's not about cost; it's also about the value.

School was actually very hard for me. Sitting at a desk, reading, writing, memorizing, being tested — I was never an academic child, and I struggled with all of it. For many years, the classroom told me in small ways every day that I was not good enough. When you hear that long enough as a child, you start to believe it. And the classroom — because this uncomfortable place — and if classroom is the only thing a school has to offer, then you start loathing school entirely, right? But I was sort of lucky because I had arts and I had dance. I'm just trying to draw a parallel here. The dance studio was the only place where I could be myself growing up. In the studio, I did not have to pretend. My body knew things my report card could not measure. I could work hard, get better, and see that I was actually getting better. For a kid who felt like I was failing everywhere else, that changed everything for what came after.

I actually want to name one person here — Natalie, my dance teacher. She made sure I could be myself in the studio. She saw me. Every dance teacher I had after her helped me too, but she was the first. I was very young. I don't know who I

would be today without her and without that dance studio. For some kids, the dance studio is that room. For other kids, it's a wood shop. It's a metal shop. It's a library. It's a vegetable garden. And for some kids, it's also hockey. It is the place where the student who can't sit comfortably in the classroom gets to stand and move and build. It is the place where the kid who is quiet in English class shows everyone what their hands can do. It is where a student makes a table, a toolbox, or fixes a small engine and goes home very proud. For some young people, it is the reason they come to school at all. I would have been one of these kids.

This might be the beginning of who they are: builders, fixers, makers, the people who actually build our territory. For some of them, the shop will lead to a career, an apprenticeship, a Red Seal, and a business of their own one day. For others, it would actually become something they keep for life — a hobby, because that counts too — a comfort place, a personal project, an escape, maybe something they do with their hands when their head is too full. I think that matters more than we can often say. For a young person who's struggling, having one thing they are good at changes how they see themselves. Making something real, something you can touch, something you're good at or making progress at gives you a quiet kind of confidence. It can be a way to calm down, to focus, to feel useful — and I know this because dance did exactly this for me, and it still does, actually.

When we talk about a shop teacher, we're not only talking about trades, right? The classroom is a difficult place for a lot of children, and that is not their fault. As a society, our job is to make sure every child has somewhere to thrive, and maybe that is a dance studio, maybe that is a woodshop, but there has to be room for each of them, for each of us. I think this should be our mandate for the children of this territory, for the future generation.

At Robert Service School in Dawson City, this room is at risk. The Dawson community has been asking for this position to be fully funded for a long time. Parents, educators, and the community have been clear and consistent. They're not asking for something new; they're asking for something that they actually used to have.

I would also like to speak about this as a critic of economy. The Yukon need people in the trades. We need carpenters, electricians, welders, mechanics. We need them in Whitehorse and we need them in the communities. The Yukon Building Trades Council has said publicly that our high school needs more shop teachers and better equipment. Many tradespeople can tell you exactly where it started for them. It started in a high school shop. So, if a young person in Dawson never touches a tool at school, we make it less likely that they become the builder or the mechanic their community will need tomorrow.

Industrial arts is an early investment in our workforce. It is also an investment in keeping young people in their community. My colleague from the Klondike mentioned all of this better than I am right now. I want to remind this House of what the government promised Yukoners one year ago. It was the campaign, so that's not 20 years ago; that was a year ago. Page 18 of the platform recognized — quote: "... "the need for more supports in rural schools." On page 19, under "Promoting Trades Training and Alternative Learning Models", the Yukon Party promised to develop — quote: "hands-on programs to

connect students with local industries to foster pride in practical skills and entrepreneurship”, and that starts in a school shop. On page 41, the Yukon Party promised, quote: “... a robust recruitment campaign to attract teachers, health care workers and trades professionals to rural Yukon [with] incentives for them to establish roots...”

A full-time industrial arts teacher in Dawson City is all of these promises in one position. It's a support in the classroom. It's a support in rural school. It's a hands-on program, and it's a trade professional who can establish roots in a rural community if we offer them a real job, not a half one.

This motion is a chance for the government to keep its own promises, and it's not a large ask. I will actually keep my eyes focused on any political interference from ministers in their departments in the future. This motion is a chance to keep all of those promises, as I said, and it's not a large ask. It is one position, one school, one community, and it is the difference between a half job that nobody takes and a full job that a good teacher will want to keep.

I think about the kids at Robert Service School who are sitting in a classroom right now, feeling the way I used to feel: wiggly. Maybe a pen and paper is not something that makes them thrive. Some of them are waiting for their room, and for some of them, it's a wood shop. So, I hope we're going to give it back to them, and I actually urge all the members to support Motion No. 160.

Linda Moen: I've been listening to this debate quite closely, and as somebody who has a very unique experience of being at the table as a former school council member, I know the difficult discussions that come with the funding formula. I also too had looked into with the administration of where that formula came from, and unfortunately, not all schools were at that table when that decision was being made. So, schools, school councils were left out of those discussions when it became apparent that it may be based on population.

