



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 42

1<sup>st</sup> Session

36<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

**Tuesday, October 13, 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<br>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<br>Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation                                                            |
| Hon. Laura Lang     | Whitehorse West                    | Minister of Justice; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Women and Gender Equity Directorate; Workers' Safety and Compensation Board |
| Hon. Ted Laking     | Porter Creek Centre                | Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation                                |

### GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

| New Democratic Party |                                              |                |                                                       |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Kate White           | Leader of the Official Opposition<br>Takhini | Lane Tredger   | Official Opposition House Leader<br>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<br>Third Party House Leader<br>Vuntut Gwitchin |  |

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Tuesday, October 13, 2026**

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

### **Speaker's statement — Members to use official party titles**

**Speaker:** Prior to proceeding with the Daily Routine, I would like to remind all members to use the correct terms for the parties represented in this House. Speakers have ruled on this issue often in the past, and I have started noticing it slipping in again. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

## **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 — Canadian Library Month**

**Patti McLeod:** October is Canadian Library Month, which gives us the opportunity here in the Legislature to talk a little about the valuable role libraries play across the Yukon. Libraries are found throughout rural Yukon, and their connected network helps ensure Yukoners can access a wide range of books and resources, no matter where they live. Now, this summer, I had the opportunity to visit the Ross River library and the school and see first-hand the important role it plays as a space for learning, literacy, and community connection.

This year's theme is "Loud for Libraries". Special events this week include an author tour with Canadian author Richard Van Camp in Haines Junction, Teslin, and Whitehorse, a classical guitar performance at the Whitehorse Public Library, a poetry reading by Berton House writer-in-residence Rebecca Thomas, and a silent disco.

### **Statement — War in Gaza**

**Kate White:** I rise today to speak out against the ongoing genocide in Palestine. In the last three years, one in 30 people in Gaza have been killed, including 21,000 children. These are the officially registered deaths, but given the mass destruction and rubble, the number is likely much higher. These numbers represent doctors, artists, journalists, students, and children — human beings — all of whom deserve peace, freedom, safety, joy, and life.

The only difference between us in this Chamber and Palestinians in Gaza is the luck of where we live. This geographic luck is the only thing shielding us from the sounds of warplanes, from uncovering our loved ones under piles of concrete, and from watching our homes destroyed.

In the words of Palestinian writer Omar El-Akkad — and I quote: "One day, when it's safe, when there's no personal downside to calling a thing what it is, when it's too late to hold anyone accountable, everyone will have always been against this."

Free Palestine.

### **Statement — International Day of the Girl Child**

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** This past Sunday, October 11 marked the International Day of the Girl Child. In 2011, Canada led the international effort to establish this important day that is dedicated to recognizing gender-based challenges and promoting girls' rights and empowerment worldwide. Every girl deserves access. Every girl deserves access to education, health care, and protection of their rights. We need to continue to raise our voices to stand with girls, advocate for laws, policies, and investments to secure a future that our young girls can look forward to.

Here at home in the Yukon, we have 11 organizations, if not more, that support the rights of girls. They provide safe spaces, places to connect and learn new skills, and a place to go when they need help and resources. I am grateful for these organizations for supporting both our Yukon First Nation and non-Indigenous women and girls. Their work is so important. We all have a part to play in supporting these girls and helping them to reach their full potential.

### **Statement — Special Olympics Team Yukon**

**Adam Gerle:** I rise today to recognize the outstanding athletes, coaches, and volunteers of Special Olympics Team Yukon who represented our territory at the 2026 Olympics Canada Summer Games in Medicine Hat. Yukon sent a delegation of 37 athletes, coaches, and mission staff to compete in athletics, swimming, powerlifting, rhythmic gymnastics, bocce, golf, and soccer, with our athletes bringing home 27 medals. Their participation reflects countless hours of training, dedication, and perseverance.

Special Olympics are about much more than competition; it celebrates inclusion, friendship, and the belief that everyone deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential. I join all Yukoners in congratulating Team Yukon for representing our territory with pride, determination, and sportsmanship.

### **Statement — War in Ukraine**

**Justin Ziegler:** I rise today to remind this House that the war in Ukraine is still happening. Every night, Russian drones and missiles still hit homes, hospitals, and power stations. Families sleep in shelters. Children are growing up with the sound of air raid sirens, and this winter will be the fifth winter of Russia's full-scale war.

The Yukon has not looked away. Since 2023, Whitehorse and Chortkiv have been sister cities. Here in the Yukon, Ukrainian families have built new lives with us. They work in our businesses. Their children go to our schools. Some of their children were born here at Whitehorse General Hospital. The families and friends of our neighbours and co-workers are living in a war zone.

The Ukrainian Canadian Association of the Yukon collects donations from Yukoners and brings medicine and supplies

directly to Ukraine. Their volunteers carry help from our territory to people living through war. I thank them for this work.

*Member spoke in Ukrainian. Text unavailable.*

### Statement — Yukon Placer Gold Community Foundation

**Hon. Ted Laking:** I rise today to recognize the launch of the Yukon Placer Gold Community Foundation, a new charitable initiative established by members of the Klondike placer mining community. The foundation launched with \$3 million in financial commitments from placer miners and will provide \$750,000 to Yukon communities in its first year.

This initiative builds on a strong tradition of giving back. In recent years, placer miners helped support Dawson City's school food program and contributed to upgrades at Robert Service School. The foundation's goal is to support both immediate community needs and long-term opportunities for the communities.

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Laura Lang:** I have for tabling today a legislative return relating to a matter outstanding from discussions with the Member for Riverdale North on April 23, 2026 in Committee of the Whole related to Vote 8, Justice, regarding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action relevant to the Department of Justice.

I also have for tabling today a legislative return related to a matter outstanding from discussions with the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin on April 27, 2026 in Committee of the Whole related to Vote 8, Justice, regarding a list of legislation under review by Yukon Government.

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

Are there any bills to be introduced?

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT, during the 2027 Spring Sitting of the Legislative Assembly, this House shall stand adjourned from its rising on Thursday, March 11, 2027 until 1:00 p.m. on Monday, March 22, 2027.

**Justin Ziegler:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to hold public consultations on amending the *Elections Act* to lower the voting age to 16 and report to the House on the results of the consultations by fall of 2027.

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

### ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

#### Question — Rental costs

**Kate White:** Renters across the territory are bracing for what comes next. The Yukon Party government will be removing rent control and reinstating no-cause evictions. People are already hearing from their landlords that increases of \$500 or more are coming as soon as the law allows.

People are already struggling with the cost of living and paying for essentials like food, clothing, electricity, heating, and transportation. The Yukon Party's plan to remove the protection of rent control means that many Yukoners will soon be struggling to make ends meet.

Can the minister explain to Yukoners how removing rent control will positively benefit Yukon renters?

**Hon. Cory Bellmore:** Thanks for the opportunity to discuss the decision to make changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act*. We have communicated here previously that we've made the commitment to remove the rent caps as well as to work on creating balance for both landlords and tenants.

Rent costs have continued to increase even more than before the rent cap was implemented. In the last five years, the cost of rentals has increased on an average rental to 2.75 percent. In the five years previous to the rent cap, the same cost average rental increase was 1.5 percent.

This strain on the rental market has been coupled with the loss of units available for rent. We've heard from tenants on the difficulty of finding a unit while, at the same time, we've heard from landlords who have chosen to exit the market due to the current legislation. These changes in the act are in response to this and support investment and growth in the market.

**Kate White:** On CBC last week, the minister admitted these changes will harm Yukon renters. When rent control is gone, there will be no limit on how much a landlord can raise the rent and no limit on how many Yukoners could be priced out of their homes. When people can't afford an increase, they don't just absorb it; they will fall behind, and some may end up without housing at all.

The minister said that Yukoners struggling with rent payments could access Yukon Housing rent subsidies. So, I wonder if the minister is aware that this federally funded program has a limited budget and is routinely oversubscribed.

Will the Yukon Party government be directing their own budget to provide additional rent subsidies?

**Hon. Cory Bellmore:** Rent control does not solve the problem of insufficient housing supply. 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.

Supporting investment by removing barriers is needed to see the market correct. Suppression of the market through policy creates situations over time that contribute to housing shortages. It can lead to less or no maintenance, tenants remaining in housing that no longer suits their needs to avoid new higher rents, and landlords exiting the market as we have seen. This is what we are currently experiencing here in the

Yukon, and it's important to remove these barriers to increase the supply.

**Kate White:** Just in case the minister missed it, I asked her if her government was going to put additional funding into rent subsidies for when people can't afford the rents anymore.

The minister told Yukoners that removing the rent cap will bring investment and new rental housing. But just last week when CBC asked the minister how many new units this change will deliver, the minister said that she had no projections. So, this government is gambling Yukoners' ability to afford housing on the strength of a promise.

We've previously asked this government to table evidence to support their theory, but Yukoners have yet to see it. How can the minister justify removing protections from thousands of renters on the promise of new supply when she hasn't provided any evidence to support her claim?

**Hon. Cory Bellmore:** I'm under no illusion that there aren't differing views here on the policy needed to support a healthier rental market and across the housing spectrum. Market rentals are only a piece of the housing supply that needs support to grow, and changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act* operate mainly in this space.

Work is also needed in other areas of housing, from emergency and transitional housing, supportive and highly subsidized housing, social and community housing, as well as home ownership. Continued support through the housing initiatives fund is helping to increase affordable housing. Adjustments to the Canada-Yukon housing benefit in the form of rent subsidies to support as many Yukoners as possible and ongoing land development to bring a mix of lot types will continue to support investment and home ownership. Addressing all the areas of the housing spectrum is complex, and the work is underway in each part.

### Question — Yukon firearms advocate

**Carmen Gustafson:** Last week, when asked about the newly introduced *Yukon Firearms Act*, the minister said that firearms in the Yukon — quote: "... should be promoted, not punished".

Yukoners are wondering what this means and have concerns about the ethics of a government-funded role promoting the use of firearms in the Yukon. The "what we heard" report on firearms legislation lists a number of priorities identified by Yukoners, such as increased education and safety training, but promotion of firearms was not among those priorities.

Can the minister tell Yukoners why she identified the promotion of firearms as part of this role and how a government-funded position promoting firearms benefits Yukoners?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. I'm pleased to be able to speak to this today.

As I've already noted, our government does support the rights of legal firearms owners in our territory as well as all Yukoners who have come forward to speak to us on this matter, and we do support an approach to gun control that helps protect public safety.

In our mandate letter, the government committed to protecting law-abiding firearms owners and to ensuring policing resources are focused on priority areas. So, we will continue to work with law enforcement and federal partners to support initiatives that target illegal firearms, organized crime, and violence.

**Carmen Gustafson:** Given the challenging fiscal situation we keep hearing about, Yukoners are wondering why this government is prioritizing a firearms advocate role. Repeatedly, Yukoners hear that this government simply doesn't have money. The Premier and one of his ministers responded to a request for substance use supports by saying — quote: "... it's not just a matter of putting more money toward a problem."

Yukoners were surprised that this government is willing to write a cheque for a firearms advocate, especially when the Yukon Government continues to cut programs like baby boxes, youth mental health, and public transit support.

Yukoners of all stripes are struggling with a cost-of-living crisis. Every day, our office hears from Yukoners who can't afford the high cost of housing, food, and energy.

Can the minister explain to Yukoners why resourcing this position is a priority over other ongoing challenges facing Yukoners?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** I agree with the member opposite. We all have concerns right now about affordability challenges not just in the Yukon but across our country, and I appreciate that there are curiosities regarding how we are going to implement the advocate, including what the funding model will be.

I've already spoken to this. We have said that we will establish not only our *Yukon Firearms Act* to establish a new firearms advocate position for the Yukon, but what we've also confirmed is that what that model will look like is yet to come, and we will be working with our colleagues both within this House as well as colleagues within the community to determine what that need is, and we will determine also what the length of time is.

I thank the member opposite for the question on affordability, and I look forward to having those types of conversations on affordability matters at a later date.

**Carmen Gustafson:** The "what we heard" report states that — quote: "Responses also included a sense of misunderstanding around the territorial government's jurisdiction and what the role of the advocate can do in opposition to the federal government's policies or legislation."

It seems that misunderstanding and confusion around this role continue. A firearms enthusiast who stood with the minister at her recent press conference went as far as to suggest that the advocate role is in fact a firearms lobbyist position. It's unclear whether this is the intent of the legislation.

This government has already taken several actions, including passing a motion, meeting with the minister of public safety, and supporting the appointment of a Chief Firearms Officer for the territories by the federal government.

