



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Thursday, October 15, 2026 — 1:00 p.m.

Whitehorse, Yukon

Speaker: The Honourable Yvonne Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2026 Fall Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

GOVERNMENT PRIVATE MEMBERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

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

THIRD PARTY

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

Thursday, October 15, 2026

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

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.
Visitors introduced

Speaker: Tributes.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Statement — Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition

Hon. Laura Lang: Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition as they celebrate their 30th anniversary of service, poignantly during the annual Poverty and Homelessness Accountability Week.

For three decades, YAPC has worked alongside community partners to address poverty, support those experiencing homelessness, generate new initiatives to approach homelessness, and improve access to essential services. I have experienced first-hand the innovative work YAPC has seeded and grown within our territory, whether this includes the now well-known coordinated access and the by-name list that have brought people into the focus instead of a number on a list or through the development of Voices Influencing Change, a committee of Yukoners with lived experience who are and will continue into the future to inform various policy initiatives within our territory.

Congratulations on this important milestone and thank you for the lasting impact you continue to make in the lives of Yukoners.

Statement — Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition

Kate White: I too rise today to recognize and celebrate the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition in its 30 years of service to Yukoners. YAPC has never wavered in its work to address and reduce poverty across our territory through community engagement, advocacy, peer involvement, and support for other organizations. It has been a strong and consistent voice for Yukoners.

In my early days in this Assembly, YAPC helped me better understand the realities of poverty and housing insecurity that many people in our territory continue to experience. Whether through advocacy or direct action, including the cardboard city on the steps of the Legislative Assembly during the early days of the housing crisis, YAPC continues to remind decision-makers that housing is a human right. Through the dedication of its staff, volunteers, and people with lived experience, YAPC has remained unwavering in its mission and its belief that a Yukon without poverty is possible.

Thank you, and congratulations to the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition on this important milestone.

Statement — NHL Legends hockey tour

Debra-Leigh Reti: The NHL has come to the Yukon. The NHL Legends hockey tour, brought to us by the Yukon First Nations Hockey Association, stopped in Carmacks Tuesday night and played to a packed rec centre. Local players went toe to toe with former NHL stars.

Their next stop is today in Old Crow, where they will attend a community dinner, a meet-and-greet, and once again meet community players for an action-packed game. I'm sorry to be missing this, but I can't wait to hear all about it when I go home. Friday brings them to Whitehorse, though, to face the U18 Mustangs in what is sure to be packed to the brim at Takhini Arena.

Events like this bring so much joy to our communities and highlight the importance of community through sport. I'm so thankful to have my community of Old Crow included in this year's tour, and good luck to the teams in their upcoming games.

Statement — Tagish Community Centre

Tyler Porter: Today, I want to recognize an important step forward for the community of Tagish. In 2025, the Tagish Community Centre was tragically lost to a fire. Since then, the community has been working toward rebuilding this important gathering place. Earlier this year, the Tagish Community Association requested a 30-year land lease to provide greater certainty for the future. I'm pleased to share that the request has been supported, marking an important milestone in the rebuilding process.

In a community like Tagish, the community centre is more than just a building; it's a place that brings people together and strengthens community connections. While this is an important step, there's still work ahead. I want to thank the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources for working with the Tagish Community Association to help move this initiative forward and recognize everyone committed to bringing this gathering place back to the community.

Statement — Farrow MacDougall, youth artist

Brent McDonald: I rise today to recognize an incredible youth artist from Dawson City. Farrow MacDougall has been drawing as long as she can remember, and this year, she shared one of her works, and it received national recognition. Her artwork entitled *Tombstone Mountains* won first place in Art Canada's national student challenge. Inspired by Inuit artist Annie Pootoogook, Farrow illustrates the Tombstone mountain range with a bear featured in the foreground. Through Farrow's eyes, even when you feel alone out there, you are surrounded by animals living right beside you. Farrow hopes her art will inspire more people to care about nature and help preserve it. And later this month, her art will be displayed at Art Toronto.

People from across the country are already admiring and appreciating your work, Farrow. Your artwork is truly inspiring. Dawson City and all of the Yukon are proud of you.

Statement — Constituent priorities in Porter Creek North

Doris Anderson: One of the most rewarding parts of serving the residents of Porter Creek North is hearing directly from them through phone calls, e-mails, and community events.

Residents care deeply about their communities and Yukon's future, and those conversations help highlight the issues that matter most to families, businesses, and neighbourhoods across the territory. I'm trying to read fast. I am pleased to see progress on several of the priorities that have been raised with me by constituents. Steps have been taken to address highway safety for road users and residents along the Alaska Highway through the Crestview area. There are ongoing efforts by this government to strengthen Yukon's energy future and address current concerns. I'm also encouraged to see ATCO representatives set to appear as witnesses in the Legislature during this Sitting, and the work that has gone into supporting responsible firearm owners in response to federal measures is incredible.

Gùnèlchìsh. Thank you.

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I have for tabling a legislative return related to a matter outstanding during Committee of the Whole on October 8, 2026.

Speaker: Are there any committee reports to be presented?
Are there any petitions?
Are there any bills to be introduced?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Carmen Gustafson: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to prevent the development of coal-fired energy projects by:

(1) issuing a direction under section 17 of the *Public Utilities Act* to the Yukon Utilities Board that they shall not review any energy project certificate application for an energy project that is designed to use, convert, or process coal; and

(2) not designating any energy project that is designed to use, convert, or process coal as a regulated project for the purposes of part 3 of the *Public Utilities Act*.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of the Arctic Sovereignty Grid Plan referenced by the Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation on October 14, 2026.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Question — Rental housing legislation consultation

Kate White: The Yukon Party announced that they are decimating legal protections for Yukon renters. If they go ahead with their proposal, soon it will be completely legal to give tenants unlimited rent increases and to evict them without any reason. Last Friday on CBC, the Minister of Community Services talked about the changes and said — I quote: "I haven't heard a lot of advocacy against them." So, this was surprising especially given that I've been cc'd on multiple e-mails sent directly to the minister advocating against these

changes. And to quote one of these e-mails: "The removal of the rent cap raises concerns that housing costs may increase beyond what many working individuals can reasonably afford. The possibility of no-cause evictions creates uncertainty and anxiety about housing security."

So, why did the minister say that she hasn't heard a lot of advocacy against her changes when we both have copies of e-mails to her that do exactly that?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: As we've said here in the House already and answered questions, we did make the commitment to remove the rent caps, and we've also made some changes and included no-cause evictions, reintroducing no-cause evictions in this current tabling of the changes to the *Residential Tenancies Act*. We've seen a reduction in supply of rental market units, and we've seen an increase in rent throughout the last few years, and these are the reasons we chose to move forward with these changes.

Kate White: Despite the minister's claim that she hasn't heard a lot of advocacy against her changes, I can assure her that there are in fact many people who are opposed. On top of the e-mails she's already received, there was a 2024 consultation on this very topic. 1,500 Yukoners weighed in and shared their major concerns about the idea of allowing unlimited rent increases and no-cause evictions. In fact, in the 2024 "what we heard" report, renters overwhelmingly said that they wanted to keep rent control, and even most landlords were in favour of the policy.

Now that the minister is aware there is significant opposition from both landlords and tenants to her changes, will she pause these changes until she can familiarize herself with their concerns?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: As we have said here, we have heard from tenants and we have heard from landlords, and we understand that the changes that were made recently to the *Residential Tenancies Act* have stifled the rental market and are causing a reduction in supply. We understand that there needed to be some changes, and these very targeted changes in this act will bring balance back to the market.

Kate White: The Yukon Party has not done any new consultation on their plan to strip away tenant protections. The Minister of Community Services is saying that she wasn't even aware of significant advocacy against it, and the Premier has said that they don't need to consult and he can do whatever he wants because he campaigned on it.

But it may surprise this House to know that the Yukon Party did not actually campaign on these changes, at least not publicly. The Yukon Party platform from the last election mentions rent control once, though it only says that they will make updates, not get rid of it entirely. And even worse, their platform doesn't mention no-cause evictions at all, not even once. The Premier's claim that they consulted by campaigning on it just doesn't hold up.