As the official critic of Education for the Yukon NDP, I do support this. I don't believe it is political interference. To me, it's advocacy. We as parents, as caregivers, as people from community, we have every right to address our MLAs on issues, our unique needs in our schools, issues that are facing our student population, and how do we address them? Well, we talk to our government leaders, including the Minister of Education. I've often heard it alluded to a few times now, with them praising upgrades to their field in their own ridings. Is that considered political interference? I don't think so. That's advocacy. I hear them praising about their activity bus that they received. I think that's great. I want all schools to have activity buses. I want all schools to have upgrades to their fields, not just a few, but all. That is advocacy, and that's what we're doing here today. We're advocating for a unique need in a rural school.

Education is important for all of our young families, for our young people. It's a key part to ensuring all students have equitable access. I heard members opposite mentioning the word equity. That is very important. I think it's disappointing when we see those types of cuts because we're not the ones affected. Most of us live here in Whitehorse. People who live in rural Yukon and represent rural members would have a very good understanding of what those cuts mean to the community.

It does mean families may be leaving. It does mean students won't have the same access to shop programs or other electives.

I believe, and I fully, firmly believe that Yukon begins and needs to invest in our young people. They need to have the same opportunities to learn, to grow, and build their futures in their home communities. And their family should have the choice to stay there. They need the government that supports them through meaningful investment into staff, infrastructure, and programs that reflect their unique needs — theirs, not ours, theirs. When we think about schools falling short of offering these programs, we have to know and understand that not all students have the same access to programs that here in Whitehorse we get to enjoy. And if our school doesn't offer it, there are options for students to maybe attend another school that does offer it.

When we see specialized courses, trades programming, advanced academic courses, and extracurricular opportunities that are unavailable, students face a lot of difficulties. Some may have to leave their community to pursue those goals or limit their opportunities. I think neither option represents true equity in education.

It was interesting to hear the minister talk about that interim report, the independent review panel. I didn't know any of those recommendations were being implemented. There are numerous recommendations from the interim report, but the only one that the minister decided to talk about today was political interference. What about all the other recommendations that have come down from that? I had to request the interim report when it first came out; it wasn't publicly available. I e-mailed and requested that information. It's very interesting to see that's the only one recommendation that was talked about today. Again, what about all the other ones?

And the amount of money that was spent on that independent review panel, when there are numerous other reports — again, the Auditor General report, numerous recommendations that this government hasn't even mentioned or talked about.

Years in the waiting for the Auditor General reports to have any of them implemented. Maybe some, maybe a few, but here we are again, almost a year waiting for more information about gaps that we already know are identified and have yet to be rectified or looked at.

Again, sitting at school council, we had many cuts. For six years, we had cuts to FTEs. Every year, I sat at that table and said, “How are we managing to do this? Why are we doing this to the children?” We, as adults, were sitting there making decisions on who's going to get cut, and it wasn't the basic; it was all the extra ones that were drama, music, arts, the ones that help our creativity in the classrooms. When you see those being cut, you know that it's not representing a whole child. A whole child isn't just about the academic part; it is about the creative part. It's about demonstrating play. It's about creating music. About other things than reading books, which are highly important. Numeracy and literacy are extremely, extremely important. So, when I see these programs not being offered in rural schools, I only can say that we're not addressing their unique needs.

The minister did bring up the Yukon Association of Education Professionals and their bargaining processes. A lot

of that is about the amount of students who are in the classroom. I guarantee you, I have yet to see a rural Yukon school that is overcapacity. I don't see rural schools needing extra classrooms, modular classrooms being offered because they're at overcapacity. If anything, again, the unique needs of rural Yukon students need to be addressed and looked at beyond what we think is needed here in this House.

When we see programs disappear, students disengage. That was brought up numerous times already. They may stop attending classrooms. I'll remind the Minister of Education: 78 days of students stop attending classes in rural Yukon — 78 school days that rural Yukon schools that the data that the Department of Education has provided themselves show that Yukon students are not showing up to school; 78 days of absences. That hasn't yet to be addressed.

Our community should not have to make these cuts. We are encouraged and frustrated by the contrast between the capital investment and direct toward school shop programs and cuts facing shops and trade programs in the rural schools, including the Klondike. We support investment in trades. We have two Red Seal tradespersons in our caucus. I have family members that are in the trades. We support upgrading schools and investing in learning spaces. However, there is a clear contradiction when trades training is expanded in one location while opportunities are reduced in another, and we see that in schools today. I know that there is a school actively having a shop program put in place, but yet we see rural Yukon having the cut to their program. This government continues to suggest that resources are limited and difficult, and that choices have to be made. Yet Yukon families can see that money is being spent, but we're not questioning whether the resources exist or not. The question is where those resources are being directed, and whose priorities are being reflected. Families, educators, and communities are asking for investments that respond to local needs, and they deserve a government that is listening. Investing in rural education is also an investment in rural economic development. When we invest in communities, people build lives, businesses, opportunities, and stronger futures. It's an investment in hope.