Can the minister explain what the firearms advocate would do that the Minister of Justice, her Cabinet staff, and the Chief Firearms Officer cannot?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** I believe I've already answered this question a number of times, but I'll try again.

As I've said, our government is tabling a *Yukon Firearms Act* to establish a new firearms advocate position in the Yukon. This position will strengthen advocacy on behalf of legal gun owners as well as all Yukoners, advise the Minister of Justice on firearms-related matters, and provide safety, education, and outreach opportunities as well as programming.

Between July 2 and August 7, 2026, our government heard from Yukoners through a variety of engagement avenues, including an online survey, written submissions, and in-person events, to help inform this proposed legislation.

All in all, I will say that the advocate will be able to provide us yet another opportunity to sit at tables that will allow the northern voice to be provided in a way that represents the Yukon, the Nunavut voice, the Northwest Territories voice, any northern voice that says this program does not suit the needs of the North.

### Question — Energy costs

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** I have a question for the Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation.

During the 2025 election campaign, the Yukon Party committed to rolling back power rate increases. They promised to wipe out the 34-percent increase proposed by the Yukon Energy Corporation. As we approach the one-year mark of this government's time in office, it has been clear that the government doesn't intend to live up to that campaign commitment.

The cost of living has increased steadily under this government. We are leading the country in cost-of-living increases. The government could help Yukoners by following through on its campaign commitment.

Why hasn't the government cancelled the 34-percent power rate increase?

**Hon. Ted Laking:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. The reality is that in order to roll back the rate increases as much as we'd like, we need much more financial capacity as a government.

The previous government essentially crashed the car and is now complaining that it won't drive. What we're trying to do is ensure that our electricity grid is more stable while also supplementing the cost of electricity by enhancing the rebates that the previous government had.

The new rebates that we brought forward in this spring's budget are double the size of what the previous government had brought forward. We know that doesn't wipe it out completely, but it does help a little bit, and we are proud of that, and we would hope that the member opposite would certainly be supportive of increasing the rebates, but they voted against that.

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** Yukon Party candidates were pretty clear at the door; the 34-percent rate hike was going to be cancelled. They handed out pamphlets that said "Cut power bills". They used a variety of language: cancel, roll back, eliminate, and cut power bills.

Instead, Yukoners are faced with ever-increasing power bills largely because of this government's broken promise. It's my understanding Yukon power rates are increasing by another

5.1 percent on January 1, 2027. Can the minister confirm this is the case?

**Hon. Ted Laking:** As I've already indicated, the current government has more than doubled the size of the rebates that are available for Yukoners that will be automatically applied to their bills. We think that's good work and that it's important to help offset the increases that are largely due to the poor planning of the previous government.

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** This was probably the most expensive election campaign commitment the Yukon Party made. It was millions of dollars. The Yukon Party was going to cancel the 34-percent rate increase. Instead, under this government, rates went up in January of 2026, in April of 2026, and are going up again on January 1, 2027. When you add it all up, it means a 35.1-percent increase.

The cost of living is going up faster here than anywhere else in Canada. The rising cost of electricity is one of the main reasons why. While all of these increases have been happening, the Yukon Party has abandoned its commitment to rescind the rate increase. Why has the government broken this campaign commitment to Yukoners?

**Hon. Ted Laking:** I think the member opposite should be aware that the rate increases that have come in were approved under the previous government — were brought forward under the previous government. So, we now have to live with those for the time being while we work with the federal government to partner with us on electricity projects.

We know that paying for all of the electricity needs of the territory is beyond the fiscal capacity of just 45,000 Yukoners. We've made that case to the federal government. The previous government had not done much work in this regard. So, while we do that work, what we've done is we've taken the old affordability rebate, we've more than doubled it, and this will help offset some of these cost increases while we work with the federal government to partner with us on essential energy infrastructure.

### Question — Diesel generator noise

**Justin Ziegler:** Residents in my riding of Riverdale South have been living with noise caused by the Yukon Energy Corporation's diesel generators for years now. After Yukon Energy's assessment of the noise, they informed us that they would install modern silencers on the permanent diesels at the Whitehorse Rapids generating station to help mitigate the noise that is plaguing Riverdale. Yukon Energy has now told residents that the silencers will not be installed until summer 2027. That permit was issued in January 2025 — almost two years ago — yet Yukon Energy only started procurement in April 2026, 15 months later.

Why did Yukon Energy wait so long to start work on a deadline it had known about for over a year? And will the minister commit that the silencers will be installed before the end of summer 2027 with no further delays?

**Hon. Ted Laking:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for his continued advocacy on behalf of his constituents. It is unfortunate that there has been a delay with the procurement for these silencers. I have

been briefed that is in large part due to the significant energy needs in the North American market and the significant demand on the manufacturing sector when it comes to electricity infrastructure. That being said, Yukon Energy is still committed to having these installed and is going through the necessary procurement process.

**Justin Ziegler:** Yukon Energy operates its Whitehorse diesel units under an air emission permit issued by the Government of Yukon. When that permit was renewed in January 2025, it required Yukon Energy to submit a noise mitigation plan and to have a solution in place by December 31, 2026. This is not a voluntary goal; it is a condition of their permit to operate.

In their update, Yukon Energy says they have let the regulator know that they will miss the deadline in its air emission permit. Informing the regulator is not the same as getting permission, and we know that we can't spare the use of these generators this winter.

Can the minister tell us if an extension or amendment to Yukon Energy's 2025 permit was granted, and if not, will Yukon Energy be operating out of compliance this winter?

**Hon. Ted Laking:** Obviously, we can't control global supply chains when it comes to the procurement of energy infrastructure. Yukon Energy has taken best efforts to get this infrastructure in place so that they can meet the requirements of it. When it comes to the status of the permit that the member opposite asks about, I'll return to him with further details on what the status of that is.

**Justin Ziegler:** In its update to residents, Yukon Energy says the new silencers will be late — and that's what the minister just said — because of high demand for electricity equipment across North America — same language — and that is causing long manufacturing delays. These supply chain problems are not new. They have been reported for several years. If Yukon Energy knew equipment was taking longer to arrive, why did they wait 15 months to start the ordering process?

This also raises a bigger concern: If new equipment takes this long to arrive, the same is true for replacement parts. Our grid already relies on diesel units to get through the winter. If similar delays apply to old parts of generators, is the Yukon at risk of having any thermal units offline for extended periods of time this winter?

**Hon. Ted Laking:** I think at the crux of the member opposite's question is the importance of planning for the future when it comes to energy. What we found when we came into office is that the previous government had not done much planning, and that's why we are now in a dire situation where we're starting to consider things such as rolling blackouts in a capital city.

So, we agree. We need to do better planning, and we will do better planning, and that's why we're moving ahead with things such as the Whitehorse Power Centres and working with the federal government to partner with us on other energy projects for the future of the Yukon so that we can get ahead of things such as procurement, because we know that there are long lead times on a significant amount of this equipment.

## Question — Primary health care providers

**Adam Gerle:** I have heard from many constituents about the importance of access to primary care or front-line health care services. For years, we have heard concerns about thousands of Yukoners being without a family doctor or primary care provider.

Last November, we learned that a medical clinic in Whitehorse was on the brink of closure, with thousands of Yukoners about to lose their doctor, making the orphaned patient problem even worse. Can the Minister of Health and Social Services please tell us what happened?

**Hon. Brad Cathers:** Improving access to primary care and helping Yukoners connect with a regular health care provider remains a top priority for our government.

As the Member for Porter Creek South mentioned, shortly after we were sworn in, we learned River Valley Medical Clinic was about to close. Had this happened, thousands more Yukoners would have been left without a family doctor, placing more pressure on an already strained system.

At my request, officials from Health and Social Services worked to find a solution to allow those doctors to continue serving their patients. As a result of their work, Alliance Health, owned by nurse practitioners, has now assumed operations of the clinic. As a result, the clinic that almost closed last November remains open, with doctors continuing to see their patients, and Alliance Health has created opportunities to expand access to primary care services through the addition of nurse practitioners to this practice.

**Adam Gerle:** In January this year, I understand the Find a Primary Care Provider wait-list had ballooned to over 4,600 Yukoners. That is the equivalent of nearly one-tenth of the Yukon's population, and we all know people who haven't even bothered trying because the wait-list is too long.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services please provide this House with an update about the number of Yukoners currently on the wait-list for a family doctor or nurse practitioner?

**Hon. Brad Cathers:** We're pleased to report success reducing the number of Yukoners on the Find a Primary Care Provider wait-list. In January, shortly after we formed government, the number of Yukoners on the list was 4,606. In September, the number of Yukoners on the list had dropped to 1,827. This is a 60-percent reduction in eight months. This is the result of joint efforts of the Yukon Government, Yukon doctors, the Yukon Medical Association, nurse practitioners, and Yukon Hospitals and includes the success in recruiting 12 doctors who have moved to the Yukon since November of 2025.

There is much more work to be done, but we are pleased to see these positive developments, and I thank everyone who has been part of making this happen.

**Adam Gerle:** It's great to hear that more Yukoners have been connected to a health care provider, but the reality is that many families are still seeking out that support.

Can the minister please share more details about how Yukoners who may lack a primary care provider can access one?

**Hon. Brad Cathers:** This list helps connect eligible Yukoners with a doctor or nurse practitioner and includes people who are being connected with new family doctors and nurse practitioners, family doctors matching with patients, and Insured Health Services contacting people on the wait-list to determine if they still need a primary care provider, all of which has been part of shortening that wait-list.

Thirty-five family doctors are participating in the new longitudinal family medicine program, and each is required to accept at least 10 patients from the list each year. The Alliance Health Clinic is also building capacity to attach patients from the list through addition of nurse practitioners to that clinic. We also supported Kwanlin Dün First Nation in adding a nurse practitioner to their health centre.

People on the list are matched to physicians and nurse practitioners on a weekly basis, and when families and dependants of the same address register together, Insured Health works to match the entire household to the same provider or clinic. Information about the program, online registration, and participating doctors and clinics is available on yukon.ca, and you can also fill out your application to join that list.

#### Question — Transportation between communities

**Linda Moen:** Over the past number of years, multiple reports identified the need for safe and affordable transportation between rural Yukon communities. In the government's own MMIWG2S+ implementation plan, it is highlighted as a priority. The Yukon Government committed to evaluate community transportation needs. That was due within the first five years.

This spring, I asked the minister the same question, and she replied that she could not confirm whether this evaluation had been done but committed to reporting back to the Assembly. I hope the minister now can confirm whether the evaluation has been completed, and if not, when can Yukoners expect it to be?

**Hon. Cory Bellmore:** I'd like to talk about the opportunity for Yukoners to be able to travel between communities and what we've heard so far. We have heard from the Association of Yukon Communities. They have asked us to look at the opportunities for intercommunity transportation, which we have said we would do. We would look at what opportunities are available. We need to see what's out there right now. We know that there are different organizations doing different levels and types of service between different communities, and we need to understand what currently exists before we move forward with making any changes.

**Linda Moen:** Young people in remote communities face many barriers to transportation. Not having access to reliable transportation reduces access to sports, to learning opportunities, to community, and sometimes to safety.

The *Territorial Youth Strategy* identifies a need to invest in intercommunity infrastructure to improve safety. Again, I asked the minister this question back in the spring, to which she responded that she did not have an update. So, I ask again: What is the minister doing to ensure young people in remote communities have safe and reliable transportation options?

**Hon. Cory Bellmore:** As I had said, we need to have a look across the Yukon to see what currently exists. Different organizations and different governments are doing different types of things to try to bridge this gap of intercommunity transportation for youth, for elders, for people who are seeking to come to Whitehorse for medical travel. There's various different types of things happening currently, and so we need to understand what the whole picture looks like to see how we can make it run more efficiently.

**Linda Moen:** Transportation between rural communities and to Whitehorse is a significant issue for both medical and non-medical travel. Yukon Government has been provided with multiple recommendations and models of practice to deal with this issue. The *Putting People First* report calls on the government to work with Yukon First Nations and municipalities. As of 2025, it is still listed as "in progress". In the spring, the minister of health could not provide an update on this work and said — quote: "... as I have reminded members previously, we are still very early in our time in government..."

So, I'll ask again: Will the minister share what the status of this commitment is, who is at the table, and when Yukoners will see a solution to this issue?

