



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Thursday, October 8, 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		

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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	

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Thursday, October 8, 2026 — 1:00 p.m.

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

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.
Visitors introduced

Speaker: Tributes.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Statement — World Mental Health Day

Tyler Porter: With World Mental Health Day approaching on October 10, I want to highlight the importance of mental health and well-being across our territory. In 2022, only 46.5 percent of Yukoners reported their mental health as very good or excellent. This reminds us that mental health challenges affect more people than we may realize.

Mental health is just as important as physical health, yet too often, people struggle in silence. For Yukoners in rural and remote communities, accessing timely and appropriate support can bring additional challenges. I want to recognize the dedicated mental health professionals, front-line workers, and community organizations who support Yukoners every day. Reducing stigma starts with all of us. By encouraging open conversations, checking in on one another, and taking the time to truly listen, we can build healthier and stronger communities.

Statement — Liard First Nation Chief and Council

Kate White: I'd like to take this opportunity to offer my congratulations to the new chief and council of the Liard First Nation, who were elected on June 29 this year. Congratulations to Chief Harlan Schilling, Deputy Chief Freddie Loots Jr., and councillors Paul Caesar-Jules, Daniel Dick, Amanda Johnston, Sheila Caesar, Brady McMillan, and Lisa Horsey. Stepping forward to serve your community is no small task, so thank you to those for taking on this challenge. My team and I look forward to working with you to advance the needs of your community, and we wish you all the best in your roles.

Statement — Old Crow artists

Debra-Leigh Reti: The Yukon is home to many talented First Nation artists, and Old Crow is no exception — art based on traditions, stories, and images that have been passed down from generation to generation. The work of our respected elder and community leader Shirlee Frost is featured as part of the permanent art collection at the Yukon Arts Centre.

Jeneen Frei Njootli is a multimedia artist that was a finalist for the 2025 Yukon Prize for Visual Arts. Christine Creyke and her traditional hide tanning have been shown in a short film on the CBC Creator Network. The VGFN website features caribou art by Lawrence Dean Charlie, and the VGFN 2026 general

assembly logo was created by artist Gary Njootli. There are countless other artists that I am unable to list in my short time here today, but I encourage people to take the time to search the artists from Old Crow to see the beautiful artwork that displays and preserves our Gwitchin heritage.

Statement — Yukon Wildland Fire Management

Hon. Cory Bellmore: This year marks the 80th anniversary of Yukon Wildland Fire Management. Wildland Fire Management protects life, critical infrastructure, and property from wildfires. They lead the development of climate resilient communities. In 1946, as the Canadian military's Forest Protective Service, crews responded to fires along the Alaska Highway. This grew into a program that prioritized protecting towns, roads, and recreation sites. But this work isn't done alone.

Wildland Fire Management has many partners in Yukon emergency response, including First Nations and municipal governments, volunteer and municipal fire departments, RCMP, and Yukon First Nation Wildfire. This year, Wildland Fire Management supported its partner agencies with exports of personnel to British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Ontario, Parks Canada, Washington State, Oregon, and Alaska. Thank you to Wildland Fire Management and their 26 wildfire crews based across the territory for keeping us safe. Here's to the next 80 years.

Statement — National Seniors Day

Justin Ziegler: Today is National Seniors Day. Yukon seniors and elders bring so much to our community. In this role, I've had the privilege of working with a number of seniors in my riding who have brought forward critical issues for their community. Their advocacy has made a difference. Just this year, seniors received a double Income Supplement payment by mistake that then had to be retracted, causing chaos and confusion. Last month, Meals on Wheels stopped without warning, and close to a hundred clients were told that they had to pick up their own meals, many of whom did not have the means to. Both of these important issues were raised to me by seniors.

Their advocacy efforts ensured that these questions were answered. Yukon seniors and elders make a difference in our community. Their knowledge, experience, and expertise brings so much to all of us. It's essential that we ensure that we are always listening and learning. Thank you to ElderActive and the Golden Age Society for the incredibly important work they do for the people who are also incredibly important.

Statement — Yukon Youth Conservation Corps

Hon. Wade Istchenko: I rise today to recognize the young Yukoners who took part in the Yukon Youth Conservation Corps program this summer, otherwise known as Y2C2. The program gives youth an opportunity to get hands-on experience in the work the Department of Environment undertakes while also giving back to Yukoners and broader community. This year, through a partnership with the Wildfire Awareness Society, Y2C2 completed FireSmart work for seniors and people with disabilities to help reduce wildfire risk around their homes. It's great to see these youth gaining new experiences and skills while helping people make their properties safer who may not be able to do this work on their own.

Their efforts show how opportunities can connect youth with work on the land and create lasting benefits for both participants and communities across the Yukon. I want to thank the participants, our organizers from the department, Sue Johnson, Lauren Wonfor, and Carrie McClelland, and all those partners whose efforts help build a safer and more resilient Yukon.

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Scott Kent: Pursuant to section 53(3) of the *Yukon University Act*, I have for tabling the *2025-26 Yukon University Annual Report* and the *Yukon University Consolidated Financial Statements — Year Ended March 31, 2026*.

Hon. Ted Laking: Pursuant to section 22 of the *Yukon Development Corporation Act*, I have for tabling the *Yukon Development Corporation Annual Report*.

Hon. Laura Lang: I have for tabling today a legislative return related to a matter outstanding from discussions with the Member for Riverdale North on April 27, 2026 in Committee of the Whole related to Vote 8, Justice, regarding legislation currently under review.

Hon. Linda Benoit: I have for tabling a letter to the federal Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature.

Hon. Brad Cathers: I have for tabling today a letter dated October 7 to the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition from myself as well as the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Minister of Justice.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 10, *Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Laura Lang: I move that Bill No. 10, entitled *Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 10, entitled *Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for Introduction and First Reading of Bill No. 10 agreed to

Bill No. 12, *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Laura Lang: I move that Bill No. 12, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 12, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for Introduction and First Reading of Bill No. 12 agreed to

Bill No. 8, *Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act (2026)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I move that Bill No. 8, entitled *Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act (2026)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 8, entitled *Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act (2026)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for Introduction and First Reading of Bill No. 8 agreed to

Bill No. 13, *Labour Relations Boards Statutes Amendment Act (2026)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I move that Bill No. 13, entitled *Labour Relations Boards Statutes Amendment Act (2026)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of the Public Service Commission that Bill No. 13, entitled *Labour Relations Boards Statutes Amendment Act (2026)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for Introduction and First Reading of Bill No. 13 agreed to

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Patti McLeod: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports the Government of Yukon's creation of a red tape reduction framework.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the City of Whitehorse and other partners to develop new country residential lots for housing development.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Question — Health care

Kate White: Yukoners seeking abortion care continue to face unnecessary barriers to access. The newest report from the Yukon Status of Women Council called the *Geography of Choice* found that Yukon health care only covers the cost of abortion medication at the Whitehorse General Hospital pharmacy, a service which is only open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and again only in Whitehorse.

This additional barrier to access health care doesn't make any sense for Yukoners or their health care providers. Worse yet, when a health care provider outside the hospital prescribes this medication, that care provider has to physically go to the hospital pharmacy and get that medication to give to their patient. This is especially concerning when compared to BC next door, where this medication is available at no cost in all pharmacies. So, when will this government make abortion medication available to Yukoners in all Yukon pharmacies at no cost?

Hon. Brad Cathers: What I would first of all like to emphasize is that we have not made any changes regarding abortion services since taking office. I appreciate the issue that's been raised by the member. I have not actually had a chance to read the report that they recently tabled. I do have a copy printed off, but I have not had a chance to read through the report that the member made reference to. But I do intend to do so, and we will, in this area, look into it and discuss it with the department as well as health professionals, because issues around access to medications are ones that are best made with the advice of health professionals involved in making those decisions.

Kate White: I look forward to the day where the minister has read this important report that talks about how availability on paper isn't the same as access. The Opal Clinic in Whitehorse is the only dedicated abortion clinic in the territory and the only clinic that offers access to surgical abortions. The Yukon Status of Women Council found that due to limitations in funding and surgical access, the Opal Clinic only offers appointments one morning per week and that surgical abortions are only available one morning every second week. The report found that some Yukoners waited up to three weeks for care, and it also notes that despite the essential care they provide, the Opal Clinic receives no dedicated operational funding from this government. Abortions are medically necessary health care protected under the *Canada Health Act*, but barriers to timely abortion care remain in the Yukon. So, when will this government provide dedicated operational funding and space to the Opal Clinic?

Hon. Brad Cathers: What the member is not recognizing is the fact that when it comes to support for medical clinics, we do have, first of all, an agreement with Yukon Medical Association regarding how that is structured, and for anything else, we need to ensure that we are not conflicting with that arrangement. The member has raised this issue. I have not seen a separate request from the clinic itself. If there are concerns, of course, as always, the department and I remain open to hearing from any medical clinic in the territory if they have concerns.

But we do, of course, as noted, follow the agreement that we have with the Yukon Medical Association regarding fee-for-service. We also have an agreement regarding contracts with the Yukon Medical Association, and I would remind the member — and she should know, because she had some involvement in legislation — that the Yukon Medical Association is empowered to act as the sole agent to bargain on behalf of physicians in the territory by virtue of Bill No. 310. So, again, if issues are brought to us originating from a clinic through the Yukon Medical Association, we will engage in good faith, in keeping with our obligations to them and the legislated requirements.

Kate White: If someone were to just tune in right now, they might be confused as to what we're speaking about, because the minister never once responded with anything about safe access to abortion care. The report found that Yukoners in rural and remote communities face some of the greatest barriers to accessing abortion care. Anyone who has accessed the medical travel system knows how challenging that process can be.

But these challenges are only compounded by the added complexities of accessing abortion care. Abortion care is still heavily stigmatized, as we've seen from the minister, and it comes with additional concerns about privacy, confidentiality, and patient safety. The medical travel system does not account for any of this.

The report identified the need for accessible information, trauma-informed support, and confidential services that can be accessed safely and anonymously within rural communities. What specific steps is this minister taking to ensure that people living in rural and remote Yukon communities have timely, equitable access to abortion care?

Hon. Brad Cathers: Again, as I have noted previously, we are reviewing our medical travel program, including the supports provided for Yukoners both in and out of the territory. I would also, though, note for the member that, again, I have just recently received a copy of the report to which she referred. I will read it in its entirety but have not had a copy or a chance to go through that copy at this point in time. When it comes to decisions around enhancing services, whether in Whitehorse or in rural Yukon, we will work with the Department of Health and Social Services as well as health professionals to consider any request for increased services.

I would just note as a general matter that one thing that we do have within Yukon is we are not able to provide every health service that is available in Whitehorse in all Yukon communities. We do strive to provide health services when we are able to, but there are some limitations on that, which include scope of practice for community nurses in those areas, in some cases, as well as the capacity of any rural health centre to provide it and, in some cases, the equipment. So, again, we will look into this request, but decisions around changing access or expanding access will be made in concert with health professionals, not by me here on the floor of this Legislative Assembly in response to a question from the member opposite.

Question — Energy strategy

Carmen Gustafson: This winter, the government's affordability rate relief will provide some needed help for households facing higher electricity bills, but the rebate is limited to residential customers. Small businesses, farms, and other commercial customers are excluded even though they are facing the same rising electricity rates and fuel costs. A local store, restaurant, or farm simply cannot stop using electricity when prices rise. For many of these businesses, keeping the lights on, running equipment, refrigerating food, or heating a workspace is an unavoidable cost of staying open.

What support will the minister provide to commercial electricity users like small businesses who are not included in the government's electricity rebate?

Hon. Ted Laking: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for referencing the new affordability rebate that provides more than double the amount of the previous rebate. With respect to supports for businesses, there are a number of them. Through our dependable grid program, we provide rebates for people who are going to retrofit their buildings to bring on other sources of heating and to bring on ways to shave their peak energy demand. These are

rebates that will help offset the costs of these improvements but also lead to energy savings down the line.

Carmen Gustafson: Heating oil prices have risen sharply across the Yukon, leaving families with fuel bills they could never have anticipated. With another northern winter approaching, households need help getting through this sudden and extraordinary increase. This government is offering homeowners thousands of dollars to move away from electric heat and install new oil heating systems. While that may reduce pressure on the electrical grid, it also leaves more families dependent on imported fuels, the prices of which they cannot control. These households need to know what immediate help is available to manage today's extraordinary home heating costs.

What supports will this government offer Yukoners struggling with the increasing cost of home heating oil?

Hon. Ted Laking: Now, of course, global fuel supply and global fuel prices are out of the control of the Government of Yukon. From global conflict, such as the Strait of Hormuz or global trade wars, these things are driving up the cost of fuel.

What we're doing is we're providing rebates to help people offset either their electricity costs or offset the costs associated with bringing other forms of heating into their homes. These are real rebates. These are significant. They're going to provide relief to families, and we're looking forward to the Opposition finally recognizing that and starting to support these.