So, did the Premier forget that his platform didn't mention no-cause evictions, and will he fix his mistake by pausing until a real consultation is completed?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The member opposite must have been asleep for the last five years to think that my position on

this issue has changed in any way. We voted against it in 2021 when the Liberals and NDP brought it forward. We opposed it in 2023 when they amended the CASA to bring it forward yet again. We voted against the legislation when they amended the legislation after that subsequent to the 2023 CASA to bring in their flawed policies that have disrupted the market to the point that we've seen the trend toward increasing rents and a decreased supply of rental units.

The changes we intend to make in this legislation are aimed at improving the quality of the market, the balance of the market, and improving access to housing for all Yukoners.

Question — Fuelwood supply and affordability

Carmen Gustafson: Many Yukon families rely on firewood to help heat their homes through the winter. For years, governments have talked about improving access to timber and increasing the supply of firewood. Yukoners were optimistic when this government announced new harvesting areas and timber harvest projects aimed at getting new wood to market. Yet problems still seem to exist. We continue to hear concerns about finding enough firewood and finding good quality firewood. This is an issue that seems to return year after year. Just last week, my office heard from a senior in Whitehorse who told us she had been calling around for weeks but still has no wood and is worried she won't be able to heat her home this winter. With winter approaching, Yukoners who rely on wood heat want to know whether things will be any different this year.

What is this government doing right now to ensure Yukoners can access a reliable supply of good-quality firewood this winter?

Hon. Ted Laking: Just earlier today, we announced that we have significantly reduced permitting timelines associated with getting wood to market, and we've also opened up a significant number of new opportunities for timber harvest areas in the Yukon. That's good news. I think that we're speeding things up, that we're getting more wood available, and so I look forward to future questions from the member opposite about the good work that the Government of Yukon is doing to get wood to Yukoners.

Carmen Gustafson: The minister's pointed to new harvesting areas, timber harvest plans, and speeding up permitting as evidence that progress is being made. But opening a harvest area is not the same thing as ensuring Yukon families actually have access to firewood. Firewood still has to be harvested, processed, transported, and brought to market. The government's previous support programs acknowledged that harvesters face challenges related to operating costs, equipment, and financing. So, despite years of discussion about this issue, Yukoners continue to raise concerns about the availability of firewood. Families preparing for winter want to know whether the system is actually working better than it was a few years ago.

So, what barriers are preventing Yukon firewood harvesters from getting more wood to market, and what is the government doing to remove those barriers?

Hon. Ted Laking: I think the stats speak for themselves. Permits are now being issued 35 percent faster than they were last year. We have now approved four new timber harvest plans

this year. We have issued 1,200 personal-use firewood permits already this year. The amount of wood that has been harvested in the Yukon at this point is already at the level for the entire season of last year, and we still have a couple of months left in this year. So, I think all the stats show that we're getting permits out faster, we're getting more wood available, and we're getting more wood into the hands of Yukoners.

Carmen Gustafson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer and the hard work of the folks in the forestry branch.

Many Yukon families rely on firewood because it is a practical way to heat their homes through the winter. The Government of Yukon provides rebates to help homeowners install and upgrade wood heating systems. For many families, that's a reasonable choice that can help reduce dependence on other forms of heating. But a wood heating system is only useful if people can afford the wood that goes into it.

This government has encouraged Yukoners to invest in wood heating systems and has spoken often about helping households manage their energy costs. Yet many families who rely on firewood are still left to shoulder the rising cost of the fuel needed to heat their homes. As winter approaches, those households want to know what support they might access.

So, how is this government making firewood more affordable for households switching to wood heat under their rebate programs?

Hon. Ted Laking: I think it's a good question by the member opposite. I too agree that this is an important area to focus the effort of government. That's why we put so many significant resources into getting more wood out to Yukoners. I echo the member opposite's compliments toward the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and the hard-working staff there to move forward on these projects. The reality is that we know that there's more work to do, and we're going to continue to do that work. We think that there are opportunities for continuous improvement at the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. But the stats show that we are seeing progress, and we look forward to seeing even more progress as we go through this winter and start to approach next year's harvest season as well.

Question — Lead in drinking water in Yukon Housing Corporation units

Lane Tredger: In 2025, water quality testing was done in a small sample of Yukon Housing homes. It was found that more than 10 percent of the units tested had drinking water with unsafe levels of lead. That means that at least 22 Yukon households have been drinking water that put them at risk for health impacts like high blood pressure and kidney dysfunction.

My understanding is that remediation was done in the affected units and water filters were installed. But only a small portion of Yukon Housing's units were actually tested, so the actual number of people affected could be much higher. I hope that Yukon Housing has prioritized testing the rest of the units so they can make sure all their tenants have safe water.

What percentage of Yukon Housing units have had their drinking water tested since 2025, and how many had unsafe levels of lead?

Hon. Scott Kent: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. It's an important topic to discuss.

The member referenced elevated lead in drinking water in some of the units. I'll endeavour to get back to the member with the specifics that she's asked about how many units are affected in the testing. I obviously agree that health and safety for Yukon Housing tenants is paramount, and I will return to the House with a schedule for that testing that the member opposite referenced.

Lane Tredger: Thank you, Speaker, and my pronoun is "they". Thank you to the minister for that promise. I look forward to getting that information, because as mentioned, exposure to lead in adults can cause harm to their blood pressure and kidneys. But for any children living in those units, the effects could be much worse. The biggest risk of lead exposure is that it affects children's brain development and can reduce their IQ and brain functioning. These are very serious problems that can affect children for their entire lives. It's been more than a year since the first testing was done, so I hope by now all the units have been tested, and I'll look forward to getting that information.

A previous briefing note also suggested that some of the high lead levels were found in units that had been sitting empty, so the water had been sitting stagnant in their pipes. The briefing note said that a protocol was being developed to flush pipes before new tenants moved in.

So, can the minister also get back to us with an update on that protocol? Has it been developed? Is it happening consistently so that people moving into Yukon Housing units can be confident their water is safe?

Hon. Scott Kent: I thank the member opposite for, of course, raising this significant concern when it comes to Yukon Housing units. I will endeavour to get back to the member opposite with the specific information that they have requested, and I'll do so as soon as possible.

Lane Tredger: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the minister, and I'll add one more question to that list.

As mentioned, lead exposure is particularly dangerous in children. Children who are exposed to lead through their drinking water are at risk for poor brain development and lower IQ, and those are effects that will follow them for their entire life. There is testing available for children who are at risk for having been exposed to lead. According to the Canadian Paediatric Society, if exposure is suspected, a doctor can order a simple blood test to find out if it has been affecting the child so they can intervene. But that will only happen if parents know the risks of lead and if they ask their child's doctor about it.

So, I'm wondering: Were there any children living in the units that had unsafe lead levels, and if so, how did Yukon Housing support their families to access medical testing and follow-up?

Hon. Scott Kent: Once again, I appreciate the questions from the member opposite. These are specific questions that I would have to get the information from the Yukon Housing Corporation on. Obviously, lead exposure for children is something that we've dealt with under the previous government within our schools as well. So, an extremely important and urgent matter that the member opposite is raising, and I will get

the information that she's requesting here as soon as possible — they.

Question — Vehicle headlamp brightness

Brent McDonald: At the 2026 Association of Yukon Communities annual general meeting, representatives from Yukon municipalities gathered to set their priorities for the coming year. Among those priorities was to advocate for improved regulation of excessive vehicle headlamp brightness. We've all had the experience of driving on a dark highway at night and being absolutely blinded either by poorly aligned or overly bright headlamps. It's scary enough for experienced drivers but especially so for young and inexperienced drivers who are still building their confidence behind the wheel. It can be incredibly dangerous.

Does the minister agree with the AYC that excessively bright headlamps are a problem that should be better regulated?

Hon. Linda Benoit: I thank the member opposite for their question. I have been in contact with AYC about that matter and have indicated that as we move forward on the *Traffic Safety Act* and the chance to develop regulations more thoroughly, there we can look at addressing it. We're also awaiting a study that the Government of Canada did recently on excessive brightness of lights to be able to share that data and look at what we can use from there in order to move ahead.