**Hon. Brad Cathers:** We are doing a review of the medical travel program. Again, as I've touched on previously during the Fall Sitting, we do expect that, subject to Management Board approval, we will see some changes to this program that will benefit Yukoners in the next fiscal year. However, there is work that's required in this area. We're also having discussions with communities about their needs, including continuing to work with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation to ensure that we're following through and implementing the recommendations of a coroner's inquest that does include a portion related to medical travel.

We will have additional information we can report on publicly once this work is advanced. We are, as I noted, doing that work right now and look forward to being able to make announcements at some point in the future.

#### Question — School staffing allocation

**Tyler Porter:** When we discuss staffing in our schools, it is important to recognize that no two schools operate under the same circumstances. Rural Yukon staffing decisions can affect not only classroom sizes but also the range of programs and student supports a school is able to provide. Those decisions need to be guided by a clear process while allowing individual schools to respond to their own circumstances.

Can the Minister of Education explain what framework guides staffing allocations across Yukon schools and how those decisions are made while allowing schools to address their own individual educational and staffing needs?

**Hon. Scott Kent:** I appreciate the question from the Member for Southern Lakes. The Department of Education uses the school *Staffing Allocation Handbook*, which is designed to provide sufficient staffing to support quality educational programming for Yukon students. The handbook establishes a territory-wide process for allocating positions to schools based on objective criteria and student needs. This

helps ensure a fair, transparent, and consistent approach across the education system.

Once allocations are determined, school administrators are responsible for deciding how those resources are deployed within their schools to best support local needs and student success.

**Tyler Porter:** One challenge with smaller schools is that student numbers don't always tell the full story. A school with fewer students may still need to accommodate multiple grades, deliver specialized programming, and provide additional support to students with different learning needs. This raises an important question about how we measure staffing requirements, particularly in rural communities.

Can the minister explain what considerations beyond student enrolment influence staffing allocations and whether the department is examining the current model to ensure it reflects the operational realities of rural schools?

**Hon. Scott Kent:** Student enrolment is one of the primary factors considered when staffing allocations are calculated. The department also considers educational programming requirements, student supports, grade configurations, and the realities of operating schools in communities of different sizes across the territory.

I want to be clear that I am strongly committed to supporting rural schools and the students, families, and educators who make them successful. At the same time, it would be inappropriate for a minister to direct staffing levels at individual schools outside of the established allocation process.

Yukon schools deserve a system that is fair, transparent, and applied consistently across the territory. That's why I've directed the department to undertake a review of the staffing allocation model for rural schools. The goal is to ensure it continues to reflect the realities facing Yukon schools today, particularly in our rural communities, while maintaining a consistent and equitable approach for students across the Yukon.

**Tyler Porter:** In smaller communities, school enrolment can change considerably over time, and those changes can present difficult decisions when planning staffing and educational programming. Understanding how the department responds to those changes is important, particularly when resources must be distributed across schools of very different sizes.

Can the minister provide an example of how enrolment has changed at a rural Yukon school and explain how those changes factor into staffing allocation decisions across the territory?

**Hon. Scott Kent:** Changes in student enrolment across the school system can result in some schools receiving additional staff while others experience staffing reductions. For example, enrolment at Robert Service School declined from 228 students in May 2020 to 189 students as of September 2026. That represents a significant decrease in enrolment over that period.

As student populations change, staffing allocations must also be adjusted to ensure resources are aligned with student needs and distributed fairly across the territory. While those decisions can sometimes be difficult, Yukoners expect us to apply the same transparent process in every community. At the

same time, our government recognizes the vital role that rural schools play in their communities, which is why we are reviewing the rural staffing allocation model to ensure it continues to support strong educational outcomes for students across the Yukon while remaining fair, transparent, and sustainable for the future.

### Question — Organ donation

**Kate White:** In April of 2022, the Yukon Party tabled a motion asking the Liberal government to improve the organ donation program for Yukoners. They offered several suggestions, including better promotion, more accessible registration, active offer initiatives, and opt-out policies. The Yukon NDP have tabled similar motions over the years, and we were in full support of the proposal. It's rare that the Yukon Party and the Yukon NDP agree on anything, but we did on this very important issue that's so fundamental to saving lives. So, this should be an easy question for the minister.

Is the Minister of Health and Social Services committed to implementing his party's 2022 motion on organ donation?

**Hon. Brad Cathers:** What I would point out to the member — perhaps she missed it — is in fact, earlier this year at my request, we began increased efforts through social media and advertising to encourage Yukoners to consider organ donation.

I've asked the department to consider additional measures, including around active offer — encouraging people when they are renewing a driver's licence, for example, or a health care card — to consider what steps are taken to encourage them to consider organ donation. They had indicated in the past that was done away with because of some individual complaints that have been received, but I've asked them to take a look at this and consider what additional steps we can do to encourage Yukoners in a respectful manner to consider signing up as organ donors. I look forward to being able to make further announcements in due course.

**Kate White:** I'm delighted to hear that the minister is taking steps toward what he committed to or what was championed in 2022.

I want to specifically focus on a simple change that can lead to significant improvements. Opt-out organ donation systems are already used in many countries — not to mention here in Canada in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Québec is already looking to make this change. In 2021, Nova Scotia became the first jurisdiction in North America to change to an opt-out system for organ and tissue donation. The results were striking. Fewer than four percent of Nova Scotians opted out, and both tissue and organ donations nearly doubled.

Is the minister willing to follow the example of Nova Scotia and switch to an opt-out organ donation system?

**Hon. Brad Cathers:** It would be premature for me to make any legislative commitments at this point in time. We know there have been concerns expressed in the past when systems like that have been proposed from people who have concerns about how it may impact them. Again, that is something that we can certainly consider, but there would need to be consultation with Yukoners across the territory around it, because we understand that there may be some traditional and

religious concerns related to it among some Yukoners, and we would want to be respectful of that and understand it before reaching a final landing place from a policy perspective.

However, as I mentioned in my first response, we've already taken steps to increase what the Yukon Government is doing through Health and Social Services to encourage Yukoners to continue signing up as an organ donor. I look forward to further work in this area.

Also in this area on a related matter is the advancement of the internal medicine program at Whitehorse General Hospital. That work that is supported through funding in this year's budget is aimed at ultimately developing a program that would allow more Yukoners to receive the care that they need locally instead of being medevaced. It is anticipated to ultimately lead to a situation where we can significantly reduce the number of medevacs from the territory; although, of course, there's a connection in that to the Whitehorse General Hospital expansion project, considering how constrained we are with the existing space.

**Kate White:** One of the challenges with organ donation in the territory is a lack of education of what happens when a person signs up to be an organ donor and what needs to happen between end-of-life and that donation. One of the education campaigns that needs to happen is that — around the steps to take and how that works.

Is the minister committed to making sure that Yukoners understand the steps once they register to be organ donors to be able to do the final part of that organ donation?

**Hon. Brad Cathers:** If there's need for additional information or education in that area, we're certainly open to considering it. Again, as I mentioned in both my previous responses, we've already taken the steps earlier this year to expand the efforts of the Department of Health and Social Services to proactively encourage Yukoners to consider signing up as an organ donor. I have asked the department to consider additional measures such as active offer to people when they're dealing with applying for a health care card, for example, and we will consider additional measures in this area.

We are open to considering different policy solutions here; however, we do want to make sure, in considering it, that we understand traditional and religious views that Yukoners may have regarding organ donation and their bodies. But ultimately, we've already taken those proactive steps right now to encourage more Yukoners to sign up as organ donors and we are open to hearing ideas wherever they may come from about how we can do more to encourage Yukoners to consider doing so.

Understanding what happens after they register, as members suggested, is certainly something that I'll ask officials to take a look at what is currently happening and consider if there's room for that to be added to.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

## NOTICE OF GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**Hon. Scott Kent:** Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(7), I would like to identify the items standing in the

name of Government private members to be called on Wednesday, October 14, 2026. They are: Motion No. 175, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek South; Motion No. 174, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake-Ross River-Faro; and Motion No. 171, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek South.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

**Clerk:** Motion No. 173, standing in the name of the Hon. Scott Kent.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Government House Leader: THAT this House shall stand adjourned from its rising on Tuesday, November 10, 2026 until 1:00 p.m. on Monday, November 16, 2026.

**Hon. Scott Kent:** I'll be very brief in speaking to this motion. I brought this motion forward.

Of course, all members of the House and indeed all Yukoners know that Wednesday, November 11, is Remembrance Day.

We brought this motion forward to not sit on Thursday, November 12 primarily to allow rural members of this Legislature to travel to their communities for Remembrance Day commemorations and ceremonies and then not have to travel back immediately the next day for another sitting. So, this does provide that additional day that week for this House not to sit.

**Lane Tredger:** We will be supporting this motion.

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** I rise today to speak to Motion No. 173 regarding our schedule around Remembrance Day. This is a motion we usually do every year in this House.

The motion today will allow MLAs — particularly rural and remote MLAs — to be in their home communities for Remembrance Day. Every year, I do look forward to attending Remembrance Day events in my community of Old Crow. As a Canadian Ranger, it's one of the most important days of the year, and so I will support this motion.

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

**Hon. Scott Kent:** I wanted to thank colleagues from the Official Opposition and the Third Party — the NDP and Liberal Party — for supporting this motion that indeed supports our rural members.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?  
*Motion No. 173 agreed to*

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

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

**Clerk:** Second Reading, Bill No. 6, standing in the name of the Hon. Laura Lang.

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

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

**Hon. Laura Lang:** Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to Bill No. 6, the *Act to amend the Workers' Safety and Compensation Act (2026)*, for the Legislative Assembly's consideration. This bill fulfills a specific commitment made by this government to expand the cancer presumption to include wildland forest firefighters.

The principle at the heart of this bill is simple: Wildland forest firefighters should be included in the firefighter cancer presumption in recognition of the risks they face at work. Wildland forest firefighters provide an essential service to Yukoners when they protect our homes and communities from wildfire. If that work takes a toll on their health, our workers' compensation system is here to support them.

The *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act* already recognizes that certain diseases are linked to certain types of work. The firefighter cancer presumption applies when two conditions are met: the firefighter is diagnosed with a cancer listed in the regulation and the firefighter has completed the required period of service.

Wildland forest firefighters are not currently covered by the presumption. So, to be clear, all firefighters, including wildland forest firefighters, and in fact all workers have always been able to make a claim for cancer they believe is related to their work. Without the presumption, wildland forest firefighters are asked to establish the connection between their work and their illness.

Bill No. 6 changes that. Effective November 1, 2026, it will extend the firefighter cancer presumption to wildland forest firefighters. This will reduce red tape by making the compensation process more straightforward.

These amendments cannot undo a cancer diagnosis. They cannot remove the uncertainty that comes with cancer or ease the worry about what comes next. But they can remove one more obstacle, allowing firefighters to devote more of their time and energy to treatment and recovery.

This does not mean that every cancer claim will automatically be accepted. Each claim will still be assessed through the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board's claim process, and the firefighter must meet the requirements of the regulation. The important difference is that if the requirements are met, the firefighter will not have to establish that their cancer was caused by their work; it will be presumed to be work related unless evidence demonstrates otherwise.

The Yukon firefighter community has told us this change does matter. We have listened and we have moved swiftly to bring this bill forward. After the bill is enacted, our government will work with the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board to determine how best to engage with affected unions to review the cancers covered by the presumption and the minimum service requirements. This review will be informed by scientific evidence, developments in other jurisdictions, and importantly, the experience of Yukon firefighters. The

approach is deliberate. It allows us to act now for wildland forest firefighters while ensuring that any future regulatory changes receive careful consideration.

The Workers' Safety and Compensation Board is working with the International Association of Fire Fighters to strengthen prevention measures. This means giving firefighters the information and resources they need to better understand the exposure to carcinogens and take meaningful steps to reduce the risk of occupational cancer, because the strongest protection we can offer firefighters is to do everything we can to prevent occupational cancer from occurring in the first place.

Bill No. 6 also prepares a legislative framework for future changes as scientific evidence and our understanding of occupational cancer risks evolve. Firefighting is not uniform. Structural, wildland forest, and other firefighters work in different conditions and may face different occupational exposures. This bill allows for different cancers and minimum service requirements to be established for different types of firefighters. This flexibility will help ensure that any future change reflects the latest scientific evidence and the realities of firefighting work across the Yukon.

Bill No. 6 also protects firefighters if a cancer is added to the presumptive list in the future. If a new cancer is added, an eligible firefighter who was diagnosed before the change will have 12 months from the date to apply for compensation under the presumption. This will ensure that a firefighter can still access the presumption if their cancer was diagnosed before it was added to the regulation.