Carmen Gustafson: I would thank the minister for the rebate for the wood stove that we installed in our house this year. So, I do support those rebates. And earlier this week, the Premier also said that "things like diesel prices, unfortunately, are far beyond the control of one territory in the far north." We agree. Diesel prices in Whitehorse have risen nearly 36 percent in just one year, driven by the events referenced by the minister just now. The Whitehorse Power Centres project may provide the permanent generating capacity Yukon needs, but that cannot be the government's entire answer.

A robust energy plan would include renewable generation and storage projects along with measures to reduce peak demand so generators run less often and taxpayers or ratepayers are protected from rising fuel costs. This government needs a plan to diversify Yukon's energy supply, bring down demand, and reduce the amount Yukoners must spend on imported diesel. What is the minister's plan to reduce reliance on diesel that is too expensive to rely on?

Hon. Ted Laking: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for highlighting a very important point. The point of the Whitehorse Power Centres project is to have a dependable and reliable backup. Ideally, we wouldn't have to rely on thermal generation. This is the shortest-term solution to meet the needs of the territory today, and what it will do is it will provide us the ability to ensure that we can get out of scenarios where we're having to consider rolling blackouts through a capital city. But yes, we are going to be moving forward with plans for other generation opportunities beyond the Whitehorse Power Centres.

Let's talk about the significant investments that we're moving ahead with at the Mayo generating station. This is a very important asset for the territory's energy grid. It provides 15 megawatts of clean energy. It's at its end of life, and if we

don't make immediate investments in it now to ensure that it does not fail, then we would lose access to that 15 megawatts. So, that's another significant investment we're moving forward with. Unfortunately, I don't have enough time in my answer to list all of the other things that we're working on but happy to continue this debate with the member throughout the Sitting.

Question — School public address systems

Linda Moen: Today I'd like to speak about the serious and ongoing issues with the public announcement systems in many Yukon schools. I know the Minister of Education is aware of the importance of this issue, since he advocated for PA system repairs many times as the Opposition critic for Education. School administration depends on working PA systems to ensure that all staff and students are aware of potential safety issues as soon as they arise.

Unfortunately, not all schools have PA systems operating in a consistent and safe manner. Can the Minister of Education inform Yukoners how his department will ensure all Yukon schools have a fully functional PA system?

Hon. Scott Kent: I agree with the member opposite. During my time in Opposition and since becoming the minister, I've heard from a number of school councils and different schools about PA systems that aren't functioning properly. To that end, I can advise the House that in the 2026-27 capital budget that was tabled in the spring, there was \$313,000 identified for program-related capital repairs, including repairs to PA systems.

In the 2027-28 fall capital budget that is currently before this House, there is also \$953,000 to accelerate the replacement of these systems, improve reliability, communication capabilities, and the ability to support emergency communications across Yukon schools. We'll continue to invest in the PA systems to bring them up to a standard that is acceptable for the schools and ensures that they're operating effectively and safely for those school communities.

Linda Moen: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for that response to the minister. School administration and school councils are essential in flagging issues to the department when the public announcement systems are not functioning properly. Repairs and timely responses are important so that the issues are correctly fixed and the system is operating as it should. School administration should be able to depend on fully functional PA systems.

Yet some schools have been waiting for years and still have no timeline of when the repairs will happen. Can the minister give Yukoners a timeline of when all school PA systems will be fully functional?

Hon. Scott Kent: I don't have that exact timeline information for the member opposite here with me today, but I will commit to get back to her with that information. Again, I think it's important to note that there is an investment in the current capital budget that we voted on and passed in the spring. That is \$313,000 that we identified for program-related capital repairs, including repairs to PA systems. And then, of course, working with my colleague the Minister of Highways and Public Works, we were able to secure and identify \$953,000 for the fall capital budget that is specific to PA systems.

I'm happy to return to the House with a list of which ones those will recover. Of course, we have to continue work. We're not where we need to be yet, but we're off to a good start less than a year into our time as government, thank you.

Linda Moen: Elijah Smith has been without a functioning PA system since I was on school council nearly a decade ago. When I went to the school's grade 7 graduation in May, it was still broken. When I spoke to the school this morning, nothing had changed. Schools like Elijah Smith have experienced multiple lockdowns, highlighting the critical need for a functioning public announcement system. Last week, there was a serious incident at the school and no way to coordinate students and staff safely.

As we know, time is essential to make staff aware of the lockdown procedures and ensure the safety of students. Can the minister provide an update to parents, staff, and students of Elijah Smith about when they can expect a fully functional public announcement system?

Hon. Scott Kent: Over the past number of years, there have been upgrades or replacements in École Selkirk Elementary School, Hidden Valley Elementary School, the community school in Carcross, as well as the community school in Teslin. As I mentioned in previous responses, we do have \$953,000 identified in this current fall capital budget. What I will commit to members of the House is to return with a priority list of where that money will be spent and what is still outstanding when it comes to replacing PA systems.

I'm not sure exactly where Elijah Smith Elementary School is on that list, but, of course, like the member opposite during my time in Opposition and early into government, attending a school council meeting there as well, I did hear the concerns about the PA system. But again, there are a number of schools that this affects. So, I'll return with a priority list and a schedule when I can.

Question — French language services at Whitehorse Correctional Centre

Justin Ziegler: Earlier this year, an inquest into a death by suicide at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre brought to light issues francophones experience in the Yukon's justice system. Navigating systems in a different language is already difficult, and when it's the justice system with its own specific legal vocabulary, it's even more challenging. In custody, where a person cannot go anywhere else for help, it can be dangerous.

The *Languages Act* gives the right to services in French from government offices where the nature of the office makes it reasonable. It is hard to think of an office where this is more reasonable than a correctional centre. Est-ce que la ministre peut confirmer quels services sont disponibles en français pour les détenus au Centre correctionnel de Whitehorse et si aucun service n'est disponible en français, quelle en est la raison?

Hon. Laura Lang: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to my colleague across the aisle for that question. I extend my sadness to the family of this individual. Just to be clear, the death was determined to be suicide. There has been a jury who has been involved in exploring what exactly has happened, and seven recommendations to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre have been made. The presiding coroner's

report has not been received yet, and I'm looking forward to receiving that and taking a very good look at it.

Justin Ziegler: This is exactly what French speakers experience in Whitehorse corrections: not understanding what's happening. The government has a responsibility to make sure the Yukon justice system meets its obligations to everyone, including francophones. Two of the inquest's recommendations focused on improving bilingual communication in the justice system.

Together, these recommendations include installing bilingual signage, having at least two bilingual correctional officers on staff, and making sure that inmates have 24/7 access to interpretation services. Will the Minister of Justice commit today to implementing these recommendations, and what would the timeline be?

Hon. Laura Lang: Before I make any commitments today, which, of course, I'm not closed to doing in the future, I again would like to understand more about the coroner's report once I receive it. I'd also like to take a look at that in conjunction with the jury's recommendations, and I'd like to understand specifically what the recommendations are against what the coroner's report will be telling me in terms of what is already in place and where we can improve. I thank the member opposite for saying that there are always improvements. Generally, what he's saying is there are always improvements that can be made, especially when we're talking about bilingual communication. I think we know that.

We've been working on a very informed strategic plan through the French Language Services Directorate. One of that is around the health care system. Another one is around the justice system, and we are making considered efforts, and, of course, that has been informed by the francophone community. So, again, as I said, I will wait to receive a fulsome report from officials once we receive both reports, and I'd be happy to speak more at length about this at a different time.

Justin Ziegler: Suicide prevention screening at Whitehorse Correctional Centre is the difference between life and death. But screening only works when a person in crisis can explain what they feel and be understood. Imagine trying to find those words in your second language. Who would know? Under stress in custody, that is the reality for some Yukoners behind bars. After this inquest, the jury recommended that inmates have access to interpretation 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Francophone Yukoners in custody deserve to be understood under any circumstance but especially when their life may be at risk. Is suicide risk screening at Whitehorse Correctional Centre offered in French, and are staff trained to seek interpretation when an inmate is in crisis? And if not, when will that change?

Hon. Laura Lang: I'm not disagreeing with the need for bilingual services, and I'm not disagreeing that this is a very sad and unfortunate event that happened at Whitehorse corrections. What I'm saying is that I need the information in order to have a better understanding of what we are currently doing, what the coroner's report has found, and what improvements need to be made.

I'm not shying away from additional responsibilities at the correctional facilities. If those need to occur, we will be looking

at them and implementing that. But until I have both reports, I will not be committing to anything.

Question — Rental housing policies

Adam Gerle: In 2021, the Liberal government abruptly imposed strict rent controls on the Yukon rental market at the request of the NDP through the confidence and supply agreement. The policy was made with no notice, consultation, or forewarning and was shocking to many landlords with units in the rental market. Predictably, the policy was largely considered a failure and resulted in the Yukon NDP issuing a public apology for the unintended consequences caused.

In the last election, we heard from many Yukoners that poor design and implementation of the Liberal-NDP rent control policies destabilized the rental market. Will the Minister of Community Services tell the House whether or not proposed changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act* will help fix that problem?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: Throughout the election and over the course of the past several years, we have heard how the hasty implementation of the rent control policies imposed by the previous government have destabilized and upset the rental market. We continue to hear that, despite promises to the contrary, rents have increased considerably, and there has been a noticeable lack of investment in new rentals. We think that it's time to restore balance to the rental market in Yukon, and I believe that the amendments I've tabled today will do just that.

We think that these amendments will better balance the interests of landlords and tenants while supporting the investment to increase rental housing availability over the long term. Ultimately, our goal is to increase housing choices for Yukoners and help create the conditions for more housing supply across the territory.

Adam Gerle: Following the failure of the first version of rent control, the previous Liberal-NDP government responded by going even further and imposed a ban on no-cause evictions. Once again, the government was forced to recognize that this policy wasn't working and in 2023 announced a landlord subsidy program with a budget of over a million dollars. That program was aimed at discouraging landlords from removing their units from the rental market due to the flawed rent control policies.

Once again, that program failed, and after spending the allocated money, the program was cancelled. Can the minister tell us if they are planning on bringing forward a landlord subsidy program like the previous Liberal-NDP government did?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: No, we are not planning on subsidizing landlords like the previous government. Instead, we think the solution is to fix the problem that was created by the changes they made to the legislation. We've heard from both landlords and tenants that the system isn't working. While the current rent cap limits annual rent increases based on CPI, landlords have told us the system doesn't reflect the actual costs of owning, maintaining, and operating rental units.

We've also heard that the current system has discouraged investment in rental housing at a time when Yukoners need more housing options. I've heard this several times, actually. The changes I've proposed are aimed at increasing housing

availability and creating a better balance between protecting tenants and ensuring rental housing remains a viable investment.

Adam Gerle: Our government has been clear that increasing housing supply requires policies that support both tenants and landlords. The proposed amendments include changes to rent caps, notice periods, and eviction provisions. Can the minister explain how these changes will help create a more balanced and sustainable rental market?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: The proposed amendments would remove rent caps and reintroduce no-cause evictions, providing landlords with greater flexibility in managing their property. At the same time, tenants would receive six months' notice for rent increases and six months' notice for no-cause evictions. This is significantly longer than the previous notice requirements. This provides tenants with more time to plan and adjust and secure alternative housing if necessary. We believe these changes create a better balance between the interests of the tenants and the landlords while supporting a healthy and sustainable rental housing market.

By encouraging investment in rental housing, these amendments can help increase housing supply and improve our housing availability over the long term. These amendments are not a stand-alone solution. Market rentals are only one part of the housing spectrum. These changes are one part of our broader efforts to increase housing supply, support new housing construction, and improve housing affordability for Yukoners.

Question — Old Crow infrastructure

Debra-Leigh Reti: I have some questions about infrastructure needs in the community of Old Crow, and I'll start with the main road that runs along the Porcupine River. It has deteriorated year after year due to flooding and river erosion. It is now down to one lane. This is an issue I've raised with the minister and the Premier since being elected to this position. I was hoping the Premier and minister would visit my community this summer to see the road first-hand, but that did not happen.

I was also hoping there'd be funding in this year's budget to fix the road, but I haven't seen that either. I would like to ask why this road is not in the budgets that we are debating this fall.

Hon. Linda Benoit: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for her question. I understand how important this road is for Old Crow. I would just note that general maintenance would be within the O&M budget for the department and not separated out in a capital budget anywhere. So, that is where the majority of the maintenance on the road comes from. I understand the road is important. It's important for public safety.

We continue to provide road maintenance and snow-clearing services in Old Crow while navigating the unique challenges of maintaining that infrastructure in a fly-in community. Generally, we have had our airport equipment operators doing that work. We have had some staffing shortages and things like that in the past. We have completed several road improvement projects, however, to address flooding, drainage, and erosion concerns. But we will continue to maintain that road, and I'll let the member know when there are any big capital projects planned.