Brent McDonald: National standards for headlamp brightness are indeed the jurisdiction of the federal government, but here in the Yukon, we're responsible for inspection and enforcement of those standards. Yukon Government can build a system that ensures vehicle lighting systems are properly aimed, compliant, and do not create undue safety risks. So, there is a role here for the Yukon Government. The AYC is asking for the Yukon Government to review and strengthen vehicle safety inspections and enforcement frameworks to ensure road safety is maintained for all users.

Will the minister accept this recommendation from the AYC and commit to a review of vehicle inspections and enforcement frameworks, which include dangerously bright headlamps?

Hon. Linda Benoit: I thank the member opposite for their question. Any new regulation or new regulatory framework will be brought in with the rest of the regulations for the *Traffic Safety Act*. I think the member opposite is aware that the act itself has come into force. However, there are only two sections in force right now, and the rest are dependent on the remainder of the regulations being completed. We're working on coming up with a timeline for completing the remainder of the regulations right now.

Brent McDonald: There was a second component to the AYC resolution, which called on Yukon Government to advocate to the Government of Canada for stronger action on headlamp brightness. As the minister mentioned, earlier this year, Transport Canada conducted a national survey on headlamp glare. That consultation has now closed, but its findings and next steps have not yet been released. Yukon drivers spend long periods travelling on dark, isolated highways, often in difficult driving conditions. Their concerns

need to be part of the national discussion, and I would happily work with the minister to make that happen.

What submission did the minister make in this consultation? Will she share it with Yukoners, and how is the minister advancing this AYC recommendation?

Hon. Linda Benoit: Once again, I thank the member opposite for their question. My officials have been in touch with Transport Canada officials about awaiting the results of the study that they have done. They did do a public survey, but I believe they have done some internal work on this matter as well. As I mentioned, we will work with other partners once we have that information and take it into consideration.

Question — Energy supply and economic growth

Patti McLeod: For years, one of the biggest challenges facing Yukon businesses was attracting investment and finding enough customers. Today, that story has changed. Canada is focused on growing its economy. Investors are looking to the North, and Yukon businesses are seeing opportunities to expand, hire more people, and contribute further to our economy. But what we're hearing now is that the biggest barrier to growth is not the lack of opportunity; it's the lack of power.

Can the minister explain what impact Yukon's energy constraints are having on economic growth and our ability to capitalize on opportunities before us?

Hon. Ted Laking: Reliable and affordable energy is the foundation of a strong economy. Whether we're talking about resource development, commercial activity, or housing construction, these opportunities depend on having enough electricity available when it is needed. The reality is that demand for electricity in the Yukon continues to grow. Yukon reached record peak electricity demand during the winter of 2025, using roughly 90 percent of available generating capacity, and we expect that non-industrial peak demand could increase by another 60 percent by 2035. The fact that we do not have enough energy can negatively affect investment decisions, delay expansion plans, and limit the economic opportunities for all Yukoners. That's why our government is asking the Government of Canada to partner on the energy infrastructure we need to support Yukon's economic growth.

Patti McLeod: Now, across Canada, governments are looking for ways to grow their economies and support resource development. In Yukon, limited energy capacity is becoming a barrier to new investment, business expansion, and economic growth. We've already seen examples of major Yukon employers seeking access to additional electricity to support their operations only to be turned down due to capacity constraints.

Can the minister update this House on the impacts that Yukon's energy constraints are having on industry and economic development?

Hon. Ted Laking: The member is correct that there are some real-world examples of how energy is impacting our economy already. Last winter, during the shortage of energy that I referenced earlier, we saw mines and other major energy users required to reduce their electricity use several times

during peak demand periods to help prevent system-wide rolling blackouts. The state of the electricity grid requires these drastic measures, but it does have a significant financial implication for businesses and the decision of whether or not to grow businesses here in the territory. The reality is that the state of the electricity grid is a major limiting factor for the growth of the economy. That's why our government is seeking federal partnership to support the Arctic Sovereignty Grid Plan, which includes over \$1 billion in new investment to effectively double the Yukon's generation capacity.

Patti McLeod: The message from Yukon businesses is becoming increasingly clear. Companies want to invest in Yukon. They want to create jobs. They want to grow their operations. What they need is confidence that the electricity system will be able to support that growth.

What specific steps is the government taking to ensure energy availability does not become the factor that limits Yukon's economic potential?

Hon. Ted Laking: We agree that energy security and economic growth go hand in hand. We are no longer being asked how to attract investment; we are being asked how to ensure our infrastructure can support the businesses that are already here and the businesses that want to invest further. That's why we've asked the federal government to partner with us on the Arctic Sovereignty Grid Plan, which includes new reliable and clean power generation for the territory. These are nation-building investments, but they come with a price tag of more than \$1 billion. That level of investment cannot be carried by Yukon taxpayers and ratepayers alone. Federal support is crucial, and we are actively working with Canada to secure the investment required to turn our plan into reality.

Question — Community safety in downtown Whitehorse

Debra-Leigh Reti: I have a question for the Minister of Justice. This week, we've already confirmed there are no new services or programs to help vulnerable people downtown. Now, let's take a look at the issue of downtown community safety. On October 21, 2025, the Yukon Party announced its plans for decisive, immediate action to address the effects that the disturbing rise in both the number and severity of crimes is having on individuals and communities throughout the territory. Immediate action. A year later, it's obvious that the Yukon Party's plans for immediate action haven't happened, and the community safety concerns, particularly in downtown Whitehorse, are worse than they were a year ago.

Why has the Yukon Party failed to live up to its commitment to deliver decisive, immediate action to improve community safety?

Hon. Laura Lang: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. And we agree; there is a continued need to address our public safety concerns throughout the whole territory, including downtown. That is why, as part of the 2026-27 budget, you saw an additional 10 members attached to the RCMP FTE complement. We continue a number of different initiatives that support public safety downtown, and that includes increased foot patrols and increased presence all around the downtown

core in ways that are sometimes obvious and ways that are not. So, if the member opposite has a specific question or observation that we are not attending to, I would be happy to hear that.

Debra-Leigh Reti: A year ago, the Yukon Party promised immediate action to address community safety. Ask anyone who lives or visits downtown if community safety has improved since last October. We all know what the answer is to that question. On September 3, 2025, the then-Leader of the Official Opposition and now Premier wrote an open letter promising to reinstate the prolific offender management program to deal with repeat offenders. A year later, Yukoners are still waiting for the immediate action on this program promised by the Yukon Party on the eve of last year's election.

Why hasn't the Minister of Justice immediately reinstated this program as promised?

Hon. Laura Lang: I can confirm to the member opposite that the program is indeed running, and the name has changed to the program and I don't have the name right at the tip of my fingers, but I will endeavour to get the name for the member opposite.

I can also confirm that there are many other initiatives that we have underway. One of the really important initiatives is the community safety planning program which this government has been working on for some time, and I'm very eager to see what this is going to look like specifically for the downtown of Whitehorse in partnership with the City of Whitehorse. In addition to providing additional resources to the RCMP, in addition to ensuring that the program that the member opposite refers to — I'm sorry; the name has changed; I don't remember its new name — I can also confirm that community safety planning is well underway and also within not just Whitehorse but across the Yukon.

Safety is a paramount concern. We all know that. So, again, if there are new ideas or new initiatives that the member opposite does not believe that we're attending to, I'd be very happy to hear about that.

Debra-Leigh Reti: The Yukon Party made a lot of promises to voters that they would crack down on crime in downtown Whitehorse. They wrote letters promising immediate action and new programs and have delivered on neither. A year later, promises haven't been implemented, and downtown isn't any safer. "The Yukon Party will bring community safety back" promised the election news release.

When are Yukoners going to see the immediate action promised on downtown safety by this government?