Bill No. 6 is an important and meaningful change to the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*. It extends the firefighter cancer presumption to wildland forest firefighters and allows the framework to respond in the future as scientific evidence evolves.

We honour wildland forest firefighters' service not only with gratitude but with action. This bill recognizes the risks they face and strengthens the support available when they need it the most.

I look forward to discussing the bill in greater detail during Committee of the Whole, and I urge all members of this House to stand with Yukon wildland forest firefighters and support Bill No. 6 at Second Reading.

**Kate White:** It is a real pleasure here today to be speaking about Bill No. 6, the *Act to amend the Workers' Safety and Compensation Act (2026)*. I've already indicated to the minister responsible that this is a really good thing. This is a really good thing.

I don't want to talk about the nuances about how this is going to work; I want to talk about how we got here, because how we're having this conversation right now in a way that is not the confrontational way that I had been used to having this conversation for the better part of five years is important. I think it goes all the way back to the reach-out that started to happen about possible amendments or changes to what was then the Workers' Compensation Board and now the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*.

I think about the Yukon Employees' Union that had a submission in January 2020 about recommendations for amendments to the *Workers' Compensation Act* and *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. The reason why I bring it

forward is because in 2020, they had a list of recommendations with a fair number of recommendations — they had nine recommendations. Recommendation six was to include wildland firefighters in all firefighter presumptions.

So, even back then, the Yukon Employees' Union, which represents wildland firefighters who work for Yukon Government — those in Wildland Fire Management — were already saying that there was an unfairness between the classifications and what was happening in the legislation. They were highlighting that it's not just the wildland firefighters having to deal with wood smoke, but there was starting to be more of an exchange where wildland fires would be closer to structures. As far back as 2020, the Yukon Employees' Union started to indicate that this was something that Yukon Government needed to look at.

I think about August 26, 2021 specifically — and I can tell you the date because I went back to look — was the first time that I had a wildland firefighter reach out to me to share their concerns about the unfairness. They totally supported structural firefighters being covered by presumptive cancer coverage, but they indicated that it was unfair that wildland firefighters weren't included. The person shared some stories about their own family and how, really, it's been intergenerational work: parents, grandparents, children — this is multiple generations of one family working in this industry. Then they indicated that their family, unfortunately, was very familiar with cancer, but unlike structural firefighters, they weren't given that same thing. Really, it was that message on August 26, 2021 that really made me start to pay attention.

I think about — well, there was a lot. For members who were in the Chamber during this time when the new *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act* came forward, they'll know that, for the most part, everybody agreed that it was important that we make changes. But I'll note that the Minister of Community Services or the minister responsible for what will become the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act* and I had a fundamental disagreement about the inclusion of wildland firefighters.

The reason why I say it's so interesting to be here in a time when, instead of fighting for what I think is the right thing to do, I just get to say I'm so glad we're getting to the point where it's the right thing to do — I'll note that in October of 2021 in a tribute to wildland firefighters, I said this — so, I'm quoting myself from 2021 — I said: "... it's with that gratitude and respect in mind that I wonder why wildland firefighters do not enjoy the same benefits afforded to other firefighters under Yukon's WCB act. Changes are long overdue to include wildland firefighters in this legislation. We need to recognize the hazardous nature of the occupation and provide support for the people involved in this aspect of public safety. In order to truly honour those who show up for us, it's time that we show up for them." And I agree.

In 2021, it became a pretty regular thing. I went back through it. I think I asked more than a dozen questions in Question Period about the inclusion of wildland firefighters, and the minister at the time and I had a lot of heated arguments.

In November of 2021, I was really privileged to be involved in a press conference with First Nations Wildfire calling on the importance of including wildland firefighters in this presumptive coverage. And it's a stark contrast, because

when I was standing with wildland firefighters, the then-minister of the Workers Compensation Health and Safety Act was writing to businesses to tell them that their rates would go up if wildland firefighters were included.

And so, while I was standing next to wildland firefighters, letters went out to industry. They went out to Air North, the wilderness tourism association, and the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, and the minister at the time was collecting letters against including wildland firefighters in presumptive cancer coverage. I have to say that was a surprise for me. I mean, maybe it shouldn't have been a surprise for me, but it was, because instead of looking at what was happening around the world, instead of listening to the International Association of Fire Fighters, who were themselves the ones really spearheading the expansion of presumptive cancer coverage, but that same organization, that same union, was also saying that wildland fire needs to be included, and that if not now, then when —

When I look back and I think about all of this time that this conversation has happened in this Chamber, really what I think about is the wildland firefighters who shared stories with me. I think about those who talked about the challenges they faced, those with whom I sat at tables for press conferences or sat next to at a different point in time when wildland firefighters themselves were calling on additional supports.

When there was an indication or a glimpse that this legislation was coming, I actually sent out e-mails to all those folks, and I said thank you for getting us here, thank you for sharing your stories and for advocating for not only what you as a wildland firefighter need but what you want to make sure that people coming behind you have access to. Wildland firefighters have always been very clear that the work is physically demanding, and so it's not often or likely that you have someone in wildland fire that will be on the front lines for 20 years.

They also really highlighted the need to make sure when this finally happened that work is done specifically with wildland firefighters to make sure that it covers what they need, because one of the things that had been indicated, for example, was skin cancer. Wildland firefighters spend a lot of time outside in the sun in the summer in a way that structural don't, and so I appreciate that there's going to be ongoing work to make sure that the changes when we talk about time of service and the coverage that is afforded sometimes will have to look different.

I have lots of questions for debate about how it's going to be rolled in and how communication and education are going to happen. I appreciate right now that any worker that thinks that they're suffering from cancer because of their work has the ability to go to the workers' safety and compensation folks, but I will say that including the presumptions has really changed things for structural firefighters. I know that the changes that were made in 2021 — I got to see first-hand how it supported a family through a loss and how important that was. I'm grateful to be here today to be supporting these changes. I do have questions about what it means and the timeline, but that shouldn't surprise anyone. I also just note here that, again, the reason why we're here having this conversation is not because of the politicians in the room; it's because of the people who advocated for what they needed, and it's for the folks who

already had access who advocated for their colleagues. Structural fire was always very clear that they wanted for wildland what they themselves had access to.

So, I think that this is an example of how, when people work together, we're able to see those results. I'm really pleased today to be standing in support of this legislation and thank the minister for bringing it forward and for not delaying bringing it forward, because this is long overdue.

I thank folks here and especially those who are listening. To those in fire management, those in wildland fire, those at First Nations Wildfire — I want to thank everyone for sharing their stories, because that has helped us get to this point. I look forward to questions in Committee of the Whole.

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** I rise today to speak to Bill No. 6, *Act to amend the Workers' Safety and Compensation Act (2026)*, and I also just thank my colleague for some really great history on it.

I will be supporting this bill. I met with advocates for this legislation last fall, and I want to thank them for their work. I am curious, though, what cost analysis has been done at workers' compensation regarding the potential impacts on rates this change might have, and I'm also wondering whether this bill applies retroactively or just going forward.

I'm sure this will be discussed in Committee of the Whole. Once again, I will be supporting this bill.

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

**Hon. Laura Lang:** I would like to thank the members of this House for the contributions that they have just provided on this very important adjustment to the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*. I appreciate also hearing the history about where this change has come from. More importantly, I would like to acknowledge MLA White's point. This is the result of strong, consistent advocacy by a number of firefighters who cover the spectrum of firefighting, all of whom agree that wildland forest firefighters should also receive the same type of compensation.

There are a number of key players within that industry who have worked tirelessly to see this come about. And so, as a new Member of the Legislative Assembly, I deeply acknowledge that I'm at the tail-end of this journey. I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues in the Yukon Party who have also been standing beside the wildland forest firefighters and firefighters in general for many years. I'm thankful that I have the privilege of bringing this bill now into Committee of the Whole.

Thank you again for having this conversation in such a meaningful way, and I look forward to debate.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

## Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

*Bells*

**Speaker:** Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Currie Dixon:** Agree.

**Hon. Scott Kent:** Agree.

**Hon. Cory Bellmore:** Agree.

**Hon. Linda Benoit:** Agree.

**Hon. Ted Laking:** Agree.

**Patti McLeod:** Agree.

**Hon. Laura Lang:** Agree.

**Hon. Jen Gehmair:** Agree.

**Hon. Wade Istchenko:** Agree.

**Adam Gerle:** Agree.

**Doris Anderson:** Agree.

**Tyler Porter:** Agree.

**Kate White:** Agree.

**Lane Tredger:** Agree.

**Brent McDonald:** Agree.

**Linda Moen:** Agree.

**Carmen Gustafson:** Agree.

**Justin Ziegler:** Accord.

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Madam Speaker, the results are 19 yeas, nil nays.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for Second Reading of Bill No. 6 agreed to*

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

**Clerk:** Second Reading, Bill No. 10, standing in the name of the Hon. Laura Lang.

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

**Hon. Laura Lang:** I'm pleased to speak today about the proposed *Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026)*. This bill proposes amendments to the *Territorial Court Act* and the *Act to amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*. The proposed amendments will implement recommendations of the 2022 Judicial Compensation Commission and support the administration of Yukon's Territorial Court.

Judicial compensation processes exist across Canada as an important safeguard for judicial independence. In the Yukon, the *Territorial Court Act* requires the establishment of a Judicial Compensation Commission every three years to review judicial remuneration and make recommendations. The recommendations of the commission are binding on government when they fall within the parameters established by the legislation.

Several amendments in this bill implement recommendations from the 2022 Judicial Compensation Commission process. These amendments establish a presumption that Territorial Court Judge salaries are set at 90 percent of the salaries paid to federally appointed Justices of the Supreme Court of Yukon effective April 1, 2025. The bill also identifies specific circumstances in

which the presumption would not apply. Finally, the bill extends the Judicial Compensation Commission cycle from three years to four years. Together, these measures are intended to provide greater certainty, reduce administrative burden, and support a more efficient compensation review process.

The bill also contains several administrative amendments relating to the operations of the Territorial Court. These include extending the term of the Chief Judge from three years to five years effective for the next Chief Judge term beginning in April of 2028. This change will support greater continuity in court leadership and longer term planning. The bill will also provide flexibility to authorize additional remuneration for a Judicial Compensation Commission commissioner when circumstances warrant.

Finally, the bill contains amendments to the *Act to amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)* that clarify survivor benefit provisions. These changes do not create new pension entitlements; they clarify existing provisions. They also confirm that the 2021 act is deemed to have come into force on December 2, 2021, the date of royal assent, consistent with how the pension plan has been administered in practice.

I look forward to discussing the proposed amendments and answering any questions.

**Carmen Gustafson:** I rise to speak on and in support of Bill No. 10, *Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026)*.

The intent of the provisions is straightforward. The minister highlighted very clearly what the bill does. It implements recommendations made by the Judicial Compensation Commission regarding pay and benefits for Territorial Court Judges and associated administrative matters. Amendments are made to the *Territorial Court Act* and the *Act to amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*.

However, I wouldn't want to miss an opportunity to speak to the importance of the independence of the judiciary. This bill and how it comes to us today is one example of how that independence functions. Territorial Court Judges are appointed through a non-partisan process that engages the Judicial Council, a body of Yukoners who are appointed to carry out its mandate. They receive and assess applications for judges and make recommendations. Currently, all three recent Territorial Court appointments are long-time Yukoners, whom some of us may know, who have raised their families here, and they practised law in the territory for many years. These are the judges who interact most with Yukoners on a regular basis. They hear a large volume of legal matters from Small Claims Court to criminal law, and these matters have real impacts on the individuals and Yukon society. Their primary responsibility is to impartially and competently uphold and apply the law to everyone equally regardless of the outcome.

Similarly to judicial appointments, remuneration for judges follows a neutral process absent political considerations. Judges' pay and benefits are considered, and binding recommendations are made by the Judicial Compensation Commission, which come to this Legislative Assembly to make law. So, I appreciate the work of the commissioner and the public servants through this process that has led to bringing this bill forward for consideration today.

An independent judiciary is one of the pillars of a strong democracy and ensuring the rule of law. There is no room for politics or political interference in the judiciary even when we disagree with their decisions and perhaps especially when we disagree with their decisions. We're fortunate in the Yukon to have a skilled and competent judiciary that is well versed in our local circumstances, the people who live here, and most importantly, our unique legal position with respect to Indigenous rights and Yukon First Nation final agreements.

The arm's-length processes, including the work of the Judicial Compensation Commission, that culminated in the bill before us today demonstrate that in the Yukon we respect and support the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law.