Debra-Leigh Reti: One suggestion that has come forward time and time again in the community is to build a berm at the southwest end of town toward the end of the airport runway. This is also an issue I raised with the minister in the spring. It would prevent flood water from getting into town and further damaging the road. The latest floods that we've been having come right up to the airstrip, which then shuts the airstrip down. It's very concerning, especially in the past couple of years, thinking about how we will get people out if there is a major flood again.

In the spring, the minister said that this was something the government would consider. It's now October and nothing has progressed. Is the government going to budget money for this project and act on this issue?

Hon. Linda Benoit: There has been some work done to address some of the flooding and drainage in the area that the member opposite refers to. We are planning to advance more erosion addressing here in the future. There is an initial review of potential options that has been completed, and we're doing some work currently to inform detailed design, and then we will consult with the community and VGFN in order to get that completed.

Debra-Leigh Reti: As I noted yesterday, not a single government minister had been to Old Crow since the election last fall, and no community meetings have been held to hear input from folks about their priorities. And the government didn't include Old Crow in its pre-budget community tour, and the community is feeling ignored by this government. Is there any funding in the budgets that are before us to address the impacts of flooding or climate change, even in Old Crow?

Hon. Currie Dixon: As I've indicated to the Member for Old Crow several times over the last few days, of course, we plan to get up to Old Crow and to speak to the community there, whether that's a public meeting or with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. Either way, we do want to acknowledge the importance of Old Crow to the Yukon Territory.

Now, when it comes to the contents of the budget itself, as I've said before, there are a number of items in here that are in the fall capital budget that are relevant to Old Crow. When it comes to the specifics related to flooding and climate change adaptation, I'll have to defer to individual ministers within each of their departments. But what we can do is go back and get a better list of all the items that are relevant to Old Crow and provide it to the member so she's got a comprehensive list of what's in the budget.

Question — School busing

Linda Moen: Last year's school bus cancellations were a chronic problem for Yukon families. The Minister of Education said that if the department can't get kids to school safely and with reliable service, then it's a problem they need to fix. It's a new school year, and already there have been bus cancellations. Last spring, the minister said the department was tracking bus cancellations.

How many times this year have school buses been cancelled already?

Hon. Scott Kent: I appreciate the question and the details that are sought by the member opposite. I'll have to return with the exact number of cancellations. I can say — obviously early on in the year or just going back to last winter — many of those cancellations were associated with the colder weather and mechanical issues. What we've seen at the start of this year is around the human resource driver shortages or driver illness.

I had a meeting prior to the start of the current Fall Sitting with senior officials from Standard Bus who travelled here to Whitehorse to meet with myself and officials from the Department of Education. At that time, they were flying drivers in from across the country, I believe as far away as Nova Scotia even or Manitoba, to bring additional drivers in. I know they're working on their HR issues. We're trying to help them recruit and retain additional drivers.

The other thing that is going on right now is we're building the tender. The current contract expires at the end of this school year, and we'll be tendering very soon for the next school year, and we'll look to make modifications in that tender that will help with some of these critical issues that we're seeing in school transportation — some of those critical issues that are plaguing the school transportation system in the Yukon.

Linda Moen: This is leading up to my next question with some of the responses that were received.

This spring, the minister did acknowledge how frustrating it was for parents and students, and he did promise to fix it. Families don't need more acknowledgement of how frustrating it is; they have already heard that. What they need is a bus that arrives when it is supposed to each and every day so that they can get to work and kids can get to school.

The minister did explain what is causing these, but can he give me specific timelines when they will be fixed?

Hon. Scott Kent: Every day, I'm sure that all members of the House and all Yukoners can understand. Often there are illnesses with drivers or some drivers aren't able to arrive at work to carry out their shift. That's something that Standard Bus lines is taking seriously, trying to alleviate, trying to ensure that they have backup drivers that know any of the dozens of routes that we have throughout the territory. So, that work is underway.

I can't provide specific timelines on this. I can say, though, that we are working within the new tender to ensure that we cover off many of the challenges or find ways to cover off many of the challenges. I certainly can't stand here and guarantee that there won't be bus cancellations tomorrow or next week or next month. We try to minimize that, of course, and one of the communications tools that we've introduced is a tracking app for parents, and I've heard extremely good reviews about this that shows where a family's bus is or a student's bus is along the route so they can tell if it's late. Obviously, it's important right now, but it will be even more important once we get into the colder weather of winter so that kids aren't standing out at the bus stop for an extended period of time waiting for a bus that's late. So, we're working through a number of different things to ensure that the bus service is reliable and safe for our students.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 7, *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026)* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second Reading, Bill No. 7, standing in the name of the Hon. Jen Gehmair.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I move that Bill No. 7, *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Economy, Tourism and Culture that Bill No. 7, entitled *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I rise today and am pleased to speak to Bill No. 7, the *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026)*. This bill defers the coming into force of previously enacted changes to the Yukon Business Investment Tax Credit until January 1, 2029. This deferral will maintain the eligibility of Yukon businesses with higher asset values to access the program while government considers the longer-term direction of this program. The Yukon Business Investment Tax Credit is intended to encourage investment in eligible Yukon businesses and help these businesses access the capital they need to grow. The program was expanded in 2020 from the former Small Business Investment Tax Credit. At that time, the government introduced changes to broaden eligibility and increase the asset threshold to \$50 million, and the investment limit to \$4 million over the preceding three-year period. It also introduced a temporary increase to the asset threshold to \$100 million and investment limit to \$4 million per year. These temporary increases were scheduled to end January 1, 2023, when the bill was scheduled to come into force. They were subsequently deferred to January 1, 2027. The amendment being proposed today would further defer the coming-into-force date from January 1, 2027, to January 1, 2029.

Part 1 repeals the previous deferral provisions contained in the *Income Tax Amendments Act*, and part 2 amends a subsection of the *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2020*, to establish the new coming-into-force date. In practical terms, this provides Yukon businesses and investors the additional two years of increased limits under the current framework. These two years will give certainty to businesses and the business community interested in accessing the program, while the government completes its further analysis to determine how the business investment tax credit can best support economic growth.

The Government of Yukon will review the Yukon business investment credit during the 2027 and 2028 years. The extension allows that work to take place without changing the current framework for businesses and investors in the meantime.

The Yukon is entering a period of tremendous opportunity. Investments in infrastructure, energy, resource development, and tourism have the potential to shape our territory for decades to come, and to deliver lasting benefits to Yukon communities and future generations. To make the most of these opportunities, we must ensure that government is using every tool available to us to strengthen the Yukon's long-term prosperity.

This is a targeted amendment that provides certainty while giving government time to consider the longer-term future of the Yukon business investment tax credit. I look forward to discussing this bill further.

Justin Ziegler: I just want to start by sharing that it's the first time that I have carried a bill for the Official Opposition, and I had time to imagine this moment, and I did not imagine this kind of bill. It is two pages long. It changes one day and one date, and to understand that one date, I had to read three different acts, some explanatory notes, and a debate from this House from 2020. So, I'll be honest, this is a small bill, but it has a very long history, and it is not easy to understand on its own. I think this is exactly why it deserves our attention. So, I'll do my best, and I'm taking this very seriously.

I just want to start by rephrasing what's in front of us now. The business investment tax credit, I'm going to call it BITC, because I think it's funny, helps Yukon businesses raise money from Yukon investors. The mechanism is when a Yukoner buys shares in an eligible local business, they get a tax credit of 25 percent. So, that system keeps local money working in local businesses. That's a good thing, and the Yukon NDP has supported this credit for a long time.

In March 2020, this Assembly passed the *Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2020*. I can only assume it was a very difficult week. COVID-19 was just arriving, and all parties agreed to move things quickly. That bill made big changes to this credit. So, it raised the asset limit for eligible companies, it lowered the Yukon payroll test from 50 percent to 25 percent, and it changed how much one company can raise under the credit with new rules starting in 2023. I hope people are still following. The Premier at that time was open about why. He told this House that the payroll change was made specifically for Air North. Former member from Whitehorse Centre at the time, Liz Hanson, spoke in that debate, and she was clear that she wanted Air North to succeed, and many Yukoners do. I do. But she also said that a credit with a limited budget must be shared fairly, so that small Yukon businesses still have room to use it. She said these changes would need strong oversight. The NDP voted for that bill, and we still believe in the credit being an effective tool. And her concern about fairness is actually still our concern today. Some of those changes were supposed to start on January 1, 2023, but in 2022, the date was moved to 2027, and now three months away from 2027, the government has asked us to move it again to 2029.

If this bill passes, a law adopted by this Assembly will wait a total of six years before it takes full effect. At some point, a delay stops being a delay and becomes a decision. So, if the government no longer supports these changes, or if the government doesn't support these changes, it should say so. If it still supports them, it should explain why it needs two more years.

The explanatory note tells us what this bill does. It does not tell us why. So, I want to thank the officials for the briefing, but Yukoners should need should not need a private briefing to understand why a law is being put on hold. That explanation belongs here on the record. So, I will ask many questions in Committee of the Whole to make sure that things become manageable and understandable. I look forward to that conversation with the minister. As I said, my goal is very simple.

When we're done, Yukoners should be able to understand what this bill does and why.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Mähsi' cho. I rise today to speak to Bill No. 7, the *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026)*. As we've heard today, the changes being made by this bill are fairly straightforward, even if the way the acts are drafted is sometimes explained sound complicated, as my colleague explained. I thank you for that explanation. I'm certainly in support of the business investment tax credit continuing to be available to Yukon businesses. As you know, Air North, which my First Nation development corporation has a major share in, is the only business, though, right now, to take advantage of this credit in recent years, and that on its own is of great value. However, it would be good to see more private businesses using the credit again.

I was encouraged to hear in the briefing that the department is looking into why other businesses are no longer taking advantage of the program, and more broadly, what the government can be doing to support the private sector. So, I'll be curious to hear the outcome of those discussions as we move forward. And so, for now, I'm supporting maintaining the system as it exists, and as such, we'll be supporting this bill.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I thank the members in this House for their comments and general support for this work. As I've said in my comments earlier, this is a simple change — that we're looking to maintain some continuity while the government takes a look at the program generally. It's an opportunity for us to look at the circumstances of the economy today and find opportunities to best support local businesses here in the territory, and that remains our priority. So, I appreciate the conversation and look forward to future debate.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?
Motion for Second Reading of Bill No. 7 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: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 7, *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026)*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 7, entitled *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 7, entitled *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026)*.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: Thank you for the opportunity to debate this bill in front of the Legislature today. I'm going to defer my comments, as I've shared them earlier in the day, and look forward to questions from the member opposite.

Justin Ziegler: For my first question, I want to circle back to my explanation of what this bill is going to do earlier today. I just want the minister to confirm if I was correct or not, and I can rephrase.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: For the purposes of those in the House, can the member opposite please reiterate what it was he shared earlier with this House?

Justin Ziegler: So, this is a mechanism that allows Yukoners to buy shares in eligible local businesses and get a tax credit of 25 percent. This mechanism raised the asset limits for eligible companies. I don't know the numbers, but the asset limit for eligible companies got raised, and the payroll got decreased from 50 percent to 25 percent. This change has been reiterated up until now, where we're going to reiterate this change of changing the caps to allow more businesses to be eligible for the program. Is this correct?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: The member opposite is mostly correct in the change here today in front of the House. So, great work on his exploring government bills to understand this. So, I appreciate that. But to be clear, today what we're proposing is a change to the limit of \$100 million. We're not proposing any changes to the payroll, and this is to be exclusively moving forward. So, just to be clear, it is a change to the \$100-million asset limit.

Justin Ziegler: So, what exactly — January 1, 2029 — what is new? What has changed?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: If this bill is passed, the current status on January 1, 2029 would be that the \$50-million asset cap would then come into place, and the limit of \$4 million over the preceding three-year period would then be in force.

Justin Ziegler: Why was 2029 chosen as a date for delay for the rest of the previous act?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: The two years was chosen so that the department and the Government of Yukon can do a policy review and to ensure that the bill itself and all of the components of it align with the current economy, current economic needs, and current business needs. We feel that two years is a fairly reasonable time to be able to do that work to ensure that we've communicated that work — and we've consulted with the appropriate businesses and/or organizations in that work, which explains why the two-year time frame was chosen.

Justin Ziegler: Why is the delay needed? What is the reason the delay is needed? What is the rationale? What are the numbers behind this decision?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I guess the question here is: Why wait? Why the extension?

In addition to the policy and the reasoning for asking for this change right now in order to do that is because we do know that businesses between that \$50 million and \$100 million threshold are eligible. And so we would like — we don't want to create an environment where we would exclude folks or any businesses out of this while we do the policy work, so we feel the best approach to this from a policy perspective and fairness and equity perspective is to maintain the status quo while we do the review — not impact businesses through that review and then be able to, once the two years have concluded, come back to this House and report on our findings and make adjustments at that time if necessary.

Justin Ziegler: I hear the minister said that the credit was underused.

I have a few questions about the credit first. How much is the credit? Is there a limit? If we have, let's say, a hundred businesses asking for a tax credit, is there a dollar cap amount to this credit available for businesses?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: The program right now and what we're proposing has a \$1-million cap, which is the limit to which Yukon Government can support this program in. So, that is currently being offered and would maintain a first-come, first-served basis up to a total of \$1 million.