Hon. Laura Lang: I'm going to contradict the member opposite. We have taken immediate action. In fact, we took serious immediate action by adding 10 additional positions to the RCMP FTE complement. I see that as immediate action. I also see the additional resources which we have provided to other initiatives, including the continued resources to community safety and well-being plans that have been underway since we've gotten in. I also see the immediate action we've taken with our partnership with the federal government to continue to raise our concerns of public safety issues in the Yukon that fall within federal jurisdiction.

So, immediate action is definitely part of what I do every single day. If there is something specific that the member opposite does not believe that I am doing or we are doing as a government, I'd be very happy to hear suggestions. Again, I'm proud of our track record as a government to this date.

Question — Merger of Economic Development and Tourism and Culture departments

Justin Ziegler: On August 25, the newly coined Department of Economy, Tourism and Culture was announced in a news release. The release explained that there will be no changes to departmental services, programs, staffing, or points of contact. It also stated that clients', partners', and stakeholders' day-to-day operations will remain unchanged. This has left Yukoners wondering: If there are no tangible changes being made, what's the catch?

So, I ask the minister this: If programs, services, and staffing aren't changing, how does this change benefit Yukoners?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I'm really excited to speak to this initiative. The original announcement of this merger was intended to let Yukoners know that we are taking action here in this government to find ways to be more efficient. And the exercise in bringing those departments together was done very thoughtfully and very strategically so that we did not have disruptions in both services as well as disruptions to the staff. I'm really proud of the work that the department has done to bring these together and the efficiencies that have been found through that process, of which I'm happy to show this House. So, to answer the member's questions, we are moving slowly and methodically on changes to the department.

Justin Ziegler: It's interesting that the minister brings up addressing efficiency. If a business owner in Whitehorse were waiting on a permit, based on the government's news release, they would call the same office as before the merger. They would fill out the same forms and they would talk to the same people.

So, if there is no change in programming, no change in staffing, and no change in structure, I ask the minister again: If nothing has changed, how will this merger address efficiency?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: By strengthening collaboration between the units within the departments, we've been able to find some efficiencies and find ways to serve clients better. An example of this is reducing administrative burden for clients, including transfer payment agreements on joint projects. We've reduced engagement to one department as opposed to two in many cases. So, due to there being one department that's overseeing much of the arts, culture, and the business communities, we've been able to find efficiencies within that. We've also been able to find opportunities to shift staffing positions around so that we can better utilize our staffing resources and have more of a streamlined approach to Corporate Services within the department.

The opportunities that have presented within the merger in and of itself, as I've said before, have been well-thought-out and methodical. And we've done our best to ensure that staff were engaged along the way. We also did our best to ensure that community members and clients of the department had the opportunity to be engaged in the

process as well. So, it was very important to us that it was a collaborative approach as much as we can.

This is one of the first times that we've seen any big changes in our government structure for a very long time. So, to me, that was important and that staff had the opportunity to be a part of that conversation. So, really proud of the work that we've done so far, and really proud of the opportunities that are presented for the clients and staff.

Justin Ziegler: The minister just said it again. This merger is about finding efficiency and meeting the growing needs of Yukoners. So, to know if the merger is achieving this, Yukoners are wondering how success will be measured. In this House, the minister said the measure of success would be from positive feedback from staff. I would like to believe that the minister will be able to show Yukoners that the success of this merger will rest on something other than internal conversation.

How will the department be evaluating the success of the merger, and will that evaluation be released publicly?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I'm happy to speak to this. I think what I can share around how success will be measured was that we know that change is working when we see stronger collaboration across the teams, when we hear positive feedback from staff as well as clients; we also are looking for feedback from stakeholders through program delivery, administrative processes that would feel clearer and more consistent and easier to navigate. Success will also show up in day to day — less duplication, fewer competing priorities, and better alignment with how we allocate resources and manage budgets. There's plenty of opportunities for these efficiencies within the department.

Another example is that we've moved into a single deputy minister's office as opposed to two, which has resulted in savings in salary, allowing the department to address emerging staffing needs within existing budgets. As an example, we've also been able to support the creation of a development archaeologist position that we've utilized existing resources for. So, by being able to find these efficiencies, we've been able to provide better support to the community and for programming needs.

Question — Yukon public service collective bargaining

Linda Moen: Since December 31, 2024, Yukon public service employees have been without a collective agreement. With no new agreement in place, workers risk falling behind on wages, workplace protections, and other modernized employment provisions.

What is the government doing to get back to the bargaining table and reach a new collective agreement with Yukon public service workers?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: The Government of Yukon recognizes and appreciates the continued hard work and dedication of our employees who strive to deliver exceptional public services to Yukon residents. We are committed to negotiating a new collective agreement that is fair, balanced, and fiscally responsible. We're committed to upholding the integrity of the bargaining process and will not be commenting on the specifics of the confidential discussions.

Linda Moen: Recent employee survey results show that Yukon public service employees have a strong relationship with their coworkers and immediate supervisors. However, many employees report low levels of trust in senior leadership and in the public service as a whole. These results point to the need to rebuild trust and strengthen workplace relationships.

What is this government doing to improve its relationship with the Yukon Employees' Union and rebuild trust among Yukon public service employees?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: For those who are unaware, this is a survey that is conducted on a regular basis to gauge engagement of our staff within the public service and to be able to make decisions and changes that are well-informed and provide an opportunity for staff to give feedback. The 2026 engagement survey gives the Yukon Government a confidential and organization-wide view of employees' experiences and supports evidence-based decisions to strengthen the workplace. The survey is confidential and independently administered, and across Yukon Government, 65 percent of employees completed the survey in 2026.

Linda Moen: As I've noted, a collective agreement is critically important to Yukon public service employees. Delay in bargaining can lead to significant retroactive payments and added administrative costs. Given the government's commitment to fiscal responsibility, reaching a timely agreement should be a priority.

When will the government return to the bargaining table?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: As I've stated, the Yukon Government fully respects and holds the work of the public service in very high regard and will continue to work toward finalizing a collective agreement. But as I've stated, the bargaining process is confidential, and we will not be speaking about the details of that on this floor.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

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

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

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

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

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I want to thank members for this discussion and the questions on this bill. As we have discussed, this bill further defers the coming into force of previously enacted changes to the Yukon business investment tax credit until January 1, 2029. This maintains the current temporary

framework and provides certainty for Yukon businesses and investors.

During Committee of the Whole, members raised important questions about the program and the reason for its extension. I thank them for their questions. They have also brought up the importance of ensuring the program is accessible to Yukon businesses, and I can assure you that our policy review will consider red tape in this initiative. The member opposite did ask for some information through a legislative return, and I'm pleased to have tabled that today.

The extension gives us time to review the Yukon business investment tax credit during 2027 and 2028. That work will help inform decisions about the longer-term future of this program. The goal is to provide certainty today while ensuring future decisions are informed by evidence and the needs of Yukon's economy.

This is a targeted amendment. It does not create a new tax credit or redesign the program. It maintains the current framework while government takes the time to consider its longer-term direction. I believe this provides a practical path forward for Yukon businesses and investors, and I encourage all members to support this *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026)*.

Justin Ziegler: I'd like to start by thanking the officials in the department who worked on this bill. I also want to thank the deputy minister who provided us with a very interesting briefing. It was a very rich conversation, and I really appreciate the work they do in the department.

I am looking forward to the upcoming two years, as this bill sets a deadline in January 2029. I'm looking forward to the two years and to seeing the work being done to advance what this bill is doing in making sure that more businesses have access to the tax credit.

Debra-Leigh Reti: We talked about this bill the other day and got lots of interesting history and explanation. Thank you to my colleague for that. That was really good, and as I said before, I support this bill.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?
Motion for Third Reading of Bill No. 7 agreed to

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

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

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

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

Hon. Laura Lang: As I've noted in earlier discussions, this bill implements key recommendations arising from the 2022 Judicial Compensation Commission process and makes minor amendments relating to judicial administration. The

Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026) supports these objectives through targeted amendments to the *Territorial Court Act* and the *Act to amend the Territorial Court Judiciary Pension Plan Act (2021)*. The bill establishes a presumption that territorial court judges' salaries are set at 90 percent of the salaries paid to federally appointed justices of the Supreme Court of Yukon, subject to specified exemptions, and extends the Judicial Compensation Commission cycle from three years to four years.