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** I rise today to speak to Bill No. 10, the *Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026)*.

I do not have a great deal to say on this today. I admit that the nuances of how judges are paid and the administrative supports to the Territorial Court are not things that I was familiar with previously. So, I appreciate the information and background provided by the department officials in the briefing. It is reassuring to know that there is an independent process to review these matters, and I trust the fairness and expertise of those on the commission.

I know that the changes brought forward in this act are overdue and appreciate the staff who have worked to shepherd these amendments through. I hope that extending the cycle of the commission to four years will make that task easier in the future. I will be supporting this bill.

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

**Hon. Laura Lang:** I am definitely learning through practice when to appropriately stand. Thank you for your patience and thank you to my colleagues across the floor.

I'm looking forward to your questions in Committee of the Whole.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?  
*Motion for Second Reading of Bill No. 10 agreed to*

## **Bill No. 12, *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026* — Second Reading**

**Clerk:** Second Reading, Bill No. 12, standing in the name of the Hon. Laura Lang.

**Hon. Laura Lang:** Madam Speaker, I move that Bill No. 12, the *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026*, be now read a second time.

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

**Hon. Laura Lang:** I am pleased to speak today about the proposed *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026*. As many members of this Assembly know, miscellaneous statute amendment acts are used to make minor corrective changes to multiple pieces of legislation at one time. This kind of legislation is introduced every few years. Some members

may be aware that there is a corresponding process for regulations.

As Minister of Justice, I am bringing forward this bill as part of my responsibility for supporting the accuracy and integrity of Yukon legislation. The bill contains technical and administrative amendments to 11 Yukon acts that correct editorial errors, update outdated references and provisions, and make other minor changes to ensure the affected acts operate as intended.

I look forward to providing an overview of changes proposed in the bill and answering any questions members may have during Committee of the Whole.

**Carmen Gustafson:** Just a brief note to say that the officials in the briefing assured me there was nothing controversial in this bill. I tried as I might, and I agree with that assessment. So, we will be supporting this bill.

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** I rise today to speak to Bill No. 12, *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026*. This is a very straightforward bill. I understand this is simply a housekeeping bill to correct errors and bring various acts up to date. I appreciate the officials for their time and walking me through those changes. Today, I will, of course, be supporting this bill.

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

**Hon. Laura Lang:** I realized I stood too soon before, and here we go again. I will repeat my gratitude to my colleagues across the floor, and I'm looking forward to debating this in Committee of the Whole.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?  
*Motion for Second Reading of Bill No. 12 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:** Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

### Bill No. 6, *Act to amend the Workers' Safety and Compensation Act (2026)*

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to amend the Workers' Safety and Compensation 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:** Committee of the Whole now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to amend the Workers' Safety and Compensation Act (2026)*.

**Hon. Laura Lang:** I'm pleased to rise today as Committee of the Whole considers Bill No. 6, *Act to amend the Workers' Safety and Compensation Act (2026)*.

I would like to take a moment to welcome two of my colleagues from the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board. I have with me, on my right-hand side, Catherine Jones, who is the president and CEO, and we will soon have Chris Butler, the director of Corporate Services, join.

Today, I gave a Second Reading speech about the *Act to amend the Workers' Safety and Compensation Act (2026)*. As a quick summary, Bill No. 6 makes targeted amendments to extend the existing firefighter cancer presumption to wildland forest firefighters effective November 1, 2026.

Wildland forest firefighters provide essential protection to Yukoners. They work in difficult conditions to protect our homes and communities from wildfire. Including wildland forest firefighters in the firefighter cancer presumption reflects the risks they face at work.

Before turning to the specific amendments, I want to clarify what the presumption changes and what it does not. Wildland forest firefighters have always been able to apply for compensation when they believe their cancer is work related; however, under current legislation, they are asked to show how their diagnosis is linked to their employment. Bill No. 6 changes that requirement. When a wildland forest firefighter is diagnosed with a cancer covered by the presumption and meets the required period of service, the cancer will be presumed to be work related unless evidence shows otherwise. This will streamline the claims process and reduce red tape by cutting the time and effort required to access compensation.

This does not mean all claims under the presumption will be automatically accepted by the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board. The board will still continue to assess each claim for compensation in accordance with the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*. To be clear, Bill No. 6 does not create a new compensation benefit or change the benefits available to firefighters; it changes how a cancer is determined to be work related when the prescribed conditions are met.

Bill No. 6 makes several related amendments to support this change. First, it brings wildland forest firefighters within the legislative framework for the firefighter cancer presumption. Second, Bill No. 6 provides the flexibility to keep the regulations aligned with the current scientific evidence and the realities of firefighting in the Yukon.

Once the bill is enacted, our government will work with the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board to determine how best to engage with affected unions to review the list of cancers and service periods. This work will inform any future regulatory changes as well. Our government recognizes that firefighting is not one uniform occupation. Structural and wildland forest firefighters have different training, perform different work, and experience different occupational exposures. Bill No. 6 therefore allows for listed cancers and minimum service requirements to be established for different types of firefighters. This flexibility will help ensure that the

regulations continue to reflect the occupational risks that each group faces and the most recent medical evidence. This approach also allows us to include wildland forest firefighters in the presumption now while undertaking the broader regulatory review carefully and thoughtfully.

Third, this bill protects firefighters when new cancers are added to the presumptive list in the future by extending consideration retroactively. If an eligible firefighter is diagnosed with a cancer that is listed after their diagnosis, they may still benefit from the presumption. They will have 12 months from the date of that cancer being added to make a claim for compensation under the presumption.

The targeted amendments that comprise Bill No. 6 will bring meaningful benefits to wildland forest firefighters in three ways: by recognizing the occupational risks they face in protecting Yukoners and our communities; by streamlining the claims process and cutting red tape when they need to access compensation benefits; and by providing the flexibility to keep the framework current in the face of evolving scientific evidence.

I also want to emphasize that prevention must be part of this commitment, because our responsibility does not begin when cancer is diagnosed; it begins when doing everything we can to prevent it in the first place. That is why the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board is working with the International Association of Fire Fighters to help firefighters understand their risks and reduce their exposure. This work will equip firefighters with the resources they need to understand what they can do to protect their health.

In closing, please allow me to recognize the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board for its expertise and work in developing these amendments. I am now pleased to answer members' questions as we proceed with consideration of Bill No 6.

**Kate White:** I welcome the officials here today. Like I was saying in Second Reading, it's a delight to be talking about wildland fire in a positive way as opposed to the ways that have happened in the past — by that, I mean now that we're talking about coverage as opposed to wildland fighters deserving coverage. So, I'm delighted to have folks here today.

During the press conference that was recently held, I think there was some confusion as to whether or not there was a minimum time of service, and so maybe the minister can just confirm or clarify. In order to be covered for presumptive cancer coverage, is there a minimum time of service required?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** Yes, as in the case for full-time, part-time, and volunteer firefighters under the current legislation, wildland forest firefighters will be required to meet specific service requirements for specific cancers for the presumption to apply. Again, wildland forest firefighters have always been and continue to be eligible for compensation benefits if they have been diagnosed with a cancer that was caused by their work. The presumption just means that the claims adjudication process will be expedited.

**Kate White:** I thank the minister for that clarification. So, one of the questions that I've heard from folks within Wildland Fire Management comes to do with the service requirements. Of course, we know that folks in Wildland Fire

Management often work seasonally, so they'll be out, for example, for summers as opposed to year-round like structural fire. And so, when we're talking about service requirements, I know the officials did a good job of walking us through what that could look like.

But could the minister just expand on how service requirements or time worked is calculated to help wildland firefighters better understand that it's not really about 10 years of service, but it could be about the amount of time served, as explained by the officials during the briefing?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** And, of course, that's critical for any understanding of: Why does this actually matter to wildland forest firefighters? And again, I appreciate the member opposite for raising the fact that this is seasonal work. So, when we look at the application of presumption to wildland forest firefighters, there should be complete clarity of how their service will count. Again, if this isn't clear today, I welcome anybody listening to go to the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board where they can walk individuals through the actual process, which is being done for me a few times now, and I've appreciated that.

We will consider the question of how to assess years of service as part of the upcoming review of eligibility requirements with affected unions, including approaches used in other jurisdictions. If a wildland forest firefighter submits a claim while the review is underway, WSCB will assess their firefighting services against the legislated eligibility requirements and explain how their service is calculated. If they do not meet the requirements of the presumption, their claim can still be assessed through the regular claims process to determine if their cancer is work related.

**Kate White:** I have questions around understanding that it's going to be effective November 1, 2026. I'm interested in knowing the education campaign or how this is going to be communicated and the changes are going to be communicated to wildland firefighters. So, I'll note that in the territory, some are represented by the Yukon Employees' Union and some are not. So, Yukon First Nations Wildfire, for example, aren't represented by the YEU. So, how will communication and education, that kind of outreach, happen?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** So, that's been something that's been of paramount concern for us during this whole process — making sure that our firefighting community has been an integral part of the whole process for the changes that we have proposed on the floor today. And that includes working with the International Association of Fire Fighters to ensure that every step of the way, their engagement has been lockstep with us. I fully recognize that there are different classes of firefighters in different areas within government, within private business, within community, et cetera.

And so, as we see the rollout of this, if it does pass, I can confirm that Workers' Safety and Compensation Board, as well as the IAFF, will be launching simultaneous campaigns to ensure all firefighters are aware of this change. And we will be working, of course, directly with our colleagues in Community Services to also ensure that there's no stone unturned, that everybody is clearly aware of what these changes mean. And

then from there, we will be working on future initiatives regarding preventive care.

**Kate White:** I appreciate that answer from the minister. So, I met with Alex Forrest from the International Association of Fire Fighters back in 2021 and Nicholas O'Carroll actually from the Whitehorse Fire Fighters Association when they brought me a really big binder about expanding cancer coverage for structural firefighters. And so, I'm grateful, because that really started me on this path.

But I'll note that the International Association of Fire Fighters is predominantly around structural firefighters, and I know that Alex has had lots of experience and lots of involvement in making sure that wildland is covered and has been covered in other jurisdictions, including internationally. But I wanted to find out more. So, for example, the Yukon Employees' Union represents the wildland firefighters who work for Yukon Government. Yukon First Nations Wildfire doesn't have union representation. And so, yes, I absolutely think that the IAFF is an organization that should absolutely be leaned on, but it shouldn't be the only one.

And so, what kind of work will be done with the Yukon Employees' Union, who represents Yukon Government's own wildland firefighters, and what kind of outreach will happen with those, for example, that don't have union representation?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** So, agreed. There's a lot of variety here, for which I applaud Workers' Safety and Compensation Board folks for leaving no stone unturned. Quite frankly, they have already been engaging not only with the International Association of Fire Fighters but also with the union, with the First Nation firefighters, with local experts, including Nick O'Carroll and Alex Forrest. The whole intention is to ensure that everybody is completely aware of the changes that will be taking place. That includes through the provision of letters. We have done open houses. We've met in groups, and that type of approach will be what we continue to apply going forward.

**Kate White:** I do appreciate that. Again, it's just looking for additional. So, again, the people who were just listed by name are structural firefighters with the IAFF, and that's an incredibly important organization. We are this far along because of the support that I've received from Alex Forrest and Nicholas O'Carroll, as has Wildland Fire Management, but they are not wildland firefighters themselves. And so, I just want to make sure that there is outreach directly with wildland firefighters and Yukon wildland firefighters as well. So, I'm just looking for that confirmation.

**Hon. Laura Lang:** I can confirm that outreach is specifically happening with wildland forest firefighters. I can also confirm that I have a rather strong relationship with the Minister of Community Services, who is equally supportive of this bill and has encouraged our wildland forest firefighters to participate in the Legislative Assembly when we first read the bill in this House. I can confirm that Worker Safety and Compensation Board have done a very good job of working to ensure that specific voice has been part of not just the amendments to the Act but also what those next steps are going to look like.

**Kate White:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the minister for that and, of course, the good work of the folks at — I don't even know the acronym anymore. I would have said WCB, but now it's WSCA? Workers' Safety and Compensation Act? I'm unsure. The minister can help me out. WCB was in my head for such a long time, and now I can't call it anything else. But I do appreciate the work from those folks there.

Can the minister give me an idea — for example, because we talked about service requirements, and I do appreciate that clarity. So, it is about, for example, the work being done as opposed to years being served.