Justin Ziegler: How much of the credit was used each year since 2020 — that's six years. So, how much was used every year?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: So, to respond to the question around how much has been used since 2020, I can share with this House that in 2020, 2.5 percent was utilized. In 2021, 2.5 percent was utilized, and between 2023 and 2026, 100 percent was utilized.

Justin Ziegler: How much of this credit was used this year? Was it? Are we already at 100 percent? We're in 2026. So, are we at 100 percent in 2026?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: In essence, the entire amount has been used, but the actual dollar rate, as it stands today, is \$997,500.

Justin Ziegler: How many businesses have used this credit — actually, Yukoners using this credit. How much credit was used before 2020 and since 2020? I want to know how many businesses have accessed this program.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: Since this program's inception in 1999, there have been 11 businesses that have utilized this credit.

Justin Ziegler: And since 2020, how many of these 11 accessed these this program?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: The answer to that is two.

Justin Ziegler: So, my understanding is that out of the 11 businesses that used this program since 2020, when the caps

were changed to allow more businesses to access it, less businesses have accessed this program. Is this correct?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: So, the short answer to that is yes; that's correct. But I think some context to that question is that it was gently utilized prior to changes. So, I think it's fair to say that changes have created opportunities that have been more available for businesses. For example, in 2011 and 2012, the program wasn't utilized at all. So, changes have increased the use and utilization of this.

Justin Ziegler: So, just to rephrase, since 1999, 11 businesses used the program but a little. And then after 2022, only two businesses understand the program fully. So, I just want to make sure that I understand everything correctly.

When the threshold to access the program was lower, more businesses would access it but would use it less. And since the threshold was expanded, less businesses access the program, but they access it fully. Am I understanding this correctly?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: So, I think I just want to add a little bit more context around this here. So, going back to 1999, there were only two businesses using this. Going back to 2000, there were four; 2001, three; 2002, four; 2003, four; 2004, two; and 2005, one. Nobody utilized it in 2006 or 2007. So, what I'm trying to illustrate here is that changes to the program in the past few years do not have a correlative impact of how this program has been utilized by just one business, if that's in fact where these questions are headed.

I just want to say that there is no data to suggest that changes have made any impact to only one business being qualified to use this. It just is a program that has changed over time. And quite honestly, many small businesses are raising capital through modern financing arrangements often involving instruments such as convertible debt or future options for equity.

This is an administratively burdensome program, which we'll try to fix, but it does offer and has requirements that have legal and financial advice that is required within it for accountability, and a lot of small businesses are unable or unwilling to go through those processes. So, I think to paint the whole picture on this, small businesses have multiple ways of raising capital, and this is just one option that the Yukon Government has available and it has been utilized by 11 companies over the past 20 years. But there are other ways.

Justin Ziegler: I'm going to ask two questions in a row. First question: Can the minister table this data? I'm just curious. I'm a data person and I'm visual, so if the minister can table this data since 1999, I would love to take a look at it.

The minister has burned through a lot of my questions, which is great.

I understand that this program is underutilized by small businesses because it is big and it's legally requiring a lot for small businesses that don't necessarily have the financial means to have legal advice but also probably don't have the time to have someone working on this an extensive amount of time throughout the year. I was just wondering if the minister had talked to businesses who had used this program in recent years — I would say since 2023, right? The world has changed in 2020, and now we're also in an economy that's shifting. So, it would be interesting, and I would like to know if the minister

has talked to any of the two businesses that have accessed this program in the recent years to see what was working, what was not working, and to make sure that this data was also taken into consideration to make the program better come 2029.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: We're happy to table this. I just — with one caveat that we just need to double-check on how much information we can table with respect to the business names, but happy to share the information as we have it here today. And then with respect to the question: Have we talked to businesses? Yes, we have talked to the businesses that have recently utilized this program and have heard strong support for the continuation of this and, quite frankly, an interest to see it move forward, because it really has been a foundational program to the growth of some businesses in the territory.

We are doing this as a result of that feedback but also recognizing that we need to ensure that the program, in its current form and future form, exists to support Yukon businesses as a whole and creates a policy that is accessible for the purposes of which it is intended to serve.

Justin Ziegler: The same question that — has the department, the minister, or anyone else talked to small and medium businesses about what stops them from using this program? What is the burden? I think we all can see what the barriers are to accessing this program. But was it discussed with small and medium businesses and the business community in the Yukon?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: And the short answer to that question is yes. There are conversations among department officials and small businesses ongoing, and we've had plenty of feedback on this program alone and the challenges that small businesses do have with accessing it. And we've also talked to organizations such as the Yukon Venture Angels around looking at ways to improve access to capital, which is exactly what we are committing to do here through a review of this program as well as other opportunities that we have available to us to consider broadening Yukon Government's approach to supporting small businesses and small business growth.

Justin Ziegler: I'm actually surprised that the minister didn't qualify this as red tape, because to me, this is a good example of red tape. But we've been talking about this in the Chamber a lot, and I've asked questions like: What is red tape like? And I think this is actually a good definition: like capital, money, investment, tax credit available for Yukoners to invest in Yukon businesses but businesses not accessing it because the process is just too much of a burden for businesses to take on.

Are there already some things that were identified by the business community or by the department that can be reduced or that can be done to improve access to this program? I mean, I understand that the Cabinet is new. Well, not anymore, but I understand that it's one year out of six years of this program. I'm sure that there are ideas that have already popped, and I'm curious to know what these ideas are and if they were put on the table, discussed, and if there is any sort of plan already emerging.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I do appreciate the member's reference to red tape, because I couldn't agree more. I think what we are looking to achieve in Yukon Government is to

reduce red tape as much as we can. But that needs to also be measured against health, safety, and accountability, and that's in fact what we are going to be doing with this program and its review and getting an understanding of what the barriers are with respect to eligibility and utilization of this program so that we can reduce where we can but ensure that accountability and all of the reporting functions within it remain sound and firm, because at the end of the day, we also have to protect the interest of the public dollar.

Justin Ziegler: I'm sorry; I just think this is really funny, because I admit that something is red tape and as soon as I admitted, the minister kind of said, like: Okay, but we have to make sure that dollars are spent in a certain way. So, I think it's really funny that kind of the tables have turned but only on this one.

Now I have a very pointed suggestion for this specific program. Will the minister create a navigator position to help small and medium Yukon businesses that don't have the capacity to work through the barriers and paperwork for this credit? So, is this in the works, and is this something the minister would consider?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I think the short answer to that is to acknowledge the work of the department. Right now, we do have staff in the Department of Economy, Tourism and Culture who do work very closely with applicants on this program, as well as many others, to ensure that applicants aren't left to their own devices on understanding what the needs are and requirements are for this program. So, while I'm not willing to commit to a navigator program, I am committed to ensuring that businesses have access to information and are able to navigate these programs with some ease and support.

Justin Ziegler: Thank you, thank you — I just want to say that my comment was not a criticism on staff at all. I'm just making a suggestion, and I'm also not expecting a commitment around this. I'm just dropping the idea and seeing if this would probably also help businesses, because I know some businesses are listening. I'm ambitious, but I'm not as ambitious as expecting a commitment on such a bill so soon.

Now, I'd like to know what the review process is going to look like. Are there specific things that are going to be reviewed in a specific way? I have my own ideas, but I'd like to know what the minister's idea is on this.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I think to be very clear — and I think the member understands this — but the review is not part of what we're talking about in this bill directly, but it will be as a result of this bill passing this House. And to answer the question more directly, we have already completed a jurisdictional scan of what is out there across the country similar to programs like this. And the work that is ahead of us now is to understand what changes to this program would have to our fiscal framework as a territory and how we can utilize tools out there for capital development in a different way, if possible.

And it will also be to engage with businesses and organizations like the Yukon Venture Angels to explore ideas to create a broader range of options for individuals. Like I said, there are many ways for businesses to grow. There are many ways for businesses to look at capital investments within their own business. So, we want to be able to support that as best as we can moving forward.

Justin Ziegler: I'm really looking forward to this review process once we vote on this bill. I'm looking forward to the review process to start. I just want to give a shout-out to officials and to all the people working in the department making sure that things work better for Yukon businesses, especially in these times, right? When the price of electricity, price of gas — I do think that nowadays doing business is getting harder and harder. I just want to give them a shout-out.

Thank you for this. I have no more questions.

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Seeing none, we are going to proceed to clause-by-clause.

Unanimous consent to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 7 read and agreed to

Justin Ziegler: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 7, entitled *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026)*, read and agreed to.

Chair: The Member for Riverdale South has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 7, entitled *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 4 agreed to

Title agreed to

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I move that you report Bill No. 7, entitled *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026)*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Minister of Economy, Tourism and Culture that the Chair report Bill No. 7, entitled *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026)*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Department of Health and Social Services

Chair: The Committee will now move onto Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in 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 Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*.

Hon. Brad Cathers: I'm joined today by Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services Matt King and senior advisor Jared Wong, who will be assisting me in answering questions this afternoon. This interim fall capital budget is a new approach for the Yukon in terms of early tendering of

projects that would benefit from getting out the door earlier with vote authority.

What this will allow us to do in the case of Health and Social Services — the only item that we have in the fall capital budget is \$14.4 million for the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion project. That is to provide a transfer to the Yukon Hospital Corporation for the 2027-28 fiscal year through this advance vote of \$14.4 million. This is a multi-phase, multi-year project, and the early appropriation will allow important work to proceed and maintain momentum on planning and preparation underway. It will support advanced preparation for the hospital expansion, what we're classifying as "early works", including water main relocation, site preparation, and a renovation of the maternity ward.

Whitehorse General Hospital is under sustained pressure with occupancy consistently exceeding 100-percent bed capacity, and what that means is that anytime they're over 100-percent bed capacity, people are in beds in areas that are not designed for that. That included when the hospital hit 146-percent bed capacity in June, the month prior to the opening of eight new beds. That meant that people were in beds in the hallways of the emergency department and that a meeting room off the emergency department had the table pulled out and three beds put in there. So, again, I would trust that all members of the Assembly and Yukoners can understand that type of situation is far from ideal and puts patients in situations where they do not have the privacy we would like them to have and are in areas where they're not properly fitted up to provide things such as oxygen, for example, as would typically be provided within a properly developed room.

This is the result of the hospital expansion project under a different name planned in 2019, and unfortunately, the government of the day did not proceed with that. So, we are dealing with a situation where the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion should have been underway and under construction by now and ideally open by now. So, we are responding to a situation where some seven and a half years later after that proposal — we are dealing with, moving forward as quickly as we can with this project. That being said, as we noted before, we need the federal government to assist us with the fiscal capacity to advance this project.

The cost estimate of over a billion dollars for the new parts of the hospital, including new beds, four new operating rooms, and new ICUs, comes at a steep price tag and following a time when the cost of hospital construction has grown even higher than the rate of growth of average construction projects since the pandemic. This is creating a situation where we again need the federal government to work with us on this.

The project, as I noted before, I firmly believe is a project of national importance, because as Canada moves forward to do more in the area of asserting and defending our Arctic sovereignty — and the federal government is committed to more military presence and operations in the North — one thing that military members and their families need, even in peacetime, is hospital capacity to meet their needs and to support exercises, to support patrols and potential combat operations. It is also important to have the hospital infrastructure to support the operations of the Canadian military, and we can provide that for the federal government and the military far more cost effectively than if they were to try to provide it themselves. As I've noted before, and we'll continue to

again both in the House and dealing with the federal government, is that to support the operations of the Canadian military north of 60 and in the Arctic, there are two hospitals that are key to supporting those operations: the hospital in Yellowknife and the Whitehorse General Hospital. We're in a situation where we are already overcapacity for beds; we are already seeing our surgical areas dealing with a higher volume than they were designed for, and a visiting specialist clinic that was built with the expectation of seeing 2,000 patients per year is now seeing about over seven times that number. We are again willing to work with the federal government in supporting Canada's assertion and protection of Arctic sovereignty, but that requires them recognizing that we need them to work with us both on the overall cost of the project and on the borrowing capacity so that if we need to borrow any money for the construction of the hospital expansion, that we are not constrained by our debt limit, which, as members will know, we are quite close to the top of.

The planned expansion of Whitehorse General Hospital will increase surgical, inpatient, and critical care capacity and help address current pressures while preparing Yukon's health system for future population growth and emergency response needs. Advancing this funding now is intended to avoid delays in planning and ensure that this project is positioned to move forward as quickly as we are able to move it forward. Again, recognizing that we do need the federal government to work with us in supporting this project.

This investment is very necessary for all Yukoners and is an important step toward expanding and modernizing Yukon's primary hospital and ensuring it can continue meeting the needs of Yukoners. I would note, as members may know, that the hospital — large parts of it were designed in and opened in the 1990s. There was the addition, of course, of the emergency department, which we planned and began construction of during the last term that the Yukon Party was in office. But the addition of bed capacity is long overdue, and the operating rooms that we have now do not meet the current CSA standards for new operating rooms, and it does place constraints on the ability of our surgical teams to do what they need to do.