When government continually paints a picture of scarcity, it becomes harder for communities to envision themselves and their young people. Too often, that contributes to people leaving in search of opportunities elsewhere. Communities need hope, and hope is built through investment. Rural communities deserve the same commitment and belief in their future that we show when we invest in our largest population centres. Communities need future tradespeople, teachers, health care workers, entrepreneurs, and leaders.

When students can access quality education and training close to home, they are more likely to build their lives and careers in their home communities. Strong schools help create strong communities. Students should not have to leave their communities to access educational and training opportunities. Education should not operate on a hub-and-spoke model. Whenever possible, young people should be able to learn where they live alongside their families and their support networks.

This is not only good for student well-being; it strengthens the entire community. I also want to highlight the importance of maintaining programs like shop classes and skill training, because it helps make the trades more welcoming to people of

different backgrounds. Introducing young people, particularly young women, to trades earlier in life creates opportunities to explore new skills and careers. Educators play an important role in creating learning environments where students feel included, supported, and encouraged to participate.

When I was on the school council at Elijah Smith, we discussed having exposure to trades at an earlier age, not when you enter high school. Without those opportunities, we risk continuing patterns where trades remain probably, for lack of better words, a male-dominated space. Diverse teams foster innovation, improve workplace culture and safety, and encourage more people to enter and succeed in trades.

There is also an important lesson here about reconciliation and decolonization. For generations, government policies removed children from their families and communities in the name of education. While today's circumstances are different, we must be careful not to create systems that continue to draw young people away from their homes in order to access opportunities.

Decolonization is not only about what is taught in classrooms; it's also about ensuring communities have the capacity and resources to educate and support their own young people. It means respecting local autonomy, listening to the community's needs, and supporting communities and building the capacity for themselves. That means responding to the needs of communities like that in Klondike. It means maintaining programs such as shop classes, making necessary upgrades, and investing in infrastructure that allows students to succeed close to their homes.

Important progress has been made through the work of First Nation governments and the First Nation School Board, but the work is not finished. Governments cannot be passive. It must continually invest in education that strengthens families, supports communities, and respects local choices. The current approach does not demonstrate an equal commitment to all Yukon students. Instead, it risks creating a system where opportunities are concentrated in Whitehorse, while rural and remote communities are asked to make do with less.

This government has repeatedly stated, both in its platform and in public debate, that improving access to trade training is a priority. If that commitment is genuine, it must include equitable investment in rural schools. Every Yukon student, regardless of where they live, deserves to access the opportunities they all need to succeed. Needless to say, I will be supporting this motion. As I stated before, there's numerous data that the department puts out on their own selves, including that in rural Yukon schools, there are up to 78 absences of students. That paints a very clear picture that students are not engaged in the education system. If we can help students stay engaged in programs in their community, maybe that data would change. But that is the department's responsibility to ensure that they are addressing those absences gaps.

Kate White: Hope springs eternal. I was hopeful that maybe we'd hear some from other rural members, but that's okay, because I'm happy to talk. It was interesting listening to the Minister of Education talking about political interference and lobbying the minister for staffing allocations. Because I'll note on April 22, 2025, the now minister of Education was asking the previous Minister of Education in Question Period

— and I’m just going to quote from this: “Will the minister agree to immediately review the staffing and EA allocation for Whistle Bend to ensure that the school is properly resourced to deal with their current situation?” That wasn’t that long ago. It’s interesting.

I’ll note that when we talk about staffing allocations, there are times when we think that it’s calculated around numbers or when it is calculated around numbers, it doesn’t give the full picture. And so for folks who are new in this Chamber, this is a story that you may not have heard, but for folks who’ve been here for a while, you will have. I have no regrets about it, so I’m going to stay and tell it again. When I was in elementary school — I went to Whitehorse Elementary School — I was in French immersion. It’s interesting, because I couldn’t sit still when I was a kid, and I couldn’t sit still when I was a teenager, and I can’t sit still as an adult, and that’s a whole different story.

But when I was in school, we had this presentation. We had someone come to our classroom, and this person said: Smart kids will go to university. Smart kids will go to university. Sort of smart kids will go to colleges, and some of you will go to trade school. Of course, that wasn’t the language exactly, but that is what my little kid had remembered. As in, if you were smart, you would go to university. If you were a little smart, you would go to college, and if you weren’t smart, then what were your options?

And so the first shop I was ever in, I was in Jeckell Junior High, the wood shop. I remember how it smelled, how it felt. Because it turns out for a kid who can’t sit still, it doesn’t mean you’re not a kid who can’t use your hands. It was a place where I actually felt like it was easier for me than other things. And by the time I got to high school, I was definitely not having an easy time.

I remember Mr. Romanczak’s metalwork program. And the interesting thing about this class is that no matter when my class was or no matter when I popped in, there were other students there, and they weren’t necessarily in a scheduled class. I remember this older guy, and he was in grade 12, so he was like an adult as far as I was concerned. And he found a passion making knives. He was making knives, and interestingly enough, he’s a well known Yukon artist now who makes knives. That’s what his job is. That’s what he does.