But one of the things that wildland firefighters have brought up — and I mentioned it before — for example, was like the other concerns. And so over the years, I've read lots of letters and documents, and I appreciated in the minister's opening remarks she mentioned how important it was to make sure that it was also about prevention. And so wildland firefighters have brought forward lots of concerns, for example, with the ability to shower, having the ability to wash clothes, being able to remove soot, and all those things. And I'll note that Yukon Government does put out those camps, and this is something that can be done there.

And so I want to get a better idea of how worker safety and, for example, departments will make sure that wildland firefighters have what they need for preventive care. So, making sure that their uniforms are with the correct fabric for the work that they do, having access to things like sunscreen, making sure that they have access to shower facilities, and a really big one is the ability to wash the uniforms and to make sure, for example, that uniforms that have been on the front line of a fire are not the ones that have to be worn for hours and hours and hours after, because there is that importance of making sure that the clothing is cleaned and that it doesn't have, for example, the smoke or the carcinogens.

So, can the minister help me understand how worker safety and, for example, Yukon Government or, in this case, the Department of Community Services will work together to make sure that wildland firefighters have the prevention tools that are well known available to them when they're on the front lines of a forest fire?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** Of course, that is a very important question and one that we've been speaking about now for months regarding prevention and having access to those tools. It's generally understood that wildland forest fire operations present practical challenges that need attention, including prolonged smoke exposure and access to washing and decontamination facilities. We also understand that prevention measures need to reflect the conditions that Yukon's wildland forest firefighters face on the fire line, in camps, and during transport. Any potential prevention measures, including decontamination and PPE, require technical and operational assessments before decisions are made about their use in the Yukon.

The IAFF, which I understand and I do appreciate, are a structural component of the firefighting family, but they're still a very important organization. They have identified nationwide challenges related to prolonged exposure, skin and respiratory protection, and cleaning contaminated gear.

So, when we think about what we have in front of us, we're talking about compensation and we're talking about prevention. WSCB will work with the IAFF as well as wildland forest firefighters to identify prevention and communication needs, including resources that help firefighters understand exposures to carcinogens and reduce cancer risks. So, again, the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board — which I too have a problem saying that acronym; I too want to say WCB — is working with the IAFF to strengthen prevention.

The key goal is to provide firefighters with practical tools, information, and resources to reduce their exposure to carcinogens and their risk of developing occupational cancer. As the scientific evidence matures, we again will continue to evolve what our practices are.

While I say in front of you today that prevention is key — I'd like to ensure that Hansard reflects — prevention is literally the key, and we are acutely sensitive, too. There's a lot of work to be done among many of us and emphasizing prevention as the cornerstone of how we're going to see families not have loved ones receive the cancer diagnosis that we are working hard to prevent.

**Kate White:** I appreciate that answer from the minister. I think what will be really important is that outreach with folks both in support from the IAFF but for wildland firefighters themselves. There have been plenty of documents that I've read online. I'm just looking at one right now from wildland firefighters talking about their concerns, for example, with the masks that they're given or the lack of — and I do appreciate the word “decontamination” — thank you, the minister, for that. But some of the challenges they have faced on those front lines — and so I think that is well known within industry, and I know that it will be brought forward by those folks who are doing that work, and so that's, for me, not the concern.

It's just making sure that we move fast enough that the service requirements are reflective of the work that is done by wildland firefighters. In the letter I was just scanning through, it reminded me that even if someone was in wildland for a really long time, they wouldn't necessarily be on that front-line crew, and it really talked about the demanding nature of the job; it was often like a decade. You're looking at young people, until their mid- to late-20s, will be actually the ones on that front line, and so he just indicated that there were some differences, and I appreciate that the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board understands this, and so I'm confident we're going to get to a place that wildland firefighters, structural firefighters, and everybody who supports both of those industries and hold those in the same regard that we do here, that people have access to what they need, and so I have no qualms.

And also, I'm just going to say this right now: To me, even when I was advocating for this in 2021, there would have been no cost that would have been too high, I don't think, to be able to make sure that wildland firefighters had the coverage that they needed. I'm going to straight up say that, and I did ask this during the briefing, and so I want to be very clear.

This has nothing to do with the current minister, but the current minister is going to have to address this, and so I mentioned today in my Second Reading notes that in November of 2021, when I was standing next to wildland firefighters, the minister at the time was writing letters to business, and so this

has been tabled at different times, and I can give the minister a copy — and Hansard, I'll give you a copy — and everyone can have a copy. I'd be delighted for people to know.

I'm going to read actually the note from the minister, because I think this is really important. So, I'm just going to quote: “Further to our conversation, the Yukon Party and NDP have indicated they support adding the cancer presumption to Wildland Firefighters. Currently in our new legislation they are not captured by the presumption.

“Expanding the presumption to Wildland firefighters has a profound impact on the workers' compensation rates. Doing so will increase the cost to Resource and Transportation Low — the aviation industry, farmers, trappers, prospectors, surveying, adventure tourism, metal mining, among them — as much as 45 cents according to actuarial analysis. It will also raise the government rate.

“The Yukon Liberal Government does not support expanding the presumption at this time. We are wary of the financial implications to a wide swath of businesses and governments already reeling from the ongoing pandemic. And there is little science or evidence to suggest Wildland firefighters suffer from cancers more than the general population.

“While we support all our firefighters, there is good reasons for treating Wildland firefighters differently than urban or structural firefighters. First, structural firefighters are generally exposed to a much wider range of noxious fumes and chemicals due to their work environment. Our wildland firefighters fight in the boreal forest, and are not exposed to the same risks.”

I'm just going to stop there. I have to say that it was an interesting time in 2021, because all of a sudden, the minister of the day started tabling letters from businesses who weren't in support of expanding presumptive cancer coverage to wildland firefighters. And then when I finally got this e-mail that had the e-mail from the minister, I finally understood where those letters were coming from.

And so, one of the challenges, I really believe, is how that communication with the business community is going to happen. So, we have the previous minister who was telling industry that this was a terrible thing for them and was going to affect their bottom line. Again, I disagree. I disagreed based on all the information I had from the IAFF. I disagreed based on all the information I had from other jurisdictions in Canada, including British Columbia at the time.

But how will the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board work to undo what was done in 2021 by the previous minister? How will this communication happen with business so they're not afraid that this will lead to disastrous consequences for their bottom line?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** Today, I'm pleased to say I'm the Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board. In an hour, I'll be back to Minister of Justice.

Thank you to the member opposite for that question regarding the business community and what happened in 2021. Here's something really great: It's 2026, and I get to be the Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board and I get to be part of a really great team that is now leading the government. So, what happened in 2021, to me, is not reflective of who I am, and it's not reflective of my colleagues.

A lot has changed in the last five years. For one, we are now years on from the COVID-19 pandemic, which introduced a lot of uncertainty into workers' safety and compensation and forecasting. I understand the concerns that were raised around that time by the business community. It was a difficult time in general for everybody.

The compensation fund has also experienced a strong level of return over that time, placing the board in a very strong financial position. The cost assertions made at that time were based on a quick analysis that placed the full cost burden on one singular employer group. That was just one of the countless potential ways that costs could have been allocated. So, again, what was communicated back then was just one of a myriad of potential ways to address the cost differences.

The process for setting assessment rates under the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board scheme is complicated, and I thank my colleagues at the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board who have spent a lot of time going through how rates are determined, and I'm just starting to truly understand how this occurs. So, for anybody who feels a little bit lost in this world, I would highly recommend going to the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board and having an official walk you through the process, and they will take as long as needed until the person understands. So, again, it relies on actuarial analysis of dozens of factors to calculate a projection of probable gross benefit liability, then spreads that risk differently across dozens of industries, again, on the basis of the very complex actuarial analysis.

Based on that, I cannot state what the ultimate effect will be on ratepayers. I don't know that answer completely. While adding wildland forest firefighters to the presumption will place upward pressure on rates, that effect can easily be offset by countervailing factors such as a decrease in overall claims or by positive returns on investment funds, both of which we're seeing right now.

Ultimately, how we set the rates is the exclusive purview of the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board's board of directors, who by design operate at arm's length from my office, and I do appreciate that. They will be the ones who weigh the various considerations and ultimately determine how the costs related to the expanded presumptions are managed, and I do appreciate that. I also appreciate, though, that I have a very good working relationship with both the president and the chair, who understand that there may truly be lingering concerns from the business community, as my colleague across the floor has mentioned.

What I would offer the business community is that I have spent quite a bit of time now speaking with the president and the chair of the board about what this will look like, and they are acutely sensitive and are moving forward each day with the understanding that the rates have to be sustainable and fair for all employers. The intention of whatever scheme is developed will be with that fully in their mindset and is something that we will be talking about going forward after today and as we see this change unravel.

I hope that answers the member's question, but I'm happy to clarify if I need to.

**Kate White:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I do appreciate that, and I appreciate that the minister is able to give

the previous minister grace that I'm absolutely unable to do, to be frank, absolutely unable to do, because although the current minister mentioned letters from business, they were in response to what I just read into the record, and so there will, I imagine, have to be some outreach to explain all those things. I understood at the time — I didn't accept the argument at the time, but I do appreciate right now being told on the record that there are many complicated calculations and it does have to be sustainable and it's absolutely true.

I know as a previous employer, the thing I told people always — if something happened at work, I wanted them to say it happened at work, because it didn't affect my rates directly, but it was important that people had the support that they needed, right? And sometimes I think, unfortunately, that employers sometimes think that if a claim is made, that it comes back directly, and it's not quite like that.

I appreciate that there's going to be some probable outreach to the business community based on how this is going to go forward, but I'm most interested to see once we get to the point with the regulations that actually do talk specifically around things that face wildland firefighters, including service requirements and I think, to be frank, some expansion of the cancers that are covered, that will be a really big deal.

I'll also note that the current minister doesn't have to deal with the things of the past, and that's important, because this always should have been. And so, I thank her for getting us to this point with what always should have been now going to be, and then really the business for the rest of us is making sure that it supports wildland firefighters in the way that they need to be supported. And so, I don't have any complicated questions about this one, but heads up to everybody else, it's not going to be so easy.

I thank you for the conversation today, and I am grateful to see these changes come in front of this Assembly.

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** I just have a couple questions this afternoon in the general debate on this bill — more clarification questions, I guess. I know the minister had advised that this bill will apply to the full-time and part-time firefighters. Is this retroactive?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** The extension of the cancer presumption is not retroactive, so it will not apply to a diagnosis made before November 1, 2026. People whose cancer was diagnosed before then, however, have always been and always will continue to be eligible for compensation benefits if their cancer was caused by their work, and I would encourage them to contact the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board to work through their case.

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for that. So, just for people who are listening and for understanding, it's not retroactive before November 1, 2026, and so since this act is amended to the wildland firefighters, they're not able to or they are able to — the minister can provide that — if their cancer is related to their work.

Is there an option still?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** To be clear, the eligibility for compensation is available to anybody who has a work-related injury, and that includes a wildland forest firefighter who has been diagnosed with a cancer previously to November 1, 2026.

The presumptive coverage will be enacted if this bill passes as of November 1, 2026.

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** Thank you for that detailed explanation to the minister. I appreciate that. The minister mentioned just previously when my colleague was speaking that there will be a rate increase associated with this bill, and so that means that it will have an impact on the WSCB premiums.

Is there an idea of how much the rates will be increased?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to my member opposite. I did already answer this question. I am going to try to answer it a little bit differently, but please forgive me for any repetition. It does take a while to understand this, so bear with me.

As I already said, the ultimate effect on ratepayers, I cannot state. While adding wildland forest firefighters to the presumption will place upward pressure on the rates, that effect can easily be offset by countervailing factors such as a decrease in overall claims or by positive returns on the investment funds. Both of those factors are what we are seeing right now with the board.

How the setting of the rates occurs is exclusively the purview of the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board's board of directors, who by design operate at arm's length from me and from my office. They will be the ones who weigh the various considerations and ultimately determine how the costs related to the expanded presumption are managed. This will be then provided to me by the president and CEO as a point of information. So, I do not set the rates.

For additional detail about the rate-setting process and what effect, if any, the expanded presumption may have on future rates, I would highly suggest spending time with either of these two wonderful people or going to the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board. They will walk you through the whole process, and they'll do it over and over and over again until you actually do grasp it. As I've said, it has taken me a wee while.

Again, the change to the rates is not known. The Workers' Safety and Compensation Board is happy to walk you through the process, and once the rates are set, after engagement does occur, the public will be made aware.

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for that very detailed explanation.

I'm always grateful to hear it from another perspective just for the fact that we have so many Yukoners who are listening. So, I'm grateful for that.