That is also part of why we propose building new operating rooms, which will allow the existing ones to be used for more minor procedures. And the addition as well of ICU capacity is to provide a net increase of eight new ICU units, but a total of 12 are included in the project, recognizing the change in CSA standards for ICUs even since when the current ones were opened in 2018.

With that, I look forward to answering questions about this project. I would note also that as the House Leader has indicated, I'm sure, to his opposition colleagues at House Leaders, we do plan to bring Yukon Hospital Corporation witnesses in this fall to answer questions about the hospital's budget, about the things that are relevant to all three hospitals in Whitehorse, Dawson, and Watson Lake as well as the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion project. And, of course, for some specific questions, they may be better positioned to answer questions about the current details of the project.

Kate White: Sometimes in this Chamber, it's really fascinating, because time bends, and if folks can believe, that was just over nine minutes in talking.

So, I appreciate that we have limits now, because when I first was elected, we didn't, and it could be very endless. I, of course, welcome the officials here today, and I committed to them that my intention was to speak only about the line item in the 2027-28 fall capital estimates, and I'm going to do my best to do that. And so, if the minister can walk me through a bit, I appreciate that this \$14.4 million is the preparatory work for the beginning of the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion, and we did get some more details from officials, but I think it would be helpful here. We were told about water mains relocation, et cetera.

So, maybe if the minister can give me an idea of the scope of this work, that would be great.

Hon. Brad Cathers: One thing I would just note to all members is that the project, since it is in the design phases and has not gone through the tender process yet to award the design and construction, that it's possible that some details could change through the design and construction period.

But I will talk about the current scope of the project, and I would note that the specific early works are ones that were identified by the Yukon Hospital Corporation as ones that they believed should advance this year to ensure that the project is not delayed another construction season. It includes relocating the city's water main. And the reason for that, just to describe it simply for members and others listening, is that if you take a look at Whitehorse General Hospital, the area where the majority of the new construction is envisioned is right beside it but on the other side of the hospital from where the river would be, so on the hill side of the hospital, and the location where the footprint would be is where parking is right now. So, it's currently physician and staff parking in that area of the hospital campus. To advance construction of the expansion project on that site requires taking a number of parking spots out of commission, and it requires as well a laydown area for construction, which will further impact parking in that area. So, that is why one of the things that we're moving forward as part of the early works is developing another parking area on the site. There will be more work related to that required later, particularly to accommodate the estimated total number of parking stalls that will be required once the expansion project is built, operational, and fully staffed.

The first phase then includes parking simply because if we were to begin construction without it, there would immediately be problems with physicians, nurses, and other health professionals who currently park there every day when they go to work not having anywhere to go. So, that's why parking is part of the first phase of this.

The city water main currently crosses the area where the expansion is intended to occur, so it needs to be relocated to avoid that being a problem. I would note again that the total \$14.4 million is a relatively small portion of the overall project costs, but it's related to those early works to give the team at Yukon Hospital Corporation the ability to move forward with this as quickly as possible.

I would also note for members that we have engaged with Infrastructure BC, who is supporting this project much like they did when the emergency department project occurred. That project was done on time and slightly underbudget. We are hopeful that the same will occur with this but recognize that the total cost of this project, in fact, delays in the project even by a

month due to the current rate of escalation of construction costs, the rate of escalation of fuel costs, steel, and so on — one of the factors in the project is the hospital team has costed out how much the total project costs go up by every month that it is delayed. Again, because of the need for federal support in helping us move forward with this project, there are a number of factors which may delay the project. So, that will simply through inflationary costs alone have an impact on the cost of this project. It will go more expensive as time goes on.

There are also, as members may know, some major risk factors that we're dealing with, as is every government in the country, related to the uncertainty of the global situation, the conflict in the Strait of Hormuz, and its impact on diesel prices is driving up the cost of transportation, which, of course, the Yukon is heavily dependent on transportation into the territory. As probably goes without saying, everything — most of the things, I should say — almost everything that will go into the new hospital project will need to be shipped into the territory. So, that is a major cost risk.

There are also potential impacts related to the ongoing trade war with the United States that have posed risk factors around the potential cost increases of products. So, again, everyone is flagging at this point those major risk factors which may negatively impact the cost of this. And it's a situation where I think that any financial analyst and even the Bank of Canada would flag these major risk factors and note that it's extremely difficult to accurately forecast what will happen because of the global uncertainty we're dealing with and the uncertainty involving our largest trading partner, the United States, due to the current administration's approach on tariffs and starting a trade war here.

In addition to the water main and the site prep, the project includes maternity ward renovations. Note that all of the early works are elements that the team at the hospital, as well as Health and Social Services, are confident that any design changes which may occur throughout the project are not going to affect what would be necessary for the early works. Or to put that perhaps a little more simply, we are confident that everything that is part of the early works identified in this capital appropriation are things that we will need to do anyway as a first step in proceeding with site work for the hospital.

We're demonstrating through this, recognizing federal interest in some of their infrastructure funding related Arctic security of supporting projects that are shovel-ready — we are demonstrating through this to the federal government that we are advancing ourselves without the specific federal support, and we are making the case to them for why we believe that this project is not only in the interests of the Yukon but is in fact in the interests of Canada and it supports protection of Arctic sovereignty.

Kate White: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the minister for that answer. When the minister has mentioned that there are going to be four new operating rooms and ICUs, how many beds? What's the expectation for new beds in this new addition that's going to go on the hospital?

Hon. Brad Cathers: The current plan is to build 56 new beds, which because one current room being used for a bed is intended to be repurposed for other needs within the project, it is intended at the current time to be a net new 55-bed facility.

Kate White: That's great news to know that we're looking at those 55 new beds in the territory knowing that — I'm sure I'm not the only one in the Chamber who was born at Whitehorse General Hospital. Sometimes you can even almost see in the same area, so I do appreciate that those changes are happening. And the minister said a billion dollars but it wasn't much more than that. I understand because he said that steel prices and construction prices and things continue to change, but is there a closer cost estimate to what the final cost of this renovation or this extension will be?

Hon. Brad Cathers: The cost estimate right now is \$1.1 billion, but as I noted, there are many risk factors which could impact that in a negative way. I would note that if we receive the necessary financial support and borrowing capacity to move forward with the project, some of this will be refined once it has actually gone out through the competitive process to determine who will build the facility. Major risk factors around the costs in that area, but as I noted, we are working with Infrastructure BC as the hospital did in the emergency department project quite successfully for that one.

We hope it will be the same in this case, but we are relying on the fact that Infrastructure BC has a lot more experience in building hospitals than the Yukon Government, of course, does. That's no negative reflection on any of our officials or staff here within the territory but simply a reflection of the fact that the Yukon Government and Highways and Public Works do not regularly build hospitals. We are very appreciative of the support from Infrastructure BC in helping us access their expertise in both design and costing and in moving forward with the project.

We have also had some assistance, though not in as great detail, from the Government of Alberta, has also provided with us with information about some of their hospital projects, and we appreciate the support of their officials in that. But Infrastructure BC, as I noted, is the one the Yukon Hospitals has a close working relationship with and is actually part of the project team.

I should also just note to explain what those beds look like. With the clinical capacity expansion of new inpatient beds is currently planned to be a 32-bed medical unit and a 24-bed surgical unit and would be four operating rooms as well as endoscopy and flexible operating space and new medical device reprocessing. And the critical care capacity, as I mentioned, is the construction of 12 ICU beds, but because the existing four would then be repurposed, it is intended to be a net new eight ICU bed capacity. And that is due in part to the population growth of the territory, the aging demographic, and also, part of the work that we're currently doing through Yukon hospitals is to move toward the development and establishment of an internal medicine program in Yukon.

That is intended to reduce the number of people that we need to medevac out to BC or Alberta and to allow for earlier repatriation of people here. But to support that, it also requires additional ICU capacity to be there for some of those vulnerable people when they're repatriated or in cases where we fly them out now that we would not have to in the future. So, details of that again are under development.

There is \$200,000 in the budget this year for supporting that program development. While it's not directly part of the

hospital expansion project, the reason I mentioned it is it's linked to the total vision for this facility, and why we're projected to go from four ICU beds to 12 is that we're seeing a change in what we expect the facility will be serving with the establishment of an internal medicine program. Again, through all these things, subject to the necessary budgetary approvals.

Kate White: Were there any other capital projects within the Department of Health and Social Services that were considered for the 2027-28 fall capital estimates?

Hon. Brad Cathers: Like with other departments, there were various options considered as we were dealing with this new process of doing a fall capital budget for things where early work is necessary. And ultimately, through that, it was determined that we would advance a submission for just one project, the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion project. That is due in part to things like some of the other projects underway are not at the stage where they would be sped up by early tendering of contracts related to them or not significantly so when compared to the construction season or simply are not at a stage where we're able to do the costing related to it to go through the budgetary submission process.

The simple answer — I think it would probably be inappropriate for me to get into the details of what was considered, but we did consider a number of options. Again, as multiple departments did, we're also trying to understand what the new process looked like and determine not only what might be eligible for it but which projects should be advanced in the fall versus those who go through the normal cycle in the spring.

Again, noting, as the Premier has explained, that most of the government's capital budget for the 2027-28 fiscal year will still be in the main budget through the normal budgetary process, this was a short list of capital projects that were identified as specifically and materially benefiting from coming forward in the fall instead of the spring. And so that's how we got to where we are today.

Kate White: The minister said just recently that it was important to have part of the work on the hospital expansion included in this fall capital estimates, because it was really important that this government show the federal government that they're advancing this issue on their own. And so I'll note that there is \$138.8 million in this fall capital budget, and to be frank, the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion is pretty minor, right? So, just kind of around 10 percent of that in comparison to the rest. So, was there more that could have been put forward in this fall capital budget to advance that expansion work?

Hon. Brad Cathers: Again, this was identified by the Yukon Hospital Corporation team as the portion that they believe should be advanced as early work, and I was pleased to support that. There is a lot of additional work on the hospital project that overall will need financial approvals at some point in time if the expansion is to proceed. But again, there will be more coming in this area. I remind the member that this spring we identified \$4.1 million in the budget to support the expansion project this year, and we're now just a short number of months after the spring approving an additional \$14.4 million or, I should say, we are requesting that the Legislative Assembly approve it and expect that it will pass.

There are other elements of the project that we will be seeking financial approval for in subsequent budget bills. But I would note, as I just finished explaining, as the Premier mentioned before, that this fall capital is a new process. It's one that had previously been tried over 25 years ago, but there had been problems with that approach. It had been talked about by a number of members but not tried. We have come up with a way to move it forward and to implement it in a manageable manner. But it is not the majority of capital spending that the government expects to include for the 2027-28 fiscal year.

The member can expect that there may be additional spending on health infrastructure in the spring, but, of course, I'm not in a position to start pre-announcing what we might hope to see in that while we're still in our budgetary development process. And, of course, the budget itself — as the member will well know, no ministers will be at liberty to talk about the full details of what's in the budget for 2027-28 until that's finalized by Cabinet and until we're in a position to speak publicly about the budget for the next fiscal year.

Kate White: The minister also said that this is going to receive the necessary financial support from the federal government, and so I guess I have questions about this \$14.4-million going forward. If there isn't that commitment ahead of the next fiscal year, how much more does the minister anticipate will come from Yukon Government alone?

Hon. Brad Cathers: At a certain point, we will need to determine whether we have the federal support that we need to allow us to advance with the more expensive works. That is also one of the reasons why the scope of these early works were chosen. There are a number of issues related to permitting, including with the city and just simply the timeline involved for moving the water main and developing new parking spaces that will take time next construction season, and some of that work needs to be completed before other groundwork could really occur.

So, again, there are other parts of this project, but I would note that because the work is advancing, but there is more work needed to finalize the design, to tender the detailed design and construction, that some of those costs will be refined before they're to a stage where we're able to go in through the Management Board process and seek specific approvals for those components and those costs. Rather than us simply identifying an allocation of what might theoretically be required for additional works, there is work being done right now that will ultimately lead into determinations of whether there is additional funding identified in the spring for the hospital expansion project and how much that would be.

But ultimately, I would flag that we don't have the fiscal capacity to build a \$1.1-billion hospital expansion project without the federal government assisting us either with a financial contribution toward the project, borrowing capacity, or hopefully both. And we have noted as well that much has happened with other infrastructure projects north of 60 because of the acknowledgement by previous federal governments that the cost-sharing arrangements typically used for provinces do not work for the territories due to our smaller population and limited fiscal capacity. We are requesting and proposing a 75-25 percent cost-sharing split where the federal government would provide us with 75 percent of the project costs over time.

We've had positive discussions with the federal government. We are cautiously optimistic.