But when I was in the metalwork shop, when I would go in — and it was the smell and it was the sounds and it was being able to use my brain in different ways; it was being able to solve problems, was being able to do all sorts of different things that in theory, I was learning in my other classes, but this is where I got to use it practically. And I’ve told this story that when I got through high school — which was not easy, because I did not graduate until I was 21 in summer school because of math 11 — and I was trying to figure out what I was going to do with my life and I had a conversation with Mr. John Allen, who was my friend Polly’s dad, and he had a construction company at the time called Mallard Construction. And Mr. Allen — because I have a hard time calling people by their first names — Mr. Allen, I went to go see Polly, and she wasn’t home, and he and I were chatting and he said, “Well, what’s next, Kate?” I said, “Oh, I’m trying to figure out what I want to do. I don’t know what to do.”

I knew for myself that university probably wasn’t it. I was, like: Maybe I want to be a set designer; maybe I want to be a

pastry chef. And he said, “Kate, I have lawyers and I have plumbers on staff.” And I said, “Okay.” And he said, “Who makes the most money?” And I was like, “Well, the lawyers.” And he said, “No, it’s the plumbers. Go to trade school. Go to trade school.” And so I did. I went to a culinary program in Vancouver, and it was awesome.

And all of a sudden, it turned out that when I couldn’t sit still and I had 90 million things happening in my head at the same time, it’s actually perfectly designed for kitchens, with a hundred things happening all at the same time every day, all the time. And that started my path down kitchens. I was in school in Vancouver. I opened a catering company. I went to France. I went to England. I went to Australia, and I worked in kitchens all the way around. I came home; I was trying to figure out what I was going to do. I had a coffee shop. I worked in mining camps.

When I worked in mining camps, it was in kitchens. I made more money as a camp cook in a mining camp than I did as a political person until 2019, when I became the leader of a party. When I worked in mining camps as a cook, I made more money in half a year than I did as someone who was elected in here. I worked in France. I worked in England. I worked in Australia with that trade. It is still something — to be frank, I’ve been here a long time now, and sometimes people ask if I miss it, and the answer is: Yes, absolutely, I miss it. What I miss most about kitchens is that every day is successful. I can tell you, the Assembly does not feel successful every day.

When I applied for the job in corrections, I didn’t have my seal. I didn’t have my journeyman ticket at that point in time. I’d been working in kitchens for more than a decade, but I’d never gone through the process, because the one time I looked into it, where I was being put was into industrial kitchens, and that wasn’t my thing. And so ultimately, I challenged my exam, and to my surprise, I did get my seal at that point in time. And lots has changed in education at this point. The supports for folks in trades — it is quite a bit different, and I think that’s really important.

But I think about how important trades are and how important it is when, like my colleague from Riverdale South said, when you just don’t feel like you quite belong, when you find that space. I think about the students in the metal shop that I saw who would be there like between classes or after classes or in classes that they weren’t in. And so I’m really lucky. Peter Menzies is a friend of mine. I’m lucky to have been introduced to them after I got elected in 2011. And Peter was always really adamant when I went to Dawson that I stop by and I see the trades wing. And the reason why — he was like: You need to see what’s happening, Kate. You need to see what’s happening, and it’s important.

I’m going to share my reflections, but I just want to share something that was from the Robert Service School Sourdough newspaper from Friday, February 14, 2020. And it’s called Shop Program in 2020 Industrial Arts Plus New Technologies.

“You can call what Mr. Menzies and students do in the Industrial Arts Wing ‘Shop’ or ‘Tech Ed’ or ‘Applied Skills’ or even ‘Pre-Apprenticeship’. Regardless of what you call it, students as young as 10 can start a technical skills pathway intended to lead them to Trades School and a technical career. “Many of the courses such as woodworking and drafting are still compulsory. With the help of the Klondike Placer Miners’

Association, the Dawson City International Gold Show and Yukon College, RSS reopened the metal shop. This allows students a chance to learn about metal and millwright trades. “Shop programs now have a large computer and multi-media component. Vinyl cutting, video editing, 3D printing, FM radio, electronics and Fine Art are all integrated into the daily lives of students. These program elements reflect that all careers require creativity and digital skills as well as the physical, hands-on skills.

“RSS has three new program options in shop. First, a student can do a self-directed study and apply a technology. The most recent project is a Grade 11 student who has prototyped a small guitar which will be used in elementary music classes. Second, a Grade 11 or 12 student can do work placement for several weeks (while earning wages) in a trade. Third, RSS and Yukon College occasionally offer a first year Apprenticeship Course. Shop students in Grade 11 and 12 are eligible if they meet the safety, team work and math requirements. Both Welding and Heavy Duty mechanics have been implemented with six RSS students participating and passing.”

Six students six students went through that pre-apprenticeship program. “Safety is our number priority and to date we have a very good safety record. Our number two priority is developing a strong work ethic.” Our motto is: It’s a shop, not a sit around and do nothing shop! Sorry, “It’s a workshop, not a sit around and do nothing shop!” I was laughing to myself before I got that right. “A local professional and successful artist gave us this slogan. It reflects that fact that employers expect youth to be dependable, safe workers with problem solving skills.