The bill also includes several administrative improvements relating to the operations of the territorial court. These include extending the term of the Chief Judge from three years to five years and providing additional flexibility respecting the remuneration of Judicial Compensation Commission commissioners. The bill clarifies survivor benefit provisions and confirms the coming-into-force date of the 2021 pension amendments.

Taken together, these amendments support the administration of justice, provide greater certainty within the judicial compensation framework, and strengthen the operation of the Territorial Court. I would like to thank members for their consideration of this bill.

Carmen Gustafson: I rise to speak to Bill No. 10. I think the minister did a good job summarizing the effect of the bill. I'm happy to see that these changes, as recommended by the Judicial Compensation Commission, are coming forward. And so I thank the officials, the public servants, the drafters, and the minister for bringing this forward, and we will be supporting this bill.

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

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

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

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

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 third time and do pass.

Hon. Laura Lang: Madam Speaker, as I've stated previously, maintaining the accuracy, clarity, and integrity of Yukon's legislation is part of the Minister of Justice's responsibility.

Miscellaneous statute law amendment acts play an important role in that work. They allow technical, administrative, and minor correction amendments affecting multiple acts to be advanced through a single bill. These amendments do not change government policy, create new offences, affect spending of public funds, or alter the rights and obligations established under Yukon law.

Bill No. 12 proposes amendments to 11 acts. These amendments contained in this bill correct editorial errors, update outdated references and provisions, improve consistency between legislative provisions, and make other

minor changes to help ensure the affected act operates as intended. Although technical in nature, these amendments support the continued accuracy and integrity of Yukon legislation.

I would like to thank members for their consideration of this bill.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?
Motion for Third 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 Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

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

Department of Highways and Public Works — *continued*

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*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Is there any further debate on Vote 55?

Brent McDonald: I have a few more questions. Can the minister tell us how many kilometres of highway lines were painted this season in 2026?

Hon. Linda Benoit: I thank the member opposite for their question. It's similar to a question that was asked yesterday. I can say that I have inquired about this information for the member opposite, but I don't have it on hand yet. I'm committed to providing it when I get it.

Brent McDonald: Can the minister describe what criteria the department uses to decide which highway sections receive pavement rehabilitation or chipsealing for the upcoming year?

Hon. Linda Benoit: Using field assessments, maintenance is prioritized based on road conditions, safety, traffic volumes, seasonal needs, and available resources.

Sometimes, it's also dependent on permitting and which projects are shovel-ready.

Brent McDonald: Based on that criteria, how did you decide which sections are scheduled to be in with this capital plan?

Chair's statement

Chair: One moment, please. I would like to remind members to speak through the Chair.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Linda Benoit: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the member opposite for their question.

There is no money for BST outside of the larger construction projects that are named in this fall capital budget; that money is all coming next year. We don't have a fulsome plan yet for the following year. It's dependent on the field condition assessments that we're still compiling; however, I can commit to getting it to the member opposite next year.

We do budget based on a number and then do as much work as we can within that amount.

Brent McDonald: Madam Chair, I'm sure that there are more things that are going to be done next year that aren't included in this fall capital budget.

Can the minister explain how these particular infrastructure projects were chosen and which ones were on the list but maybe had to be left out?

Hon. Linda Benoit: As the Premier has mentioned, fall capital projects were prioritized based on what we thought could benefit from early tendering, what could help industry plan their season better, and what could help us plan our season as well. That's how projects were chosen.

There will be a full capital budget in the spring that will include more than what you see here for the fall. Again, we also have to leave enough dollars on the table for flexibility for pending projects and matching federal dollars that may come our way before then.

Kate White: Madam Chair, I thank the officials for their time here, and I thank my colleague for giving me the opportunity today.

One of the questions that we're trying to ask and trying to get a sense of with this capital budget is how areas and how things are identified. The minister has just said that there needs to be an assessment, there needs to be planning, there's permitting, et cetera. When we look at the HPW capital advance vote and we see that some areas of reconstruction have been indicated, we're trying to get a sense of how things are prioritized.

My colleague has talked about the degradation on the south side of Dawson City leaving a 20-kilometre stretch that has just gotten substantially worse. As an example, looking at the state of Yukon highways — again, in conversation with my colleague, who has indicated that at a certain point in time, he stopped marking spots on his way to and from Dawson where the highway was really rough — how are they prioritized? Was it looking at traffic safety reports? Was it looking at accident reports? How were things prioritized? Because when you look at this fall capital budget that's saying that these are important

to move forward in a timely, early-season way next year, we just have questions about how projects are chosen.

Hon. Linda Benoit: I believe I have just explained a bit about how projects are prioritized based on the road condition itself. The one thing to keep in mind is that outside of these larger reconstruction and resurfacing projects, BST work is done internally by our crews, so there's no need to put that money out before the fiscal year begins. As that work is done internally, there's no one out there waiting for those contracts or tenders to come out or trying to plan their year around it. So, over the course of the winter here, we will plan how BST is done going forward.

I appreciate all of the concern about the North Klondike Highway, but I would point out that we do have two large construction projects going on in tandem each year here as we go, and I don't think that folks in the Klondike would appreciate us ripping up further sections of highway at the same time. There were many complaints about the amount of construction going on as well, and we do realistically have to put money into other highways or five years from now, it will be another highway that needs that much attention. So, we do have to spread our work out across the Yukon according to those priorities.

Kate White: I appreciate that in the core transportation envelope it says "example projects" and it talks about road safety improvements and then it says "vegetation control". So, I'll note that there has been lots of conversation in this Assembly around vegetation control and the importance of brushing contracts and them going out in a way that, for example, local companies could bid for so that they are broken up. We saw some challenges a number of years ago where they were so big that local companies were excluded and it was folks from Outside.

When we're talking about that vegetation control, how is the department ensuring that folks who live in the territory and employ Yukoners are going to be able to bid on these? So, making sure that they're done in such a way that they're parcelled out, for example, in smaller parcels or in collaboration or conversation with community? How are we looking at vegetation control when we look at this fall capital budget?

Hon. Linda Benoit: I appreciate the member opposite's question. When we talk about releasing brushing contracts, we do generally tend to bundle them into smaller pieces where we can. Those contracts are delivered through a qualified source list that is established through a request for qualifications process. The qualified source list allows us to engage pre-qualified contractors efficiently as brushing needs arise across the territory. We do let First Nation governments know and post ahead on Bids and Tenders when we are taking new intake for those qualified source lists, and then we do share tendering forecasts with municipalities and First Nation governments as well to try to ensure that locals have as much opportunity as larger companies to do those contracts.

Kate White: This summer, I sadly participated again in the Joe Morrison memorial bike ride from Porter Creek to the Canada Games Centre along the Alaska Highway, and I say "sadly" because nothing has happened since, unfortunately, he was killed on that highway.

And I'll note that the Whitehorse multi-use trail expansion project talks about going from Two Mile Hill to Kopper King, but that doesn't really talk about that stretch through Rabbit's Foot Canyon. So, I just wanted more details on what this means. Does it include a highway crossing?

One of the issues in that area, because I'm incredibly familiar with it, is that you have communities — it starts off on the Takhini side of the highway and then it crosses the highway to where the Kopper King is and then Raven's Ridge and Fish Lake. Knowing that there is a portion of this that talks about from Two Mile Hill to Kopper King, it doesn't address the issue. That means that next year when I'm on the Joe Morrison memorial trail, we're going to talk again about how this stretch of highway is still not safe for active transportation users. So, if I could just get some understanding about what this section will do and how it's going to cross the highway, that would be great.

Hon. Linda Benoit: Safe active transportation paths are important to me in that area. I'm acutely aware of the deaths and injuries that have happened there, so it is important to me to see this work finished. However, this section here does not cross the highway, nor does it go all the way through Rabbit's Foot.