The Premier has raised this issue personally with Prime Minister Carney on more than one occasion. I have raised it with every federal minister that I've spoken to, and I would note as well that when the federal Minister of Health, Minister Marjorie Michel, was up here in Yukon, we appreciated her visit, appreciated her willingness to tour the Whitehorse General Hospital with me to hear directly from the Yukon Hospital team, including physicians and staff, about the needs of the facility. We discussed a number of the spatial limitations and appreciate that she seemed to be listening, and we are hopeful that the federal government will support us with the hospital expansion.

The other thing I would like to note with regard to the member's question about the costs of the project overall is that we do have \$74.5 million in federal infrastructure funding that I signed the agreement on with Minister Robertson earlier this year, and though we are not in a position to talk about the details of our plan until we've received Management Board approval of our spending plan, we also need to work with the federal government around that. But I can tell the member that we do plan to use a portion of that \$74.5 million to support hospital needs. I am just not able to get into the specifics of what we envision at this point in time until Management Board has made a decision on the proposal coming forward from myself and the Department of Health and Social Services through our Management Board process.

Kate White: You know, there is nothing more exciting than being told that there is a \$74.5-million federal infrastructure funding agreement signed that we cannot talk about right now, but: Hold this space, because it's coming forward. So, I can't wait. I'm very excited about it.

The minister talked about next steps when it came to the hospital, including finalizing the design. Is there a reason why like design finalization wasn't included in this budget here to try to get that advance? So, for example, when this is completed next season, we're ready to go. Is there a reason why we weren't looking that far ahead?

Hon. Brad Cathers: We are looking far ahead through this. This project is envisioned to meet current needs and support the population's estimated growth over the next 20 to 30 years as well as providing surge capacity for emergencies and other needs and providing that capacity, for example, if there was a situation such as wildfires or other things impacting Northwest Territories that we could have some additional capacity to support them.

There is a lot of detailed work going into this right now by the hospital's project team, but the total amounts that were requested for early works by Yukon Hospital Corporation were signed off on by me as a budget request and were approved by Management Board. The \$14.4 million is what they asked for early works, and we're pleased to provide it. If the member has some questions about the details of that and why certain things were included in early works and why other things were not, I would encourage her to ask those questions of hospital officials when they occur later this fall. But again, as I noted, they asked for \$14.4 million, and that's what they have got in the capital budget.

Kate White: I like nothing more than advice or suggestions from the Minister of Health and Social Services, and so I'll take that on board and the same way he takes my suggestions on board. I do, you know, I think about and I appreciate that the federal minister did a tour of the hospital, and this is no slight. The next words I say about the Hospital Corporation — because I understand the restraints and the absolute — I can't even, like — the puzzle that has to be done to get people there. But if we ever really wanted to show an official from outside of the territory the dire space needs at the Whitehorse General Hospital, it would be to take them to the old cafeteria on the Thomson Centre side that has, I think, eight beds divided by curtains to really see about that lack of privacy or that lack of oxygen access or any of those things.

I understand that the hospital is doing its best but can't do more. I did make a commitment to the officials, and I am going to do my best to stay to that. So, instead of talking about everything else and Health and Social Services that I desperately want to talk about, I have no more questions about the \$14.4-million right now. I have questions for the Hospital Corporation, and as you can imagine, I have so many more questions for this minister when we get to budget debate, because that really opens it up, and I haven't made any promises to officials at this point. So, with that, I have no more questions.

Hon. Brad Cathers: I heard the member's suggestion that we should take the federal minister to see part of the Thomson Centre that's being used for hospital beds. We did exactly that; that was part of the tour. That was one of the things that I wanted to show her and that we did show her and explain. Again, our Member of Parliament, Dr. Hanley, joined us as well, and he certainly understands from a clinical perspective what that means.

We, specifically I, spoke to, as did the Yukon Hospital team, the challenge that creates and the fact that those beds that are in the former cafeteria area in the Thomson Centre that are separated by fabric dividers, that's not what any of us want to see. The Yukon needs that space. They are beds that are making the best of existing infrastructure and inadequate capacity. But that is something that we recognize — that any of the patients who are in there are not in the type of rooms that anyone at Yukon Hospitals or I would like to see them in.

That is another part of the reason why we have a real sense of trying to move this forward as quickly as we can is because of the current overcapacity situation and the current need to have beds in part of the Thomson Centre that was not designed for hospital beds, beds sometimes in the hallways of the emergency department, beds as well, as I mentioned, during the 146-percent bed capacity situation in June. As the hospital explained it to us, they had to take a meeting room table out of a meeting room off of the emergency department and put three beds in there for patients. That's not the type of care that anyone involved with the Yukon Hospital team wants to see.

While I recognize that is what we have to do in the current situation, that is a big part of why, to the best that I can, I'm moving forward with this project as quickly as we can. Again, adding the very important caveat that we do need the federal government to come to the table and to be a partner in this. We've identified, and will again, to the federal government on

every occasion that we have the opportunity to the importance of this project to Canada's goals in protecting Arctic sovereignty. There are also significant economic benefits to this, as the federal government expresses an interest in critical minerals in the North. Every development of critical minerals or any increased economic activity here in the territory brings people with it, and people need access to hospital services sometimes, so that places additional strain on an already overcapacity system.

I'd also like to just thank as well my colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I missed mentioning before that he has also, in meetings that he has had with federal officials, largely focused on advocating for the energy needs of the territory, but he has also done his best to assist us by taking the opportunity to mention to ministers and officials he sat down with, even if it wasn't their main area of focus, to also, on behalf of our government, explain the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion project. So, I'd like to thank him for that.

As I mentioned earlier, I have taken the opportunity every time I've talked to a federal minister, even those for whom this is not their portfolio, to make the pitch to them for the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion project. As I mentioned, the Premier has himself on multiple occasions made the pitch to the Prime Minister. I missed mentioning that he's made the pitch as well to the Minister of Finance federally and has spoken to the Minister of National Defence about this project. So again, there is a shared effort from colleagues who are also doing what they can to impress upon the federal government the importance of this project to the Yukon, to the health of our citizens, to not limiting the ability, as our population is expected to grow, the ability of our system needs to grow to support the health needs of the territory. But as I've emphasized before, I also firmly believe that this project is very much in the national interest at this point in time as Canada recognizes the need to do more to protect our Arctic from nations like Russia and China who have aspirations in that area.

We again, as a country, need to step up and do more to protect our Arctic and assert our sovereignty, and that includes healthy communities, healthy people living north of 60, and the ability to support the needs of the military and their families as well as other NATO countries that may take part in exercises, whether in peacetime or in conflict. And therefore, the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion project is again very much in the national interests of Canada.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services?

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

Unanimous consent to deem all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried

Kate White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Chair: The Member for Takhini has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 15,

Department of Health and Social Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$14,400,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$14,400,000 agreed to Department of Health and Social Services agreed to

Department of Community Services

Chair: The matter before the Committee now is Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*.

Would members like 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 Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*.

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I'll just keep my remarks brief. I had the opportunity to speak to this already and the importance of doing the fall capital estimates — an opportunity to bring projects along quicker and take best advantage of the short construction season that we have here in Yukon.

We have some items that are in the fall capital estimates. Obviously, that's why I'm speaking. We have \$18.225 million: \$2 million of that is scoping work; \$1.225 million, Protective Services; and \$15 million in the envelope of potential projects, with some projects expected, as we discussed previously.

I just look forward to the questions. We can answer them.

Brent McDonald: I thank the staff members for a good briefing earlier; it was very helpful.

My first question would be: What criteria did the department use to choose these three lines in particular for the advance vote?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: As Community Services infrastructure works generally within an envelope, they're always working on different projects and have different projects at different states of readiness. And these ones did seem that they would meet the criteria of eligibility and early tendering, so these are the ones that we put forward.

Brent McDonald: There are going to be some projects tendered early this year for next year's budget. If for some reason in next year's budget — for any reason, if there are any changes and those projects don't happen, will government be liable for any incurred costs for the tender and early planning process?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I think I understand the question — if a project was tendered and something were to change, would we be liable? I think that we do work in advancement of

projects — enough work that we are confident that the project would move forward and don't anticipate that as a problem.

Brent McDonald: For the advance projects, will the remaining capital appear in the spring 2027 main estimates on top of this \$18.2 million, or does this advance vote cap at \$18.2 million?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: For these projects listed, the amounts in the estimates are what is to be expected to be spent next year.

Brent McDonald: For the \$15 million Investing in Canada infrastructure program, is there any expected federal recovery on this amount?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: Yes, there is expected federal recovery on one of the projects, the Mount Lorne water treatment plant. There is a 65-percent expected recovery. Haines Junction infrastructure phase 4B is 75-percent expected recovery, and the Carmacks DMAF funding is 100-percent expected recovery.

Brent McDonald: What's the federal deadline for these ICIP projects to be completed and claimed? And are there any projects that may be at risk of missing that deadline?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: Just to be clear with the question — for ICIP projects, those projects have been identified. They were identified a few years ago, and there is no longer the ability to add projects to the ICIP list. 2033-34 is the deadline to complete the ICIP spending.

Brent McDonald: In the preliminary scoping line of \$2 million, can minister tell us which projects they're looking at for next year?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: Well, there aren't specific projects listed for the scoping. That work is to identify projects for the work that's currently ongoing with the community infrastructure planning and previous ICIP projects that were identified but are for scoping. I don't have that list of projects here, but that is what that scoping budget is for — to advance that work so that when we are ready to tender, we can.

Brent McDonald: The fire protection line is \$1.225 million. I understand this is for the purchase of fire trucks. Do we know which communities the new fire trucks are going to?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: Yes, that money is for the purchase of fire trucks. It's not identified which community will receive that yet. That will be based on the community needs as indicated by the department.

Brent McDonald: That's all I have for now.

Kate White: I'm delighted to join today in support of my colleague the critic for Community Services. One of the things when I look at the \$18.2 million in this fall capital estimates — something that's very near and dear to my heart is the Mount Lorne water treatment plant. So, I'm hoping the minister can walk me through the scope of what this project is and what the community can hopefully anticipate on the other side.

Hon. Cory Bellmore: Yes, the Mount Lorne community water plant is a very exciting project. I had the opportunity to be out at Mount Lorne the other night to talk to the residents out there, and they're all very excited to see this project move forward.

The detailed design phase is now complete, and we're at the stage that allows for this project to proceed to procurement. Tendering for the construction contract is anticipated to begin this winter with the fall estimates, hopefully. The community will be pleased to hear that it is a piped water connection to the community centre, which they have advocated heavily for, and is included in the design and will form a part of the construction tender. We've already started work on the land, the space available there. Tree clearing was completed in September, and the design phase to 95 percent is complete. Construction and tender are expected this winter.

Kate White: The minister, I believe, made a commitment that the water treatment plant would be connected to the community centre, so can I just get that reaffirmed? I know that the community is very concerned that the project is going to get scaled back before construction starts, and I know that the one thing that they absolutely do not want to lose is the connection to the community centre. They view that as a priority for the water but raised concerns that the summer design that Yukon Government approved didn't include this, and I know that they fought hard to get it back. And so I just want a commitment that no matter what, the water treatment plant in Mount Lorne is going to be connected to the community centre.

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I can tell you that it is included in the 95-percent design. We did hear the concerns from the community on the design previously, and that has been added.

Kate White: Does the new design include a public washroom?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I can tell you that there is not a public washroom in the water treatment plant designed as it is.

Kate White: Deputy Chair, one can always hold out hopes and dreams, and I know that was something that the community was really advocating for, but they weren't holding out hope. I just thought maybe we could sneak it in at the end.

Has the community signed off on that final plan?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I can't confirm if they have seen the final 95-percent design, although I do know that staff or officials from the community were at Mount Lorne following the meeting the other evening to discuss this, but I can commit to getting back to you to let you know if they've seen that final design or not.

Kate White: That flows really beautifully into the next thing that they indicated, which is they want a strong commitment that Yukon Government will talk and consult with them before any changes are made. One other thing they said is that in the last 11 years, it's been in front of them, it's been taken away, it's been brought back, and it's been taken away. If you can imagine when you're waiting for this really important thing — we think about all the folks down the Annie Lake Road and others who are off grid or away from water.

This access is a really important thing, and so I'm just looking for a commitment from the minister that Yukon Government will talk and consult with the community ahead of any changes.

Hon. Cory Bellmore: The 95-percent design is the design at which projects are tendered. Although there is that five-percent piece that may cause some differences during the tendering process, I'm not entirely sure what that is, but we can listen to the community. I heard them very clearly the other evening when I was out there about their desire to be listened to and heard — and happy to do so. We do provide them with regular updates as the project has moved along recently, and I look forward to celebrating the Mount Lorne water treatment plant with the residents there.

Kate White: That's always the dream — to get a project to the point where you can go and you can walk in and you can see that. And I agree; I look forward to that. Residents have been really clear about what it is they want and expect. And again, I appreciate that it's 95 percent and things can change. I think what they're trying to say is that before any of those things can change, it's making sure that the community knows about it.