“Trades volunteers are helping in a big way. Along with teaching and mentorship, these volunteers help keep our equipment maintained and safe. We’ve formed an Industrial Arts Society and membership is open to those interested in expanding trades awareness, skills and certification.

“Drop by the school on Thursday, February 27 anytime during the day and participate in our RSS/Skills Canada ‘Try a Trade’ event. Students in Grades K – 7 will have a chance to try up to 15 different technical skills.” Awesome, Madam Speaker; that is awesome.

I’ll note that it was the trades teacher and others who made sure that students could attend the territorial skills competition in Whitehorse even though it was difficult. Even though it was difficult, in a government press release from March 7, 2018, talking about the Klondike Placer Miners’ Association funds metal shop expansion at Robert Service School, which we talked a bit about, there is one really important line at the bottom that talks about quick facts.

“In 2011, Robert Service School established a trades pathway for grade seven to 12 students. Other trades training available at the school include woodworking and drafting. For the first time this school year, Robert Service School is offering metal works in addition to small engine work in the metal shop. The work on the metal shop began two years ago with support from the Klondike Placer Miners’ Association and the Canadian Welding Association.”

This is the part that I think is really important for this. “Local families have shown increased interest in shop programs

following the success of two Yukon College dual-credit courses offered in Welding (2013) and Heavy Duty Mechanics in 2017.”

When we think about that 2020 Sourdough article talking about the pride of those six students getting through those dual programs, I think that’s talking about that. And I’ll note that the minister said that trades will be offered at Robert Service School come January and that it will be full time for that half semester. But my question is: What happens to those students who don’t make it to January?

We heard from my colleague from Mountainview as she expressed — you know how in Whitehorse, if there is not a program offered in your own high school, that you have the ability to see if you can access it from one of the different high schools, you can go. You can check it out. And we’ve seen that whether it’s with experiential sciences, whether we talk about the outdoor education program, music, art, and drama, that can go toward Wood Street school. And kids from the Klondike have the opportunity to apply for that.

But if there is a student in F.H. Collins that is interested in a program not offered there, they can look at attending a different school for that class. But for kids in the Klondike, there is one high school. There is one school. Well, there are two schools now, because there is the French immersion, which is important. But for Robert Service School, there one high school. There is one option. When I think about my own education journey and trying to find my place and to think about how important it was to find it, whether it was the metal shop or the music shop or whether I think about my colleague from Riverdale South and, for him, it was the dance studio.

I know that there are students right now as young as 10 who are missing out on what that shop space offered the Robert Service School. And we talk about staffing allocations, and the minister said it alluded that it was the administration who made the decision, but administration shouldn’t have had to decide between language learning assistance teachers or EA supports or a shop teacher position. The minister himself advocated in 2025 to take a look at the staffing allocation of Whistle Bend School. And so we’re asking that there be funding, that there be a look at the staffing allocation for Robert Service School. We are asking the minister to give the money.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Kate White: And I’ll ask again for the minister to fund that position. He’s speaking off-mic right now, so, I mean, so no one can hear. So, I guess I get to interpret what he’s saying. But we are asking that it be funded. We are asking that the position be funded. The minister already spoke, and he’s done. So, what he’s saying off-mic is, I guess, relevant for him. But when we think about the students who are being left out right now at Robert Service School, because right now, they don’t have access to that space, that’s a problem. Because although there will be a teacher there in January, there is not a teacher there now. When Mr. Menzies had that classroom open, he had that space open and he was there all day every day and it meant a student could go in at any point. It meant that high school students were working on projects in their spare periods. It meant that people were poking their heads in, and it was a vibrant place in that school. It was an important place in that school.

Budgets are about priorities. There is money in this budget. We’ve seen it: \$500,000 to open roads for placer mining weeks

ahead of the scheduled opening. We've seen \$3 million in this budget just now to support businesses with extended producer responsibility costs. So, we are asking that this position be funded for all the reasons that I've said, for all the reasons that the Member for Klondike has said, and for all the reasons that those students need that space, that community needs that space. And so, I'm happy, of course, to vote in favour of this and to speak about it, because everybody's education path is different, and I want to make sure that the voices of those who need that space aren't left out of this conversation.

Until the Member for Klondike was elected, I was the only tradesperson in this space from when I got elected in 2011. So, when we discussed things like journeymen and we talked about things like apprenticeships, I could always tell who didn't understand, because it is different. It is different. And so, I want to make sure that this position exists and is a full-time position in Robert Service School, because I know how important it is. So, I thank the Member for Klondike for bringing it forward. I thank Peter Menzies for the leadership and work he did in that community. I know he had contemplated retiring earlier, but he didn't want that program to end. So, this must be hard for him and his friends and colleagues who made that program work for so long with volunteers from the community making it happen. So, we're going to vote on it. I don't expect we're going to win, but we will have fought hard.

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

Brent McDonald: I'd like to close by offering a few points. The letter that I wrote on June 17 of this year bringing this situation to light included some other things that I know the department acted on, which I found out from other sources, because I never even received the courtesy of a response to this letter — three and a half months.