Does the minister have any idea how many jurisdictions have similar legislation?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** We were talking about this earlier this afternoon or this morning; pardon me. I was pretty excited to hear that we will be the sixth jurisdiction. And Yukon is always mighty, isn't it? And we like to really lead. This is an area that I'm excited to say yet again, that this is another example of us working really hard to understand what the needs are and to lead well in this area.

Five provinces include wildland firefighters in addition, separate from us, in their firefighter cancer presumptions: British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia. Most recently, Nova Scotia extended its firefighting

cancer presumption to cover wildland firefighters in 2026 and Saskatchewan in 2025. So, we are just on the heels of those two provinces, and again, we're the first territory. So, it's pretty neat to be part of that pool.

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for those answers. That concludes my questions.

**Kate White:** I just cannot help myself, and I do appreciate that we will be the sixth jurisdiction. But when we started talking about this, we would have been first, and so we are leading and we are definitely carrying more than our weight. But there was an opportunity, and I'm so glad we reached that spot. So, I'm delighted.

I thank the minister. I thank her officials. I thank those who have done the work, and I especially thank the wildland firefighters who didn't give up on getting us to this point.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to amend the Workers' Safety and Compensation Act (2026)*?

Seeing none, we'll proceed to clause-by-clause.

*On clause 1*

*Clause 1 agreed to*

*On clause 2*

**Kate White:** Clause 2 is actually amending section 94, which is really where I think the meat and potatoes or really the good work happens with the change of definitions. So, I'll note in the previous legislation, it did say "firefighter" and gave definitions and said: "... but does not include a wildland forest firefighter".

I note that there is a bit of a change in how subsection 94(1)(a) will be written now, and maybe the minister can walk through the reasoning behind it. Now it will list a full-time firefighter, a part-time firefighter, a volunteer firefighter, and a wildland forest firefighter. So, there is a bit of a change in how this will look compared to before. Maybe the minister can walk through the reasoning behind that.

**Hon. Laura Lang:** Very simply, it was amended in this manner to ensure that we were adding wildland forest firefighters into the definition of "firefighters", extending the presumption to wildland forest firefighters.

**Kate White:** And just now in looking at it, I've tied my stuff up in knots, and so looking at not the amended but the previous, will it still include all the definitions of "part-time firefighter", "volunteer firefighter" as is listed out, or are those sections also removed?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** My colleague across the aisle tied me up in knots thinking we've forgotten to do something. Definitions are still there. The only thing that's been added is wildland forest firefighters. Everything else remains the same.

**Kate White:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I appreciate that. I'll probably have to see it at the end — only trying to put the two together right now, but I do appreciate that.

The second change in clause 2 is the definition of "listed disease". So, it will be replaced with: "listed disease means a cancer that is prescribed by regulation as applying to a

firefighter or a prescribed class of firefighters...” And I’ll note that in the previous version, it says that “listed disease” means a form of cancer that is set out in the regulations, and so maybe the minister can walk us through the changes and, again, I can understand it’s best practice, and that’s a fine answer. But I just thought I’d note that there’s differences and what that difference is.

**Hon. Laura Lang:** Very simply, this listed disease, the intent there is to tie to different types of cancers, which will then be further explained as necessary in regulations.

**Kate White:** Thank you, and I appreciate that. The next change — it says in paragraph 94(3)(b), the expression “files their” is replaced with the expression “if the cancer is not a listed disease at the time when the worker is first diagnosed with the cancer makes an” — sorry, I didn’t need to read it in, but I wanted to make sure we knew where we were or where I was, anyway.

Does the minister have anything to add to the change in 94(3)? Again, it’s just an opportunity to expand if she so chooses.

**Hon. Laura Lang:** There is no intention to change what the provision already does. These are simply clarifying edits to better reflect the existing intention that if new cancers are added to the regulations, firefighters will have 12 months to apply under the presumption from the date the cancer is added even if it has been more than 12 months since that diagnosis.

**Kate White:** The last one, which really does bring wildland into the fold, is changed to subsection 94(4), and it adds (d), which is very exciting. It says, “for a wildland forest firefighter, after October 31, 2026.” My understanding is that this will now include a full-time firefighter or a part-time or a volunteer firefighter. Does the minister have anything to add to that?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** That is just the effective date.

**Chair:** Is there any further debate on clause 2?  
*Clause 2 agreed to*  
*On clause 3*

**Hon. Laura Lang:** Clause 3 is amending section 206, which are the regulations. It’s changing (ff) and (gg), so maybe the minister can walk us through those changes.

**Hon. Laura Lang:** Paragraph 206(ff) is replaced with what is written in front of us. It expands the regulation-making authority related to listed diseases to clarify that a listed disease can apply to all firefighters or to specific classes of firefighters. Paragraph (gg) is replaced with the following that you have in front of you, and that expands the regulation-making authority related to minimum cumulative service periods to clarify that different cumulative service periods can apply to different classes of firefighters.

**Kate White:** I thank the minister and her officials for both the conversation and debate today and the clarification or bringing light to these changes. It has been a pleasure to have that discussion today.

*Clause 3 agreed to*  
*On title*  
*Title agreed to*

**Hon. Laura Lang:** I move that you report Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to amend the Workers’ Safety and Compensation Act (2026)*, without amendment.

**Chair:** It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Workers’ Safety and Compensation Board that the Chair report Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to amend the Workers’ Safety and Compensation Act (2026)*, without amendment.

*Motion agreed to*

## **Bill No. 10, Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026)**

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 10, entitled *Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments 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.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 10, entitled *Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026)*.

**Hon. Laura Lang:** Madam Chair, I would first and foremost like to welcome my officials who are joining me here today from the Department of Justice. To my left, I have Mr. Mark Radke, the deputy minister for the department and Deputy Attorney General, as well as Abdul Hafeez. He’s the manager for policy and legislation for the Department of Justice. Thank you to both for supporting me today in this work. The *Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026)* proposes amendments to the *Territorial Court Act* and the *Act to amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*. Collectively, these amendments implement recommendations of the 2022 Judicial Compensation Commission and address matters related to the administration of the Territorial Court.

I would first like to address the amendments related to judicial remuneration. Sections 2 and 3 of the bill implement key recommendations from the 2022 Judicial Compensation Commission process. The bill establishes a presumption that beginning April 1, 2025, Territorial Court Judges other than deputy judges are entitled to salaries equal to 90 percent of the salaries paid to federally appointed justices of the Supreme Court of the Yukon. However, the bill mentions that if calculations would produce a lower salary, the judges would continue to receive the salary paid in the previous annual period.

The bill also identifies specific circumstances in which the presumption would not apply. These include: circumstances where the resulting salary would be the highest or lowest of the comparator jurisdiction named in the *Territorial Court Act*; circumstances where the salaries of the federally appointed Judges of the Supreme Court of Yukon are not adjusted as required under the federal *Judges Act*; circumstances involving a significant change in judicial responsibilities that was not considered by the most recent Judicial Compensation Commission; or circumstances jointly identified by the Chief Judge and the minister as warranting

consideration by the Commission. These exceptions are intended to ensure that future Judicial Compensation Commissions maintain the ability to consider circumstances where a different approach may be warranted.

An amendment proposed by section 3 of the bill extends the Judicial Compensation Commission cycle from three years to four years. This change reflects a recommendation of the 2022 Judicial Compensation Commission and aligns Yukon more closely with approaches used in other jurisdictions. Reducing the frequency of the process is expected to lower administrative costs and reduce the workload for all parties while maintaining the role of the commission.

The bill also contains amendments relating to court administration. Section 5 changes the term of Chief Judge from three years to five years. A five-year term is more consistent with practices found in many other Canadian jurisdictions and will support continuity, leadership stability, and long-term planning within the Territorial Court. This amendment will come into effect on April 8, 2028 after the expiration of the current Chief Judge's term.

Sections 4 and 6 of this bill address the remuneration of Judicial Compensation Commission commissioners. The amendments authorize the Minister of Justice to determine additional remuneration for a particular commissioner where the minister considers it necessary.

The second part of the bill addresses matters related to the *Act to amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*. Section 8 clarifies survivor benefit provisions in that act. This amendment confirms the intended operation of those provisions following a member's death and provides greater clarity for beneficiaries. Section 9 confirms that the 2021 act is deemed to have come into force on December 2, 2021, the date of royal assent.

With those amendments reviewed, I look forward to members' questions and comments.

**Carmen Gustafson:** Thank you to the minister and especially to the officials who came down here today. I don't have too many questions on this one, but I did want to ask quickly if there were any recommendations made by the Judicial Compensation Commission that are not covered by this bill.

**Hon. Laura Lang:** The simple answer is no. The detail is that some matters that were part of the overarching commission's findings were addressed already in regulation, and this is what is outstanding. What you have in front of you is the leftover bits.

**Carmen Gustafson:** Just to clarify: Things like the salaries and the stipend would have been covered by the regulatory amendments that were already made?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** The member opposite is true in that regulatory amendments that went forward previously addressed matters like stipends — so that was changed in regulation. This bill is seeing changes to the 90-percent presumption for their salaries.

**Carmen Gustafson:** I appreciate that clarification. I believe that in the briefings, we had an opportunity to ask about any potential costs, and I apologize if the minister already spoke to that. But is there any anticipated cost of implementing this bill?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** I have two answers. Overarchingly, what this bill will do — will see a reduction in costs, as we are going from a three to a four-year cycle.

And to be fair, I didn't completely understand the question. So, if the question is actually about salaries, the federal judicial salaries — the negotiations have not been completed. So, we don't know what the salaries will be in the Yukon, and so at this time, you will note that the bill does not actually specify a salary amount. Instead, what it does is it creates a presumption or framework that Territorial Court Judges' salaries will be set at 90 percent of the salary paid to a Justice of the Supreme Court of Yukon, and that is effective April 1, 2025. And the salary impact is related to three judges in the Territorial Court.

**Carmen Gustafson:** If I got that right, the federal compensation hasn't been negotiated, because the territorial judge compensation is tied to that — we don't know exactly what it will be. That makes sense. In terms of part 2, with the changes to the *Act to amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*, will there be any associated cost with implementing those sections?

**Hon. Laura Lang:** This amendment does not create any additional financial impact.

**Carmen Gustafson:** Those are my questions.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate?  
Seeing none, we will proceed to clause-by-clause.

#### **Unanimous consent to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 10 read and agreed to**

**Carmen Gustafson:** 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. 10, entitled *Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026)*, read and agreed to.

**Chair:** The Member for Riverdale North 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. 10, entitled *Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted.  
*Clauses 1 to 10 agreed to*  
*Title agreed to*

**Hon. Laura Lang:** I move that you report Bill No. 10, entitled *Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026)*, without amendment.

**Chair:** It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that the Chair report Bill No. 10, entitled *Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026)*, without amendment.  
*Motion agreed to*

**Bill No. 12, *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026***

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 12, entitled *Miscellaneous 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:** Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 12, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026*.

**Hon. Laura Lang:** I again would like to welcome officials with me today. To my left, I have Mark Radke, Deputy Minister and Assistant Attorney General for the Department of Justice, as well as Mr. Steve Reed, Policy Analyst with the Department of Justice. So, I thank them for helping me walk through this amendment.

In my remarks during Second Reading, I spoke to the ongoing need for miscellaneous amendments and this legislation being the vehicle that brings those changes forward. I will just quickly remind members that the scope of the *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026* is narrow. They make minor corrective changes to various pieces of legislation. Part of my role as Minister of Justice is maintaining the integrity of existing legislation. Updates are bundled together periodically in bills like this one that the Minister of Justice brings forward on behalf of the government.

Some members may recall a similar exercise two years ago when the *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024* was introduced. That act amended 14 acts. This *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026*, Bill No. 12, updates 11 pieces of Yukon legislation.

Before I dive into some of the details of this bill before us today, it is important for me to note that none of the provisions in this bill will affect spending of public funds, change a person's rights as set out in Yukon laws, or create new offences. These amendments correct editorial errors, update outdated references and provisions, and make other minor changes to ensure the legislation operates as intended.

The bill is organized in alphabetical order of the acts to be amended. Amendments to the *Traffic Safety Act* comprise a lion's share of the bill. Most of the amendments in the bill fall into a few common categories: minor improvements to wording in English or French, updates to outdated references and provisions, and corrections to the numbering and statutory cross-references. The purpose of these routine corrections will be readily apparent to members.