I did make a commitment previously that I was only going to talk about the fall capital estimates and health, and I'm doing my best to do it here in Community Services too. But I'll just note that commitments have been made about looking at the transfer station contracts and stuff within a year. So, I'm just making sure that it's on the record that the Mount Lorne community really wants to make sure that before any changes happen to what they think is coming, they're consulted. And so I appreciate the commitment from the minister.

I tell you, I have a new cotton candy machine, and I'll be there for the opening. The first time I got thrown into the cotton candy world was at Marsh Lake, and I consider myself a bit of an expert after that afternoon, so I look forward to that.

I do know, in conversation with the Premier when we were talking about envelopes — and I note here the community infrastructure development example projects, which would be probably a good example of an envelope. I note that there are three here that are listed: the Mount Lorne water treatment plant, the Haines Junction infrastructure phase 4B, and Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation public works. I appreciate that I've already asked questions about Mount Lorne, but can the minister give me an idea about the scope for both the Haines Junction infrastructure phase 4B and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation public works building?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I will just take them one at a time. The Haines Junction infrastructure phase 4B is a continuation of the civil works project that has been going on in Haines Junction for a period of time. It's just working with the community to make sure that there is clean and safe water and updating their assets, as those tend to be always aging assets that need replacing. It's to rehabilitate the section of groundwater, underground utility pipes east of the main road through town to the Haines Road north of Marshall Creek Road. For the second project, for the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation public works building, this is a Government of Yukon contribution with our partners. We do like doing infrastructure projects with partners when and where we can.

This is important to Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, because they have a very aged pre-settlement garage that they use for public works currently and have completely outgrown it and are hoping to complete a project for a new public works building on their industrial lot.

Kate White: Recognizing that there is the \$18.2-million here, can the minister walk through — again, I know it says "example projects", but is there a cost estimate, for example, for the Mount Lorne water treatment plant or Haines Junction or Little Salmon Carmacks?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: The estimates we currently have in the estimates for these projects — and they are estimates, because things can change when we tender, obviously — are: the \$4 million for the Mount Lorne water treatment plant; \$4.5 million for the Haines Junction infrastructure phase 4B; \$4 million for the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation; and there is \$2 million allocated to the City of Whitehorse Fire Hall No. 3; as well as \$2 million allocated to a disaster mitigation program in Carmacks.

Kate White: I thank the minister for that. For the \$2 million for the City of Whitehorse Fire Hall No. 3, can the minister do something more about that project? Is that a fire hall in Whistle Bend, as an example, or is that an existing fire hall?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: It is to assist the City of Whitehorse with the construction of a fire hall in Whistle Bend, Fire Hall No. 3.

Kate White: I thank the minister for that clarification. Can the minister tell me the cost estimate and the number of trucks with the fire truck replacement?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I don't have an exact estimate yet for a specific truck. Obviously, fire trucks are not bought off the shelf and we can't cost them out specifically. So, it is for the purchase of a new truck and anything that goes with it, any previous needs, I guess. Hopefully, we can remain within what is estimated. I know that there have been increasing costs on things such as vehicles, so I'm not sure where that's at right now in the world of the things.

Kate White: I thank the minister for that. Like I said, I was here in a second fill role with my colleague the Member for Klondike. I'm going to thank the minister and our officials for the time today.

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I just wanted to thank everybody for their questions. I look forward to making the fall capital estimates a positive experience and helping smooth things over.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services?

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

Unanimous consent to deem all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried

Brent McDonald: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Deputy Chair: The Member for Klondike has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.
Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$18,225,000 agreed to

*Total Expenditures in the amount of \$18,225,000 agreed to
Department of Community Services agreed to*

Yukon Housing Corporation

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee of the Whole is Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee of the Whole is Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*.

Hon. Scott Kent: Good afternoon, everyone. As Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, I'm pleased to present the proposed fall capital budget for 2027-28. Joining me to provide assistance in the House are Yukon Housing's president, Samantha Patterson, and vice-president, Jamie McAllister. I would like to thank them for joining me, and I'd also like to thank the board of directors and staff at Yukon Housing for the work that they do every day to support clients and advance our commitments to increasing housing supply and improving access to affordable housing.

I will just give a brief overview of what's in the fall capital budget for Yukon Housing, and I look forward to answering questions here this afternoon. The 2027-28 fall capital budget for Yukon Housing is a total of \$26.2 million; \$12.7 million is for investments in key capital projects; \$6.7 million is for the housing initiatives fund; and \$6.8 million is for maintaining Yukon Housing's portfolio. This budget complements our mandate by expediting procurements to secure contractors earlier, providing greater certainty to industry and maximizing construction seasons.

Yukon Housing continues to work with Build Canada Homes to finalize an agreement that will see Canada and the Yukon invest \$193 million in affordable housing across the territory. While this budget cannot yet reflect those recoveries, these investments in new housing stock are part of the overall partnership between Yukon Housing and Build Canada Homes.

To support our mandate to increase affordable housing supply and expand employee housing options, the 2027-28 fall

capital budget advances projects in the communities of Burwash Landing, Ross River, Haines Junction, Mayo, and Teslin. Yukon Housing proposes an investment of \$12.7 million toward the following projects: \$700,000 for the completion of the first teacher duplex in Burwash Landing in 2027; \$1.5 million to construct a community housing duplex in Ross River; \$1 million toward a multi-unit community housing project in Haines Junction — this is obviously the first year of a multi-year commitment for that project; \$5 million toward a multi-unit community housing project in Mayo; and \$4.5 million toward a new multi-unit community housing project in Teslin.

These projects align with Yukon Housing's mandate and strategic plan to expand housing supply, improve affordability, and increase employee housing in communities to support recruitment and retention of essential staff. The housing initiatives fund is a core Yukon Housing program that has provided over \$39 million in funding to support housing development by First Nation governments and development corporations, non-profit organizations, as well as the private sector. This investment has helped unlock more than \$350 million in proponent spending and has supported the development of 992 new housing units. Of those units, 769 are considered moderately affordable.

Ahead of the next intake, Yukon Housing is making improvements to the housing initiatives fund to enhance program effectiveness and further incentivize affordable housing development. To support these improvements, the proposed 2027-28 allocation for the housing initiatives fund is \$6.7 million. Creating a safe and secure environment for tenants is a priority for Yukon Housing, and \$6.8 million is allocated to maintaining and renewing Yukon Housing's portfolio. An allocation of \$5.3 million will allow Yukon Housing to complete necessary maintenance, repairs, and renovations on existing stock. I do have a list with me here today as well on major projects, minor projects, as well as annual or repeating projects underneath that line item.

Also included in the 2027-28 fall capital budget is \$1.5 million to support the replacement of aging-out units in Pelly Crossing. This funding will help maintain our housing portfolio to ensure the safety, comfort, and well-being of tenants. In conclusion, this budget that we have before us today advances our commitment to providing Yukoners with stable, affordable, and quality housing for years to come. I'd like to once again extend my thanks and gratitude to Yukon Housing's board of directors and the dedicated public servants for their hard work on this budget and their ongoing commitment to serving our many clients across the Yukon. I look forward to this afternoon's discussion on Yukon Housing's budget and will now turn it over to members opposite for questions.

Kate White: I'm delighted to be here to talk about the Yukon Housing fall capital budget and thank the minister's officials for the briefing that I received this afternoon. I appreciate it very much. The challenge is when the minister starts off and he goes through every single line in a very short amount of things that I have to talk about is that he really took the wind out of the sails of my questions, and so I may just ask for more details.

But I'll note that the minister pretty much gave me the same — like, the briefing, like, this is the information I got

today, so I'm just going to ask for some more details. Because if he just said "hello", then I would have been like: What is this \$700,000 for the Burwash duplex? And so I can start with that one. I appreciate that duplex is hopefully going to be ready for teachers next year. I was told during the briefing that it's two bedrooms on each side, but can the minister give me more details about that duplex and maybe where it is in the community in relation to the school?

Hon. Scott Kent: Appreciate the question from the member opposite. The location of the duplexes in the Copper Joe subdivision — I know the member opposite is familiar with that area, so that is a subdivision located between Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay. As a duplex would suggest, there are two housing units there. We will use it for staff housing to support staff once the new school is in place. The \$700,000 that we're asking for is to complete that project.

Kate White: I appreciate that from the minister. So, if the minister — thankfully or handily, he's also the Minister of Education. But as this is intended to be teacher housing, are there anticipated to be other folks in there prior to the school's opening, or is it going to be vacant until the opening of the school?

Hon. Scott Kent: The opening of the duplex is aligned with the opening of the school, so we are going to hold those units for teachers who are in the school. I should say as well that there are some additional duplexes that we've committed to in future years, but this is the one that is before the House right now in the capital budget. I should also mention as well that letters went out today to all of the chiefs and, where applicable, mayors in these affected communities just highlighting what projects would be developed in their communities and some of the engagement that we want to undertake prior to getting those projects out the door.

Kate White: And so I'll note that this \$700,000 says that it's to complete the construction of the new duplex in Burwash Landing, which I think is important. But I'll also note that the \$1.5 million for the Ross River duplex is just about double. So, what is the expected total cost of the Burwash duplex once it's completed? What's the cost expected to be?

Hon. Scott Kent: It's anticipated to be in that same neighbourhood, \$1.5 million. Of course, we won't know until the tenders close. But that's where our cost estimates are, for it to be a similar price of \$1.5 million.

Kate White: Just looking at the costs for this construction in rural Yukon, does the minister have a ballpark area about what the cost of a duplex for the Housing Corporation to construct in Whitehorse is just as a comparable?

Hon. Scott Kent: I wouldn't have anything that would be an apples-to-apples comparison. We haven't done any duplex construction in Whitehorse to compare it to what's happening outside of Whitehorse in rural Yukon.

Kate White: The one reason why I'm asking is that, again, I'm sitting here or standing here, I guess, next to my colleague from the Klondike, who himself is a Red Seal electrician and has done work previously for the Yukon Housing Corporation. One of the things that we've discussed

over time is that something that's happened in recent years with tenders that have gone out for Yukon Housing is that the price has crept up and up and up. So, something that maybe realistically could be built for substantially less, now the expected cost of that contract is quite a bit higher, which means that unfortunately Yukon Government isn't getting the best value for money, which is a concern, because it's the money that belongs to all Yukoners. I have concerns about construction for a duplex to be \$1.5 million. At \$750,000 a piece, that is a substantial amount of money. I do fundamentally believe that there should be additional housing in communities, and I think that's really important. I'll note that I think about the Takhini River subdivision and the housing that has been done, which was modular, and really, in the span of one election between door-knocking, I saw houses go up and then be finished in an election period. So, there are I think some really interesting and hopeful things that could happen. And I just remembered; it was Walker Construction, Len Walker, I think.

And so when I look at some of these prices, I wonder: Is it companies from outside that are bidding? Is it local companies that are bidding? And I always hope that the money stays in the territory so that it's local folks, that it's not people who are just being flown in, going to live in a fifth-wheel in Ross River for a summer and then leave. I want to make sure that money stays in the territory. I look at that and I think about the opportunity for trades training and skill development in a community like Ross River. I just wanted to know if there was any intention to put some — not restrictions but to put some points within those contracts that do talk about local hire or training opportunities, because I think that is an opportunity.

Hon. Scott Kent: Like the member opposite, I've shared those concerns about some of the pricing and the cost estimates that we're getting for projects. One of the things that we are looking at as part of the Build Canada Homes agreement that is pending, not signed yet, but is utilizing modern methods of construction. The prefabrication that the member opposite was talking about, such as what Walker Homes does — I've been in the process of arranging a tour of his facility out at the Takhini River Crossing on the way to Haines Junction. The Member for Kluane and I are trying to find a time to get out there and visit that Yukon business and get a sense of what they're doing. I've also had the opportunity to visit a business in my riding of Copperbelt South, Northern Pre-Built. They're doing prefabrication work as well in the McCrae subdivision here in Whitehorse. So, I think through investigating the modern methods of construction but also looking at some different procurement options for some of these projects, whether it's a design/build, seeing if that can bring the price down, or a progressive design/build. Those are the kinds of things that we would be looking for. Of course, these are publicly tendered and competitively bid projects, and these are the prices we're getting. But we're trying to get a sense from our side of things if there's anything we can do differently to bring those costs down to what would seem more reasonable to most Yukoners.

So, we'll work on that and look to hopefully get some bids on these new projects that we're putting out that are a little bit lower than the cost estimates we have here. But again, we do go to a competitive tender when it comes to these kinds of pricing.

As far as local contracting, I mean, I look at Ryder and Korbo. The general contractors on those are both Yukon-based — Ryder, of course, here in Whitehorse, Korbo in Dawson City. Korbo is Wildstone Construction. It's been around the Yukon for a number of years. And Ketza Construction is doing the Ryder development, and they too are long-standing Yukon companies. So, that said, we'll see what kind of bids we get on the duplexes that we're putting out and the multi-unit ones that we're putting out in other communities as part of this fall capital.