When a school staff allocation gets stretched thin, it's hard on everybody, especially the educators. I had a parent talk to me the other day who called Robert Service School to talk to the principal who was off teaching a class and then asked to talk to the vice-principal who was also off teaching in class. That's telling when a parent can't talk to school administrators. And don't get me wrong; school administrators get back as quickly as possible. But my point is, they are in classrooms teaching.

I'd also like to point out in the capital supplementary budget that we just saw a great investment of \$150,000 for a shop class in another Whitehorse school. That's awesome. More investment in shop is fine, but if there is no one there to teach it — now I know there is a plan to have a teacher working full-time hours for second semester. There was a plan at the beginning of the school year to find a 0.5 shop teacher — didn't happen. So, this plan for second semester full-time hours is still just a plan; it's an "if", and it's still only 0.5. It pleases me to hear that they're working toward perhaps next year having full-time — good information.

When it comes to advocating for my community, well, I'm going to do it, because I know that Robert Service School Council knows about this issue. I know the TH education department knows about this issue, and I know the school administration knows about it. School administration usually works through the superintendent to get their points across and get their needs assessed. Last year during the whole school

year, the superintendent for Robert Service School did not visit that school once. How you advocate properly is by knowing the communities, knowing the circumstances, and knowing the teachers. If your superintendent can't even show up once during the whole school year, sorry; it's not funny. When your superintendent doesn't have the courtesy to show up even once during the school year, that's also telling.

So, when we look at a staffing formula that clearly is not working and we look at superintendents that don't visit, the minister calls this ask political interference; I call it recognizing something when a community is in desperate need. I call that leadership. It's not interfering; it's helping. And it's helping because this system, especially the education system, is more dysfunctional than a lot of people know. When it's not working and when a school and a community are not receiving basic things for them, that's when leaders need to step forward. I mentioned earlier that it's about numbers. It's about children. It's about our future. They deserve it.

I thank everyone that spoke. I especially thank those who vote in favour of this. And if you don't support it, that's also very telling. It's telling our community, our riding, and it's telling the students.

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: Disagree.

Hon. Scott Kent: Disagree.

Hon. Cory Bellmore: Disagree.

Hon. Brad Cathers: Disagree.

Hon. Linda Benoit: Disagree.

Hon. Ted Laking: Disagree.

Patti McLeod: Disagree.

Hon. Laura Lang: Disagree.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: Disagree.

Hon. Wade Istchenko: Disagree.

Adam Gerle: Disagree.

Doris Anderson: Disagree.

Tyler Porter: Disagree.

Kate White: Agree.

Lane Tredger: Agree.

Brent McDonald: Agree.

Linda Moen: Agree.

Carmen Gustafson: Agree.

Justin Ziegler: Accord.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Agree.

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

Speaker: The nays have it.

I declare the motion defeated.

Motion No. 160 negatived

Unanimous consent to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 169

Hon. Scott Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 27(1)(b), I request the unanimous consent of the House to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 169 regarding the membership of the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments.

Speaker: The Government House Leader has requested the unanimous consent of the House, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 27(1)(b), to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 169.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 169 — Membership of the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments

Clerk: Motion No. 169, standing in the name of the Hon. Scott Kent.

Speaker: It is moved by the Government House Leader: 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.

Hon. Scott Kent: I'll be brief on this. This was a request that came from the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, which is referenced in this motion. So, we are moving forward in acting upon that request that came from her.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Motion No. 169 agreed to

Unanimous consent to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 170

Hon. Scott Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 27(1)(b), I request the unanimous consent of the House to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 170 regarding the membership of the Members' Services Board.

Speaker: The Government House Leader has requested the unanimous consent of the House, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 27(1)(b), to move without one clear day's notice Motion No. 170.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Motion No. 170 — Membership of the Members' Services Board

Clerk: Motion No. 170, standing in the name of the Hon. Scott Kent.

Speaker: It is moved by the Government House Leader: 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.

Hon. Scott Kent: Like the previous motion, this is a procedural motion to remove the Member for Porter Creek North and replace that member with the Member for Whistle Bend South on the Members' Services Board. This was done at the request of the Member for Porter Creek North, so we're obviously happy to oblige that with this procedural motion.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Motion No. 170 agreed to

Hon. Scott Kent: 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: I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

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

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

Is there any general debate?

Kate White: I'm happy to be speaking to general debate on the first-in-my-time fall capital estimates that we have before us. And, of course, I thank back the Deputy Minister of Finance and the Premier for the conversation. Some of the questions I was asking when we were up recently was just trying to get a sense of how this works.

Can the minister walk the Assembly through the process and how departments identified things and brought it forward for the capital estimates? Because I'll note that there are, for example, departments that would have capital investments in a fiscal year that I don't see here. I'll note, for example, that Energy, Mines and Resources would have building. I would expect Economy, Tourism and Culture, Environment. I'm just trying to get a sense of how that process worked. And so, if you could, walk us through it.