What we've done is put out the piece that was the easiest to get planned and permitted. That is the piece that we're asking for the money to do here today. It expands the multi-use trail along the Alaska Highway from Two Mile Hill to the Kopper King, which includes a 1.6-kilometre section of trail along the north side of the Alaska Highway, with a new pedestrian-activated at-grade highway crossing at Prospector Road. The project also consists of a 450-metre trail connection to the Pine Street extension pathway and a 50-metre trail connection to Seine Square. All trail sections will be paved, three metres wide, and include drainage ditches and culverts along the full length. The anticipated timeline for this project to begin is mid-April and completion is by the end of October next year.

Pardon me; I misspoke about the crossing, but that's the plan right now, and what the reset of the trail looks like is still under design and planning.

Kate White: Just for clarification, when the minister said she misspoke about the Prospector crossing, does that mean there will be no pedestrian-controlled crosswalk across the highway from the paved trail to the Kopper King at Prospector Road?

Hon. Linda Benoit: Madam Chair, I apologize to the member opposite. I misspoke the first time when I said there would be no crossing; there is a crossing listed in here in this work for this year.

Kate White: I'm grateful for that. That has been long overdue, and so I do appreciate that.

I'm intimately familiar with the area, so can the minister help me understand where along the highway this is going to go?

As I envision it right now, you've got the intersection where Two Mile Hill verges off to the right — so there is some flat land there — and then by the time you pass the forestry building, you have a steep embankment that goes down, and then you have a guardrail, and that steep embankment now becomes much steeper — kind of into a gully. I can understand how it could be maybe in the less steep spot, but I guess I'm

struggling to understand where it's going to go in the existing highway footprint on that side of the highway.

Hon. Linda Benoit: I don't have that degree of detail with me here now. I'm happy to report back to the member in writing or offer to have my officials sit down with them and go through the detailed planning.

Kate White: I appreciate that offer, and I'll take either.

Was there community involvement in planning what an active transportation trail would look like alongside the highway with folks, for example, who would use it?

Hon. Linda Benoit: Prior to my time here, there was engagement done by survey, which included the cycling associations, so there has been some engagement done.

Kate White: Are there any changes from the plan that was put forward initially about the Whitehorse multi-use trail expansion project? There was documentation that came out previously; is it the same that was brought forward? Will the end product look similar to what was shown previously, or will it be different?

Hon. Linda Benoit: I'm happy to follow up with the member opposite with that level of detailed information.

Kate White: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I appreciate that response from the minister.

Again, I'll note that the sooner we can view the safety of everyone along the highway corridor, the better off we'll be. I'd be delighted, for example, for it to have gone farther, because that still means that the section of Rabbit's Foot Canyon or accessing Raven's Ridge, Fish Lake Road, or Lodgepole Lane is still not safe, and that is, of course, a concern.

I appreciate the conversation and the opportunity today to have the conversation in the Assembly, and I thank my colleague the Member for Klondike for giving me some space.

Brent McDonald: I have one last question, and it's about the site works for Robert Service School.

I'm wondering if the design has been completed and, if so, if they could share it — and if it includes a foundation or pad for the expected outdoor education building in the future.

Hon. Linda Benoit: The site works that are scheduled within this fall capital appropriation for Robert Service School are a regrade of the school grounds, restoring the field, and redirecting surface water that is affecting utilities and the building structure. I would suggest that, regarding outdoor education space, the member follow up with the Minister of Education.

Brent McDonald: Madam Chair, I'd like to thank the Minister for her answers and especially their staff for doing an excellent job in their briefing.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works?

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

Unanimous consent to deem all lines in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried

Kate White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines of Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried, as required.

Chair: The Member for Takhini has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines of Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$70,275,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$70,275,000 agreed to Department of Highways and Public Works agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*.

Would members like to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*.

Department of Education

Hon. Scott Kent: Madam Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the education appropriation in the fall capital budget. Just joining me here today is Paul Moore, Deputy Minister of Education. I just wanted to give a special mention of Exilda Driscoll, the Director of Finance for the Department of Education, who retired yesterday. She was here yesterday ready to appear, but we didn't make it to Education. I just wanted to thank her for her years of service and wish her well in her retirement.

I've largely gone through the expenditures at Second Reading. I will just reiterate that the department is requesting \$9.653 million for capital investments in Yukon schools, the details of which I went through at Second Reading. So, I'll turn it over to members opposite for questions at this time.

Linda Moen: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the deputy minister and all of his staff at the Department of Education that provided a very good briefing.

I was quite pleased with the information that was provided on behalf of all Yukon schools and students. I do have a few questions on the fall estimates. For the very first one, can the minister please provide a list of his prioritized capital projects for Yukon schools for the next four years?

Hon. Scott Kent: I'm hoping I'm understanding the member opposite's question correctly. So, if I don't hit the mark, I would invite the member to just repeat it. But the Government of Yukon prioritizes capital investments through the five-year capital plan to ensure projects align with student safety, educational outcomes, enrolment trends, and community needs. So, current confirmed 2026-27 capital projects include the Kêts'ádañ Kù School in Burwash Landing, planning as well for the replacement of the École Whitehorse Elementary School, construction of modular classrooms, special education equipment, playfield improvements, school-based information technology, and school van replacements. Before us today with the interim capital budget, we will be focused on modular classrooms, École Whitehorse Elementary School replacement, the roof replacement at Khàtinas.àh Community School in Teslin, site improvement and recreation development, the Paul-Émile Mercier trades workshop — some renovations to the existing school to add a trades workshop — public announcement systems upgrade, Ross River School site improvements and school van replacements. When it comes to longer-term replacements of schools over the next number of years, I mentioned in the spring that we're in the process of working with the Department of Highways and Public Works to revamp the Whitehorse ranking of schools that need significant repair or replacement and integrate that list with a rural ranking as well. So, top of the list right now, of course, is École Whitehorse Elementary School, and that's our immediate focus.

Linda Moen: I think it's really important for members that are listening that may not have listened before that they get the information that we're talking about and discussing. It's maybe the first time that they're hearing it. So, I think it's really important that they have a really good understanding of what the department's priorities are and how they're going to do that. My next question is about the modular classrooms. So, there are four modular classrooms that are slated for 2027-28. Two are going to Mercier, and the other two aren't determined.

Can the minister please tell me how the other schools are going to be determined? What is the criteria that will be used?

Hon. Scott Kent: The first consideration when we're determining which schools will receive modular is enrolment pressures. We're seeing that, of course, at Mercier with a school capacity of 150 students that is overcapacity right now. That's why those two modulars are going in there. There are modulars slated to go to Dámbü Tān Kets'ádañ Kù, which is the elementary school in Whistle Bend. Some site issues are to be determined on that. I guess the other consideration as well is if there's other solutions for the schools. At Robert Service School in Dawson, there was a modular replacement done a number of years ago by the previous government. And rather than it being separate portables, it was grouped together as one. I believe it's a four-classroom modular there. So, there's some other opportunities when we look at other schools. Most of the schools that are seeing these enrolment pressures right now are — or perhaps even all of them — are in the Whitehorse area. The other one that we need to have a look at is the Hidden Valley Elementary School. It's currently running significantly overcapacity, and we need to determine if we can proceed with

modulars or some sort of a modular addition similar to the one at Robert Service School for that facility.

Linda Moen: Can the minister or his department official please let me know how many schools are overcapacity? He mentioned Whitehorse area and he did name a few, but can he give me a concrete number on how many schools are overcapacity?

Hon. Scott Kent: I'll have to get the specific school-by-school breakdown, but I can provide some information based on what I have in front of me today. So, a school with an operational capacity rate of less than 60 percent would be considered underutilized, and facilities that are over 80 percent would be considered at capacity. A school with an operational capacity rate of 100 percent would be considered full, of course. So, from May 2021 to May 2026, the average operational capacity rate for all urban elementary schools increased two percent from 98 percent to 100 percent. From May 2021 to May 2026, the average operational capacity rate for all urban secondary schools increased 21 percent from 73 percent to 94 percent.