Two amendments in the bill update definitions in their respective acts. First, section 9 of the bill amends the *Student Financial Assistance Act, 2016*. The definition of "approved institution" is updated to align with current federal legislation. This amendment does not affect program eligibility for students. Second, subsection 10(2) of the bill amends the *Traffic Safety Act*. The definition of "playground zone" is clarified to confirm that a playground zone is a part of a

highway identified by a traffic control device. Bringing forward these amendments supports the accuracy, clarity, and integrity of Yukon legislation.

**Chair:** Is there any general debate on Bill No. 12? Seeing none, we will proceed to clause-by-clause.

**Unanimous consent to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 12 read and agreed to**

**Carmen Gustafson:** 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. 12, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026*, read and agreed to.

**Chair:** The Member for Riverdale North 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. 12, entitled *Miscellaneous 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 11 agreed to*  
*Title agreed to*

**Hon. Laura Lang:** I move that you report Bill No. 12, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026*, without amendment.

**Chair:** It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that the Chair report Bill No. 12, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026*, without amendment.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Yukon Housing Corporation — continued**

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on 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.

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

*Recess*

**Chair:** Order, please.

The matter before the committee is continuing general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*.

**Hon. Scott Kent:** Madam Chair, just quickly to introduce officials who have joined me here again today: Samantha Patterson, President of Yukon Housing Corporation, and Jamie McAllister, Vice President of Yukon Housing Corporation.

I know we had discussion on a number of items last week, and I'll turn it back over to the Opposition to continue that debate.

**Lane Tredger:** Thank you to the officials for being here as well as those listening in and helping from behind the scenes.

I want to start by following up with a question that my colleague asked the last time this department was up. There was discussion of the HIF — the housing initiatives fund — and my colleague had asked how many units had been built through that fund since 2021 and for the breakdown of how many of those units have been sold and how many of those units were for rent — or, I guess, to be lived in by the owner versus to be rented — and I'm wondering if the minister has that information now.

**Hon. Scott Kent:** I don't have the exact breakdown that the member is looking for today that her colleague asked about last week. Just anecdotally, there are organizations such as Habitat for Humanity that receive housing initiatives fund money, the Northern Community Land Trust Society — which is affordable ownership — that receives it. But in order to be accurate, I will make that commitment again as I did last week to get that information over to members opposite as soon as it's available.

**Lane Tredger:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the member for that. I'll watch for those.

I wanted to ask just a little bit more about this funding pot, which I understand is being changed. What the minister had said is that they're making improvements to enhance the program effectiveness and further incentivize housing development. Can he talk about what led to the need for changes, what were identified as some of the challenges with the current way the fund is administered, and what they're hoping to achieve through the changes?

**Hon. Scott Kent:** I thank officials not only here but back at the Yukon Housing Corporation for providing information in a very timely manner.

Since 2021, there were 645 units in total that have been supported through the housing initiatives fund, and of those, 36 were listed for sale. I don't have the breakdown of which it was — whether it was Habitat for Humanity or the community land trust society, but it would be a combination of those and potentially others. I can get that information if the member opposite is interested in it.

As I mentioned to her colleague last week, the housing initiatives fund increases the supply of affordable housing across the territory by supporting partner and community-led housing development. The ninth annual intake of the fund was done earlier this year, March 16, and the Government of Yukon invested over \$5.1 million in partner-led housing projects across the territory.

As I mentioned, again, to the member's colleague last week, the review of the housing initiatives fund is underway. We want to work with the board of the Yukon Housing Corporation before we make any announcements, but I would expect that any changes that we're contemplating would be ready for announcement sometime in November.

**Lane Tredger:** Thank you to the minister for those numbers. I'm sure he doesn't have them with him, but I was wondering if he could break down the number of units through HIF from 2021

to present day by year — so, how many units were built each year. That could come in a letter or at a time that works for him.

I guess I'm just struggling with how to debate this a little bit, because it's funding for a program that is going to change, but we don't know how it's going to change yet. So, it's hard to know what to ask to know if this is the appropriate amount of money to vote on for this capital budget if it's not clear how it's going to be used yet.

Can the minister talk a little bit about why they decided to include it in this capital budget before they had the program designed?

**Hon. Scott Kent:** Just to confirm on the record, I will get the year-by-year breakdown that the member opposite is seeking for the amount of units per year over that 2021-to-2026 span.

I think the big reason that we've included the housing initiatives fund in the fall capital budget — like everything else, it's about getting projects out earlier and providing certainty to the contracting community. In this case, as I mentioned, the last annual intake of the fund concluded in March of 2026. What this will allow us to do is advance that so that those that are successful and have shovel-ready projects can hit the construction season when it starts.

Obviously, everyone knows we have a tight construction window in the territory to get projects out of the ground. So, we want to make sure that not only our own projects but partner-led projects as well are able to take advantage of getting the intake done sooner and awarded sooner so that they can get out of the ground when the construction season hits.

**Lane Tredger:** I look forward to those numbers.

I do have more questions about the fund and what's going to happen, but it sounds like those are going to have to wait until the spring when the decisions have been made about how to move forward with that program.

I think my colleague really covered everything else that's in this budget quite thoroughly the last time it was up for debate.

Before leaving the housing initiatives fund, I'll really emphasize how critical that fund has been in making sure that there is affordable rental stock. I noticed the government started using the language “moderately affordable”, which I hadn't seen before, and I think it's accurate, because my understanding of the definition of “affordable” is typically “below median rent”, and there's a lot of room between median and the bottom. I guess I would put in a plug that as consideration is given to this program, that it continues to be focused on affordable housing — especially affordable rental housing, given some of the changes we know are coming. I will leave the rest of my questions for the supplementary budget.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate?  
Seeing none, we will move to line-by-line.

### **Unanimous consent to deem all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried**

**Hon. Laura Lang:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried, as required.

**Chair:** The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Chair:** There is unanimous consent.

*Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$26,200,000*

*agreed to*

*Total Expenditures in the amount of \$26,200,000 agreed to*

*Yukon Housing Corporation agreed to*

## Department of Highways and Public Works

**Chair:** The matter before the Committee is Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, 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 general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Chair:** Introduction of visitors outside of the Daily Routine.  
*Visitors introduced*

## Department of Highways and Public Works — *continued*

**Hon. Linda Benoit:** Madam Chair, I'd like to welcome my officials here today. I have Deputy Minister of Highways and Public Works Tracy Allen and our ADM of Corporate Services, Richard Gorczyca, here with me. I thank them for coming to provide their expertise.

I'm pleased to present the 2027-28 fall capital budget vote of \$70.3 million for the Department of Highways and Public Works. I gave a fairly lengthy and detailed speech in Second Reading, so I think I'm just going to let the members opposite get at it.

**Brent McDonald:** I wonder if the minister could tell us: Does the \$70 million represent 100 percent of the amount that will be tendered early for projects next summer?

**Hon. Linda Benoit:** Thank you for that question. Given we don't have a passed budget for the next fiscal year yet, I'm going to guess that \$70.3 million is somewhere below half of our expected capital budget for next year, but that remains to be seen.

**Brent McDonald:** I see \$2.7 million for the Lewes River bridge rehabilitation. Could the minister tell us what improvements or what the scope of those repairs may be?

**Hon. Linda Benoit:** The \$2.7 million for Lewes River bridge rehabilitation is central pier and concrete work from concrete delamination.

**Brent McDonald:** I also see in the budget \$500,000 for the Nisutlin Bay bridge interim repair. I understand the delays with the new bridge, but will the cost of rehabilitating the old bridge to get by until the new one is completed get added to the total accounting of the new bridge for the cost of replacement?

**Hon. Linda Benoit:** The regular operation and maintenance repairs that will be done on the current Nisutlin River bridge will not be added to the capital costs of the new bridge; however, we are tracking those numbers separately.

**Brent McDonald:** I see under building efficiency program that it includes propane boiler upgrades to J.V. Clark School and propane boiler upgrade to Porter Creek Secondary School. This sort of follows along Robert Service School switching to propane. And if the government's headed in that direction, have they had conversations with the propane suppliers to make sure that this new capacity for propane delivery can be met, especially in cold temperatures?

**Hon. Linda Benoit:** We haven't had specific conversations with propane suppliers; however, we've been working with engineers to ensure the systems are designed to work in cold weather. That said, we are cognizant that in very cold temperatures, things can break down regardless of what type of heating system you have.

**Brent McDonald:** In Transportation, I'm pleased to see almost \$24 million for North Klondike Highway reconstruction at various locations, with a broad range between kilometre 388 to kilometre 716.

For the actual projects, is there a specific number of kilometres that will be repaired within that section?

**Hon. Linda Benoit:** The money that is in the fall capital is intended to complete the 21.6 kilometres that are outstanding from this year as well as start reconstruction on 17 kilometres just south of Gravel Lake.

**Brent McDonald:** Sticking with the North Klondike Highway construction projects, is this the total amount that's expected to be spent on the North Klondike Highway next year, or will there be more in the spring budget?

**Hon. Linda Benoit:** The money that's in the fall capital is all NTCF funding or the national trade corridors funding from the federal government. We will have more projects and more work done on the North Klondike Highway in our regular operation and maintenance budget next year.

**Brent McDonald:** I thank the minister for the answer. The national trade corridors fund — this is a fund, I believe, that started years ago. Is there a finite amount, and are we approaching the end of that particular stream of funding?

**Hon. Linda Benoit:** I thank the member opposite for that question. The total of the fund that the Government of Canada is going to give us under NTCF is \$267 million, and we're still working with them to come to an end date.

**Brent McDonald:** We've mentioned before the early summer conditions of the North Klondike Highway in regard specifically to potholes, and I believe part of the challenge the government had was adequate staffing for the extra work

required to fill those potholes. Has there been any consideration or any budget amounts put aside to perhaps include tendering private contractors to help if a similar situation happens in the spring?

**Hon. Linda Benoit:** We were definitely experiencing some staffing issues earlier this summer in the camps that cover the North Klondike Highway. We also had a winter of extremely challenging weather that didn't help things. We have contracted some contractors to do some work on the North Klondike Highway this spring, and we will do that as needed next spring. However, it would generally come out of our operation and maintenance budget in the spring and not out of a capital budget.

**Brent McDonald:** I defer to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** Madam Chair, I asked about this back in the spring, and at the time, the minister said that due to the fiscal situation, the government cannot spend money out of the Gateway program this year.

Is there any progress being made on spending Gateway funding for next year? It doesn't appear to show up in the capital budget, so I'm just guessing there are no projects ready to go so far.

**Hon. Linda Benoit:** I thank the member opposite for the question. The two projects that we have been working on ongoing this year that will continue into next year are some work on the Silver Trail and more on the Robert Campbell Highway under Gateway. We're focusing on that work right now given that we have project agreements and permitting in place.

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** I thank the minister for that information.

In 2025, the Yukon Government invited the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation to collaborate on the Dempster Highway improvement project under this Gateway program, with an estimated cost of \$45 million. VGFN responded on July 23 accepting the invitation; however, to my knowledge, there has not been any progress.

I'd be happy to stand corrected, though. Does the minister have an update on whether this work on the Dempster will be moving forward next year?

**Hon. Linda Benoit:** We are still in the background working on getting agreements under Gateway for the Dempster Highway project. However, we're focused on the Robert Campbell Highway and the Silver Trail right now due to that being where our permitting is. Some of these projects are obviously subject to the fiscal situation as well.

**Debra-Leigh Reti:** In Question Period the other day, I asked about the main road in Old Crow. The minister noted that maintenance of the road would be in the general O&M budget for the department. However, some work is being done to develop options and a detailed design to address the road issue, which would then be a capital expense. That work is not done yet, which is why I would guess there's no budget for this in the fall capital budget.

What is the timeline for the detailed design being completed, and will the work for that be budgeted in the main capital estimate in the spring?

**Hon. Linda Benoit:** To clarify: In that question the other day, I think we were talking about two separate things. The main road is a separate piece, but what we're looking at is the drainage into the airport and onto the runway, and that's the piece that we're working on right now.

**Chair:** Is there any further debate?

**Kate White:** Madam Chair, understanding our newness in the Assembly, I move that you report progress.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

**Patti McLeod:** Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 6, entitled *Act to amend the Workers' Safety and Compensation Act (2026)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 10, entitled *Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 12, entitled *Miscellaneous 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 Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.*

**The following legislative returns were tabled today:**

LR 36-1-40

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* — Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Justice-related Calls to Action (Lang)

LR 36-1-41

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Debra-Leigh Reti related to general debate on Vote 8, Justice, in Bill No. 201, *First Appropriation Act 2026-27* — Lawsuits in which Government of Yukon is named (Lang)