Kate White: I appreciate that answer from the minister. I mean, looking, I couldn't remember the name in Watson Lake, but Heartland Timber Homes with First Kaska as an example. There's been lots of discussion in this Assembly previously when the minister and I were on similar sides asking questions of the then-government. But there are opportunities within contracting, for example, to put certain stipulations in, and so I'm just going to put a pitch: trades training, community development. There's a lot of reasons to make sure that rural Yukon has an opportunity to learn as they go — the success, for example, of the Carcross tiny homes project. There's a lot of reasons why this could be an opportunity in a different way.

Can the minister walk me through? I was telling the officials earlier that the real challenge became trying to read my own writing after I had taken notes as I was trying to get it out. So, we talked a bit about the Haines Junction project in the briefing. So, I'll note that it's a million dollars for this time around for the first-year construction of a multi-unit project. So, can the minister tell me more about the number of units that are anticipated, if there's multi phases, and then kind of a look —

We in this Chamber all understand that in communities, there's different housing needs. Single people typically don't need four-bedroom houses, but families of three could really benefit from a three-bedroom house — or a family of four. Anyway, many children, many rooms could be helpful. So, making sure that multi units respond to a selection of needs in community. And so I just wanted to know more about the Haines Junction project, what's anticipated this next fiscal year and then into the future.

Hon. Scott Kent: The Haines Junction project is a six-to-eight-unit development. I will be travelling to Haines Junction on November 6 with the MLA for Kluane to engage the community and get a sense for what type of tenancing they want in there, whether it's seniors or rent geared to income or staff housing or a combination of those three. So, we'll have a better sense at that time. The million dollars for this next fiscal year, we anticipate that project going over a two-year time horizon. When I'm on my feet again, I'll see if I can get what the anticipated budget over that two years is.

But again, this is one of the opportunities we feel where we can look at some different options there, whether it's through prefab homes or a design/build if it's a multi-unit building, just maybe even having some sort of separate dwellings. The piece of land there I think is substantial and will allow us to explore some different options on that. The total over that two-year period for that project is anticipated to be \$6.5 million. But again, we won't know what the actual budget is until the tender closes and we get the bids in.

Kate White: So, for that, that \$6.5 million is that anticipated full cost of that first phase, and the reason why I'm using the language of "first phase" is because I was under the impression that there could be more units to come, as the lot was quite big, and so just looking to see — because to be frank, if it's only six units and it's \$6.5 million, those houses are pretty pricey, and so maybe the minister can walk me through that a little bit in more detail.

Hon. Scott Kent: The total amount is six and a half, and that's why we're saying six to eight. Again, these are estimates at this point, and we won't know what the cost is until we get the final bids. But we are looking at, as I mentioned, other methods of construction or procurement to bring these costs down to what most Yukoners would feel is a more reasonable cost. Again, we are fighting the global winds on this type of thing as well. The fuel surcharge on freight into the Yukon right now is anywhere from 75 percent up. If this stuff has to be brought in when there's weight restrictions on the road, you can add additional money to that.

I think that's an opportunity where getting these projects out early for tender and getting them awarded will allow companies to plan around that road ban and perhaps get better deals even on the materials that they have to bring into the territory to accomplish these. So, we're looking for cost-savings wherever we can. Like the member opposite, I'm concerned with some of these numbers on a per unit basis, and we'll look to use the construction and the procurement side of things to hopefully get those down to something that's more reasonable.

Kate White: I appreciate that from the minister. Next, I'll note that there's \$5 million for the Mayo community housing project to fund the first year of construction in a multi-unit project. I was told that it was also a big lot. We could expect 10 to 12 units all together, probably completion in two years within the new subdivision. Can the minister give me more details about that? Thank you.

Hon. Scott Kent: This one will be a 10-unit development, and it's located on Laurier in Mayo. I don't know that community's streets that well, but it is located on a lot on Laurier in Mayo. The total estimate — and again, this is a bit of a smaller lot, so we would have to potentially look at some different procurement options, maybe not necessarily the detached housing that could be an option in Haines Junction for prefab housing, but there are some prefab opportunities in modern methods of construction with these multi-unit buildings as well.

This would be a \$10-million project split over two years of construction, and although we haven't scheduled a time, I'd like to get into Mayo to have some conversations with the community as soon as possible to get a sense. That said, I did send out letters today, as I mentioned earlier, to Chief Patterson and Mayor Ellis in Mayo just to advise them of the expenditure that we're planning in their community for next year.

Kate White: I appreciate that response from the Minister. And, of course, we've got \$4.5 million here for the Teslin community housing project to fund the first year of construction on a multi-unit project. I was told earlier today that the design work was done — six units plus the seventh for the Yukon Housing Corporation office that could be reverted back to a Yukon Housing unit if required. So, can the minister please

walk me through not only in Teslin but when we look at all the communities, are we looking at folks who are on both the Yukon Housing wait-list and staff who are required in community or what that looks like, what that kind of mix is?

Hon. Scott Kent: With respect to the Teslin one, the member opposite is correct. The design is in place, so this will be a traditional design and then bid and build with the contracting community. It's a \$6-million total project. \$4.5 million is allocated in next year, because this is essentially a shovel-ready project. Yukon Housing Corporation staff will be travelling to Teslin — I think it's October 29, is my understanding — to host a community dinner and talk about this project but also opportunities for the community under the housing initiatives fund — so, just to get them a sense, give residents in Teslin a sense of what's available to them.

Like this project, like the other ones that we've talked about, the multi-unit ones, aside from the duplex in Burwash Landing, which is allocated for staff, we'll look to the community to get a sense for what their needs are, monitor the wait-list, whether these are the rent-geared-to-income homes, those designated for seniors, social housing, or staff housing, or a mix of those. On the tenanting side of things, we're monitoring things in the community and getting a sense for what the needs are before we make those decisions.

Kate White: One of the things we were also talking about during the briefing was the \$5.3 million for renovation and rehabilitation, and I don't have to steal the minister's thunder on this, but there's a couple communities I think will be excited, so I'll let him tell me about some projects that are earmarked with that money, but I was happy to hear.

Hon. Scott Kent: I'll send this list over to the members opposite, but I can provide a bit of an overview. I'll get this to members opposite next week. I did inform the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin about the Old Crow project that is on here, but I'll make sure that I get this list over to members opposite. So, just to go through the major projects, there's some releveling in Dawson City at a number of different properties. Destruction Bay, at one residence, there's a renovate and move. In Haines Junction at the seniors multiplex, there's site grading and deck replacements as well as re-shingling.

In Old Crow, that I informed the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin of, will be two boilers going into duplexes. For Ross River, there are a number of properties that are getting relevelled, and the staff sixplex that is there also requires leveling and beam adjustments.

For Whitehorse, there's two Thompson Road exterior upgrades such as siding and decks and grading. 410 Jarvis, which is the head office, is getting some HVAC control work. That's the head office for Yukon Housing Corporation. 407 Alexander is some site remediation. Then at various locations and properties throughout, there's some upgrade to storage buildings and common room painting at 10 properties.

These ones are deemed minor projects: one-time funding, Dawson City Fairview fourplex, a deck and porch replacement; the seniors multiplex in Faro, renovating the common area for the Yukon Housing Corporation office to move in there. And then some projects in Whitehorse: 2101 Centennial, there's some exterior upgrades to walkways and yard; 100 Lambert's

door hardware replacement — that's the Closeleigh Manor property; on Sixth Avenue, replace the retaining wall — that's at 6123 Sixth; 60 Selkirk in Riverdale, converting the existing office that's there into another unit for a tenant.

There's a number of annual or repeating projects: 20 interior retrofits, 20 fuel tank replacements. These are located in different communities and different properties around the territory. Ten exterior repaints, 10 re-shingles, some video surveillance infrastructure, a bulk appliance order, fit and finish community housing, five deck replacements, some engineering assessments and test fits for future housing construction. So, this total is \$5.17 million, just slightly shy of the \$5.3 million, but that leaves us some room in the tender and if we get some decent pricing on this — and then there are potentially other projects that we can add to the list that didn't quite make it for this year, but those are the ones that are contained in the fall capital.

Kate White: I note that the last item there in the maintaining and renewing Yukon Housing's portfolio is the \$1.5 million for replacement of aged out units in Pelly Crossing, and I'll note that Pelly Crossing, the Selkirk First Nation, has done an incredible job of expanding their own housing stock in recent years. Going through Pelly now, it's incredible, because there's houses where there didn't used to be houses, and they're beautiful houses and they're employing locals and it's really exciting. So, I'm glad to see that Yukon Housing is looking at that.

I'll note that there have been challenges as far as staffing for teachers, having to share units as roommates, as adults that had never met before, and so is there an idea of what Yukon Housing units could look like in Pelly Crossing? Will they be smaller? Will they be bigger? What does that look like?

Hon. Scott Kent: While this is a replacement and won't add additional units to the community, it's replacing a duplex with two units. The feedback that we've had from some of the staff who are staying in these units is around the inefficiency of the older buildings. So, obviously, from a heating perspective and a utility perspective, it's quite expensive and onerous on those tenants. So, we'll undoubtedly be going to some smaller units there, but we'll look forward to getting those built and tendered as part of this budget appropriation.

Kate White: Finally, the last question I have is around the \$6.7 million for the housing initiatives fund, and so partially in our discussions today, one of the things I was told is that there's review and changes to come to that fund pending board approval and then Management Board approval before any kind of announcements, but maybe the minister can tell me about this \$6.7 million.

Hon. Scott Kent: Certainly, any of the engagement that we've done on changes to the housing initiatives fund has been targeted engagement, and once we get the results of that, I don't want to prejudge what the board will say, so we'll take those proposed changes to the Housing Corporation Board of Directors for their review and then have an opportunity at that time to announce what those changes will be.

As I mentioned in my initial remarks today, I think this has been a very successful core program for Yukon Housing. That \$39 million that the Housing Corporation has invested has leveraged \$350 million. So, almost a 10:1 leveraging of

investment from the private sector or First Nation development corporations or others into these projects, and it has created 992 new housing units since it came in. Of those units, 769 are considered moderately affordable. So again, we're always looking to improve, and that's what we hope to accomplish with the changes.

When it comes to specific projects, these are application driven. Our intake will go out — I think, due to election timing and other considerations, it was earlier this year, late in last fiscal year — but we'll look to advance that so we can give the successful applicants to the housing initiatives fund in the lead time that they would need to build it. Once we get the applications, once they're reviewed internally by officials at the Yukon Housing Corporation, we'll put out a press release with the successful applicants at that time, but I would anticipate that being maybe two or three months, perhaps more, ahead of the timing that was done earlier this year.

Kate White: Can the minister tell me: Out of those 992 new units, how many of those were houses for sale, and how many of those were units that are rentals?

Hon. Scott Kent: I'll have to get back to the member. I'll commit to get back to the member with those exact numbers. But there have been housing initiatives funding advanced for some ownership options like the Northern Community Land Trust Society and their work up in Whistle Bend for affordable home ownership. They received housing initiatives fund money as part of their initial funding. And I visited that facility a couple of times now, once during the election campaign last year and once since being elected and appointed Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation. And I mean, there's a tremendous model there that I think other jurisdictions across the country are looking at. But that said, that's not the only one.

But I'll get those exact numbers for the member opposite and I'm hoping to get a chance to discuss them later on in this Sitting when housing is back here.

Kate White: I appreciate that commitment from the minister. Can the minister let me know how many new housing units have been built since 2021 with this funding?

Hon. Scott Kent: The numbers that I have, I think, go back to 2018 when the fund was initiated, and that's the 992 new housing units. If the member wants the breakdown from 2021 to now, I can certainly look to return with that information to her via letter or perhaps, if Yukon Housing comes back, we can have that information at that time.

Kate White: I appreciate that from the minister.

What I'm looking for is the number of housing units that have been built with the housing initiative funding since 2021 and the breakdown of how many were houses for sale and how many are rental units.

Seeing the time, I move that we report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

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

Deputy 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 Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Tyler Porter: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 7, entitled *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also 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 Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

The following legislative return was tabled today:

LR 36-1-39

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* — Legislation under review (Lang)

The following sessional papers were tabled today:

SP 36-1-55

Yukon University 2025-26 Annual Report and Yukon University Consolidated Financial Statements — Year Ended March 31, 2026 (Kent)

SP 36-1-56

Yukon Development Corporation Annual Report 2025 (Lang)

The following filed documents were tabled today:

FD 36-1-32

Letter re Diesel exhaust fluid sensor requirements in northern Canada from Hon. Linda Benoit, Minister of Highways and Public Works, to Hon. Julie Dabrusin, Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, Canada (October 7, 2026) (Benoit)

FD 36-1-33

Letter re Government of Yukon endorsement of A Place to Be from Hon. Brad Cathers Minister of Health and Social Services; Hon. Scott Kent, Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation; and Hon. Laura Lang, Minister of Justice, to Kristina Craig, Executive Director and Maddie Porter, Community Action Plan and Governance Coordinator, Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition (October 7, 2026) (Cathers)