That's one of the reasons that we're currently working on a Whitehorse-area secondary school addition and enhancement plan, so that work is also underway. In May 2026, the average operational capacity rate for all rural schools was 36 percent. The highest rate is 54 percent for Robert Service School in Dawson, and the lowest is 13 percent for Del Van Gorder School in Faro. Of course, members will know that school was built when the mine, the Faro mine, was in operation, so it was built for a community that was much larger than what it is right now. As community demographics shift, many rural schools are significantly undercapacity. Again, as we've mentioned, there are \$4.8 million that we're requesting here for the procurement of additional modular classrooms, and just given the information that I've been able to provide, I think it's understandable that those will be deployed in and around the Whitehorse area.

Linda Moen: I know that we're talking about a capital budget and looking at these numbers of 150-plus students and the need for modular. My next — not going to be an assumption — but the next steps logically would be that it would require new FTEs, which is teacher staffing allocations. But I'll save those for the supplementary coming up, because we're here to discuss capital, but to give department officials some of the areas that I'd be interested in is looking at the FTE models to ensure that all students have the required teachers with all these new spaces that the department is looking at.

Can the ministers, the department officials, let me know how many school or school councils have requested modular classrooms?

Hon. Scott Kent: So, during my meetings with school councils as well as school boards, there have been requests for modulars put forward by Mercier and Dámbü Tān Kets'ádañ Kù, the Whistle Bend Elementary School. We've also heard requests to replace some aging modulars at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Secondary School in Riverdale, and then we're working, of course, with the Hidden Valley Elementary School community on what the best option is for that school to add additional space for their enrolment pressures that they're

seeing. That said, I do have meetings upcoming with the F.H. Collins School Council. It's another Whitehorse-area high school that is seeing significant enrolment pressures. So, as of now, those are the ones that I've heard from, but I also will be attending the upcoming meeting of the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards, and Committees later on this month. So, I would anticipate if there are additional requests, that they would come forward from the school councils there. I also have regular meetings with the First Nation School Board and CSFY on their schools as well.

Linda Moen: The next place I want to talk about is the public announcement systems. I did bring this up in Question Period, but in our briefing, we were told that 15 schools currently do not have a fully functioning PA system and we have been told that only some will be getting replacements this year.

Can the minister's department officials identify which schools will be getting a PA system repair this year, and what is the priority list for upcoming years?

Hon. Scott Kent: I appreciate the opportunity to address this issue with the member opposite. As mentioned, it was brought up in Question Period earlier on in the Sitting. So, I just wanted to go through a few facts. The member is correct. There are a number of schools, 15, that don't have fully functioning PA systems. This is something that I heard from school councils quite a bit during my time in Opposition and early in my tenure as Minister of Education this time around.

So, just to go through a bit of the history. Of course, we know that PA systems are the primary method to communicate school-wide messages, emergency codes, bells, and staff requests for support. They're an important piece of health and safety infrastructure for each school. However, there are increasing maintenance complexity and costs, as old or outdated parts and manufacturer support can become unavailable.

So, there have been some upgrades or replacements that have been completed to date: École Selkirk Elementary School in 2025-26; that same fiscal year, École Émilie Tremblay; in 2024-25, Hidden Valley Elementary School; Ghùch Tlà Community School was 2023-24; and then the Khàtinas.àxh Community School in Teslin was 2022-23.

In the current capital budget that we debated and passed in the spring, there's \$313,000 identified for program-related capital repairs, including repairs to PA systems. So, replacement of the PA system at Émilie Tremblay was completed in fall 2026 and is now operational.

Included in the fall capital budget that's before the House right now is \$953,000 to accelerate the replacement of these systems, improving reliability, communication capabilities, and the ability to support emergency communications across Yukon schools. The two schools that are identified as priorities for replacement in the fall capital are St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction and Johnson Elementary School in Watson Lake. Both of these schools identified require full PA system replacements rather than repairs.

I just wanted to touch on what's happening at Elijah Smith Elementary School. I know the member opposite referenced that in her Question Period question. The PA system at Elijah Smith Elementary School was replaced in 2018-19. The

Department of Education is aware that the system is currently not fully functional in all areas and is actively working to address the identified issues. The Department of Education has contracted a local company to assist with those repairs, and this company, according to the information I have, will visit Elijah Smith tomorrow to assess the work required and begin the necessary repairs.

Linda Moen: As I stated before and I will state again, in my time as a school council representative, we did bring that up numerous times with other governments, and I'm finally happy to see that maybe tomorrow it will be fully repaired. I have to think of all the students, of their safety, especially the young kindergarteners that are new that don't understand what safety procedures may mean and may be quite alarmed when they happen. I'm happy that the department recognizes the need for the safety of all students in our schools. I think it is of the utmost importance that we can ensure that when they go to school, if there's an emergency, that everything is fully functioning and operable as it should be and parents and caregivers have peace of mind.

My next question is about — there are dollars identified for the École Whitehorse Elementary planning. Can the minister tell me what the next steps are for that planning phase?

Hon. Scott Kent: Just to manage expectations for the Elijah Smith Elementary School community, as I mentioned, there has been a contract put in place with a local company to assist with the repairs, and the company will visit Elijah Smith tomorrow to assess the work required and begin repairs. I just want to make sure that there's not an expectation that the work will be completed tomorrow, but just according to the information that I have, the work will commence tomorrow. And I can report back once I get a better understanding of what the necessary repairs are and when we anticipate them being completed.

When it comes to the École Whitehorse Elementary School replacement, the funding that we've identified here is for planning, design, and site preparation of the new school. This funding was identified prior to the site selection being finalized — which is, of course, across from the Canada Games Centre, called the Valleyview site, as it borders on that subdivision in Whitehorse. So, now that the site has been selected, projections will need to be updated.

But there are a number of activities that will be underway in the next fiscal year. We need to get a number of municipal approvals. I've had the opportunity to meet with the City of Whitehorse as well as the École Whitehorse Elementary School Council and the Valleyview Community Association. The Minister of Highways and Public Works and I met with representatives of that association last week. So, again, there will be a number of things that we need to do to get through the municipal approval process. One of the things that we'll risk-manage is some geotechnical work on-site, which may be included in this \$1.2 million as well. But again, now that the site has been selected, we'll refine that number and be able to report back.

According to City of Whitehorse officials, the municipal approvals that are required could take six to 12 months to go through. So, we'll work within that time frame. Obviously, that will put us into next year, and there is some onus on ourselves

in Education as well as the Department of Highways and Public Works that will be leading that process for us to ensure we get back to the city with timely information as they request it.

Linda Moen: Thank you for that information.

I too have met with the Valleyview Community Association to hear their concerns prior to that site being selected and will be working with them and listening to their concerns as this draws out. But currently — and I would like it on the record, especially for people who are listening today — they have raised questions of how the site layout will be envisioned, whether adjacent land will be sought to make the lot less awkwardly shaped, and secondly, what the traffic flow plan will be and whether that matches what is laid out in the master plan with the City of Whitehorse.

Hon. Scott Kent: I should also mention that the meeting last Friday was the second meeting with the Valleyview Community Association. I met with them during the public input process as well, and I've also met with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council chiefs of both of those First Nations regarding the different sites. That was prior to the site selection being announced.

We have approached the City of Whitehorse for access to a lot that is owned by the city there to accommodate a larger playing field. That's what needs to be accommodated. We will, as part of the municipal process and the potential — we don't know yet if we have to go through the YESAB process on this school, but we're not sure if there are any YESA triggers. But that work is underway by Highways and Public Works at this point.

One of the other things that will emerge from the work over the next year is a traffic study for that area and for that lot as the member referenced. So, that is work still to be determined. I believe that work will be led by the Department of Highways and Public Works.

Linda Moen: My next question then is: Where is the planning budget for the replacement for the downtown school?

Hon. Scott Kent: That is, of course, a separate process from the replacement of the École Whitehorse Elementary School. École Whitehorse Elementary School will remain as the downtown school, of course, until a new school is built and commissioned and students can move into it.