Hon. Currie Dixon: The member opposite is correct. There's only a select number of departments that have projects that are in this fall capital budget. As we discussed last time we were up for debate, the Department of Finance put a call out to all departments to provide their projects that they thought would be appropriate for submission or addition to the fall capital budget. The criteria we used were for projects that would benefit from early tendering because of their potential seasonality.

Just to pick a few of the departments that the member opposite cited, departments like Energy, Mines and Resources or Economy, Tourism and Culture certainly have capital needs. But those capital needs tend to be more office-related things, computers, desks, furniture, and that type of capital. The buildings that they are in are typically cared for — if they're owned by Yukon Government — by Highways and Public Works. And so that's why you'll see that the capital projects that are relevant to those departments to either their offices or buildings like that will fall under the Department of Highways and Public Works.

The capital needs of some of the departments just didn't fit within the criteria that we were using for this fall capital budget, and that's why departments like Community Services and Highways and Public Works, which have large capital construction budgets, tend to be the ones that you'll see more of in this fall capital budget. Like I said, that's not to say that different departments didn't submit projects early on, but they would have been filtered out because of the lack of timing necessity that would have been required for their capital needs.

Kate White: I thank the Premier for that. In looking at, for example, some of the departments that have submitted capital asks, was there work within the Department of Finance and in those departments, for example, to look toward expansion? I note that Education only has an expenditure of \$9.7 million, and when we look at the spending required for educational capital investments, my guess is it's going to be a lot higher come the spring. And so, was there work with the departments to figure out if some of those things could be expanded to make sure that those contracts that could benefit from early tendering were included, or was there restrictions put on departments for the amount or percentage of their budgets that they could look for?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Kate White: It's always embarrassing when someone forgets to push mute and I welcome the new members to that embarrassment. The rest of us have been here. I will note that's a minor embarrassment compared to ministers in the middle of saying things where like phones have rung, so it's not a big deal. But if the minister can walk me through departments that maybe could have benefited from additional capital investments in the fall.

Hon. Currie Dixon: First of all, just say that, overall, if we do find that there are departments that have projects that may in future benefit from this, we're certainly willing to expand the list and look at different departments. But the initial tranche that we used was to consider projects based on the initial criteria that I outlined. I would note that for departments like Education, there is a bit of a tricky balance between their

assets and Highways and Public Works assets. For instance, while the roof at EET is clearly an education investment, it's actually going to fall under the Department of Highways and Public Works, because the school belongs to Highways and Public Works.

But the modulars, the construction of modulars, falls under Education. So, there is a bit of a tricky balance there between which projects go in which department. That being said, yes, both of those departments will have capital appropriations in the spring, and we anticipate those to be fairly significant. The overall capital budget for the spring is not yet set, and that's why I wasn't able to clearly answer the member's question last time about how much or what percentage of our total capital budget exists in this fall capital budget, because the total capital budget that'll be tabled in the spring hasn't yet been finalized or decided upon. That process is underway now.

So, to answer the member's question, yes, we're willing to look at different departments going forward to see if there are capital needs that they have that can be addressed through fall capital appropriation in the future. But we did our best with this current iteration to get it right the first time we're trying it.

Kate White: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the Premier for that answer. In looking at the amounts for each of the departments, \$18.2 million for Community Services, \$9.7 million for Education, \$14.4 million for Health, \$70.3 million for Highways and Public Works, and \$26.2 million for Yukon Housing Corporation. With the amounts that are in each of these in each of these departments, is that the total amount for the projects that have been listed? Understanding, of course, that yesterday we had a big discussion around envelopes and how envelopes could change.

Identifying things that, for example, were in envelopes like we did yesterday, is the amount, for example, of \$14.4 million what we expect the total cost to be for the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion? And by "we", I mean the Department of Finance.

Hon. Currie Dixon: In the case of the \$14.4 million for Health and Social Services for the work on the hospital, that's based on work that the Department of Health and Social Services has done with the Hospital Corporation to identify early works projects that will be necessary in the expansion project related to the Hospital Corporation.

It is certainly not the entirety of the budget for the hospital expansion project writ large. It was work that was identified in our process that could be done early and would benefit from early tendering. So, like I said last time, I'm aware of the high-level nature of some of those projects, and the minister and ministers across the departments will be better positioned to provide further detail. But in the case of the Hospital Corporation or the hospital expansion, sorry, I understand that to be work on the parking lot, work to adjust the location or the way the connection occurs with the city's water main, and the changes to the maternity ward that will be necessary in the grander changes to the hospital expansion. So, those are what I know at this stage. If the member is looking for further detail on that, I'll have to defer. But the short answer is yes, we anticipate that \$14.4 million is a sufficient amount to complete the work that I've listed right now.

Kate White: I appreciate that answer from the Premier.

I am struggling to get the idea into words. So, I'll poke around and someone's probably going to hear a word and they're going to know what I'm trying to say and they're going to yell it out and I'll get it on the record. But I was using the hospital as an example because it was one that was more concrete. But I guess what I'm trying to say is when we look at these envelopes, this money for the fall estimates, is it expected that it's the entirety of the identified items, or is it, for example, the money so that it's indicated that it's going forward? It could be a portion of the money or a portion of the cost.

As an example, I wouldn't necessarily expect that like three portables or modular classrooms could be purchased for like \$2 million, let's say. So, what I'm trying to get an idea of — is this the money to be able to lead toward the full rollout of what those projects could be, or is the idea that the money here is fully funding the completion of those projects?

If the Premier wants to give that a shot and if anyone has any suggestions and wants to yell them off-mic, I will take them. But what I'm trying to say — is this the projects in their entirety, or is this to get them going so they're started so they can go further along?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I'll attempt to bite off the part about the envelopes first.

Departments like Highways and Public Works have multiple funding envelopes for things like transportation infrastructure, building maintenance, and so on. This is not the entirety of the envelope for building maintenance or transportation infrastructure. Those will be subject to increase in the spring budget process. They are a listing of projects within the envelope that the department thinks would benefit from early tendering in the process that we've established for the fall capital process.

The department, obviously within those envelopes, has ideas about things that they want to be doing. For instance, in Community Services' infrastructure envelope, they have got projects that have been identified through their conversations with municipalities, communities, and other stakeholders, and they will have a sense of how much money is required for an individual project. Those then collectively make up the envelope that's within the fall capital budget.

So, just to pick on one example, because we were at a meeting last night with Mount Lorne — we're working on a water treatment plant for the Mount Lorne community. The amount that CS has in their budget is sufficient to tender that project so that they can start work on it. So, it's intended that be the full amount of the project. They wouldn't receive additional money afterwards to top up that amount necessarily, although that's possible if they find themselves going through the design process and the number that they have allocated is less than what's available, they may make adjustments. That's why we have those envelopes to allow for slight adjustments. But ultimately, the amount allocated in the fall capital budget per envelope is what they think will get those listed projects done. I hope I've answered that question, but if I haven't, I'm happy to try to clarify.

Kate White: We are getting closer to what I was getting to. So, I appreciate the response to that one specifically. The Mount Lorne water treatment plant is one very specific thing.

I don't want to go back into Highways and Public Works because it very clearly says envelopes. But as an example, when I look at it — Education not having had a briefing on it, but it's just trying to get the sense. Is the money for the project to be completed? So, if I look at everything listed under education for \$9.7 million, there are a lot of projects, and I'm trying to get a sense if the idea is that the money helps them get started, or the money allocated in this capital budget is in its entirety? Understanding that sometimes projects have multiple stages, they'll have different contracting opportunities. So, I'm just trying to get a sense if everything listed here, except for the envelopes that we've already clearly established, are envelopes and may change and may be reprioritized — if it's funding in its entirety, or for example, in the spring we're going to see additional funding, which is fine. I'm not saying that's a bad thing because sometimes you start the tendering process or you have to get the documents or you have to get the process started, and other things are added additionally as it goes. So, I'm just trying to get a sense if this is the idea that they're completed, and this is the full amount, and I'm hoping the Minister of Community Services just looked at me like maybe she understands what I'm trying to say, and if that's the case, she could translate that would be great. But what I'm trying to get a sense of if it's completed or if it's underway, or on its way, and by the time we get to the spring I'll know and I'll be able to really make myself clear then.

Hon. Currie Dixon: I admit I ended up in conversation with the deputy at the end, so I missed some of the last part of the part of what the member said. But I think the easiest way to explain it was just that for the projects identified in the amount in the budget is the amount we believe is required for us to complete these projects. So, it's obviously possible that things can change, but that's it's at this point we believe this to be the right amount of money to complete these projects, and that's why they're included. So, I hope that I'll try again, but that's that may be the.

Kate White: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the Premier for that and the good effort, and I think that's the answer, which is like it's expected that it be completed with this envelope of money, which I do appreciate. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources it turns out good at translation when it comes to people looking for words, and he's right. That's probably what I was looking for, and so I appreciate that we're in general now. My colleagues and I will be briefed on departments as we go through it, but that's it for the questions in general debate.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause 1. The bill's Schedule A is part of clause 1 and contains the departmental votes.

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

Chair: The Hon. Premier has moved 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 tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

The following legislative returns were tabled today:

LR 36-1-35

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Carmen Gustafson related to general debate on Vote 8, Justice, in Bill No. 201, *First Appropriation Act 2026-27* — Loukidelis report's recommendation (Lang)

LR 36-1-36

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Carmen Gustafson related to general debate on Vote 8, Justice, in Bill No. 201, *First Appropriation Act 2026-27* — Formula for the territorial base funding of the Yukon Legal Services Society (Lang)

LR 36-1-37

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Carmen Gustafson related to general debate on Vote 8, Justice, in Bill No. 201, *First Appropriation Act 2026-27* — Current breakdown of lawyers within the Legal Services Branch by classification (Lang)

LR 36-1-38

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Carmen Gustafson related to general debate on Vote 8, Justice, in Bill No. 201, *First Appropriation Act 2026-27* — Status of family law duty counsel (Lang)