However, as I mentioned at the press conference when we announced the preferred location for the École Whitehorse Elementary School, some of the initial internal work that is being done by Highways and Public Works is determining whether or not the existing building — if there's a cost benefit to refurbish that building and renovate it, bring it up to modern codes. Again, that is work being done internally by the Department of Highways and Public Works. So, I would suggest that is probably the initial work being done as far as replacing a downtown school. Once we determine that, then we'll be in a better position to determine where a downtown school will go.

I did reach out last week. I have not heard back yet, but I did reach out to the Downtown Residents' Association and have requested a meeting with them to begin those conversations about the downtown school and what the programming will look like at that school and some potential locations. As we all know,

the lots in the downtown area are quite small and tight, and we just want to make sure that those that were considered before — we can take a look at those again and make the determination.

So, it's a separate process. The budget that's before us is for projects that would benefit from an early tendering into next year, and the replacement of the downtown school does not meet that criteria at this time.

Linda Moen: I think it's equally important — and again, for people who are listening — to get a really good understanding of what the department is planning to do and has planned to do in the future. I think it's equally important. We may not be discussing it in full today, but again, I think it's important that it is touched on so that we get a complete understanding of what the department is envisioning for the next 12 months to the next fiscal year.

My next question is about the Ross River School site improvements at \$500,000. Can the minister please tell me when the work will start for the repairs of the school and what they are?

Hon. Scott Kent: Just before we leave the Whitehorse Elementary School topic as well, I did want to mention that at the meeting last week with the Valleyview Community Association, we did extend an offer for them to have a representative on the project advisory committee, and I believe they notionally agreed to that at that meeting. And we look forward to their involvement and their input as that project proceeds.

With respect to the Ross River School site improvements, this is a continuation of work being completed at Ross River School, and this work is planned for the 2027-28 fiscal year. Obviously, we're here seeking this vote so that we can get out earlier with tenders on this.

So, there are two aspects to this \$500,000 expenditure. First is mechanical systems simplification of the hydronic piping in the old mechanical room and removal and replacement of the existing boiler. As well, there's some landscaping and drainage activities also included within that envelope — improvements to the landscaping around the school to direct water away from the building and entranceways, reducing the risk of water infiltration and related damage.

Linda Moen: Can the minister confirm if the school is still sinking, and if it is, is there a plan to replace the school?

Hon. Scott Kent: I would have to defer to my colleague the Minister of Highways and Public Works on the school condition and where it's at right now.

Of course, the school is safe for occupancy. The MLA for Watson Lake-Ross River-Faro and I as well as the Minister of Highways and Public Works visited the school as part of our Cabinet community tours, had a conversation and a tour of the school, and got a sense for some of the other needs for it.

When it comes to replacement, the Ross River School will be ranked in that rural ranking I spoke of earlier, and that list will be integrated with the Whitehorse list that the previous government replaced, and that will give us a sense of where it lies in the ranking for replacement. My early understanding prior to seeing the results of that work is when it comes to rural Yukon, the school in Teslin as well as St. Elias Community

School in Haines Junction are the priority schools for replacement. But I've spoken as well about Ross River School and some of the conditions with the building and the site that it's built on. So, once we have that finalized list, I'll be in a better position to determine when or if that Ross River School needs to be replaced or if there's significant repairs that can correct some of the challenges that building has.

Linda Moen: Considering that there's work to be done on the boiler system, can the department confirm if there's going to be any closures to the school or any disruption to the learners and students in Ross River?

Hon. Scott Kent: I think that's precisely why we're here before the House with the fall capital budget, so we can get that early tendering out.

The construction season in the Yukon is extremely short, but the construction season around schools is much shorter with that two-month window. So, we're looking to minimize any disruptions to the school by getting these contracts out early and awarded so that those contractors can be on-site with the necessary equipment to conduct the repairs when the school is not in session. So, that's the goal of what we're trying to accomplish with this early capital budget.

Linda Moen: Looking at the next budget line item is the school van replacement. So, I'm interested to know: What schools are getting a new van, and are rural schools in that list as well?

Hon. Scott Kent: This appropriation will allow us to procure two school vans, and the schools that have been identified for these two are the top priority ones that need to be either replaced or added. One is at the Robert Service School in Dawson City, and the second is at the Del Van Gorder School in Faro.

Linda Moen: My last question was not identified in this capital plan, but the Member for Whitehorse Centre had brought it up, and I know it was an issue that we had talked about last fiscal year. So, I want it on the record today too and to hear from the department or their officials about the lead that has been identified in schools. The department said that there was remediation done in some schools, but today, I'm going to be asking, because it's not prioritized here, if the department can confirm if all the issues in all the schools were remediated and if they can confirm if all schools have clean drinking water sources — more than one source.

Hon. Scott Kent: The briefing note that I have with respect to water quality in Yukon schools and other youth-occupied facilities is one that's been developed by Highways and Public Works, but I'll read what I have into the record. If there's any additional information that the member is looking for, I can certainly work with my colleague the Minister of Highways and Public Works to return with that.

During the first phase of the Government of Yukon's long-term water monitoring program, all youth-occupied facilities were tested. Of course, that includes the schools, and any drinking water fixtures exceeding Health Canada's recommended lead levels were remediated. The government is now implementing the second phase of the program, with

approximately one-third of drinking water fixtures in youth-occupied facilities tested each year to ensure drinking water continues to meet Health Canada guidelines for Canadian drinking water quality.

When it comes to the long-term monitoring, the government has implemented a long-term monitoring program that tests approximately one-third of youth-occupied facilities each year on a three-year cycle. The first round of this phase of testing was completed in March 2026, with the remaining facilities scheduled over the next two years. The monitoring program focuses on youth-occupied facilities because children are more vulnerable to lead and other drinking water contaminants, as the Member for Whitehorse Centre mentioned earlier today in Question Period. The testing schedule considers factors such as building age, previous test results, and water system type, and the three-year cycle aligns with approaches used in other jurisdictions, including British Columbia. So, drinking water in other government workplaces and municipal water systems is managed in accordance with applicable drinking water requirements and monitoring programs.

The government owns 44 youth-occupied facilities that were tested in 2025. All of them met Health Canada's guidelines for Canadian drinking water quality. Results from the first round of phase 2 testing confirmed that drinking water from all food preparation sinks, drinking fountains, and bottle-filling stations also met those guidelines, and the remaining facilities will be tested over the next two years as part of the ongoing monitoring program.

If there is additional information required by the member opposite, I would be happy, as I mentioned, to get that information for members of the Official Opposition as well as the Third Party.

Linda Moen: Actually, I do have more questions. I just want clarification, because I'm looking at the dollar amounts, and I do realize the importance of the roof replacements, but can the minister explain the differences — why there are two different budgets for two different schools? From my understanding, one budget comes from the department and then another budget comes from Highways and Public Works. So, if the minister can clarify why there are two different pots even though the school is operated by the department.

Hon. Scott Kent: My understanding is because of the ownership models for the schools. The Khâtinaxh Community School in Teslin, the roof replacement is under the Department of Education because that is a leased building from the Teslin Tlingit Council. The building — it was transferred to them from the Yukon Government, and it is located on TTC land in the community of Teslin. When it comes to École Émilie Tremblay, it's a government-owned facility, so that's why the budget for that lies with the Department of Highways and Public Works.

That's my understanding from officials as to the reason why the Teslin school roof replacement budget of \$1.35 million is in the education budget and the École Émilie Tremblay roof replacement is with Highways and Public Works. Both, of course — as we know, the Teslin one is in this capital budget, and the Émilie Tremblay is in the current fall capital budget that Highways and Public Works is responsible for.

Linda Moen: Thank you again to the Deputy Minister Paul Moore and all of the staff who have been really wonderful in answering all our questions in our briefings, and I do appreciate their work. As a mother who has students in the education system, I think it's really important that when we look at all of our schools in the Yukon, that we're addressing these concerns and that we're listening to the parents and caregivers of the Yukon.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I have just a few questions this afternoon on the Department of Education 2027-28 capital budget. Can the minister provide an update on the new school being built in Burwash Landing?

Hon. Scott Kent: I should clarify that we did not include the appropriation for Kêts'ádañ Kù in the fall capital budget, because it's already been awarded and tendered, of course. So, work continues on that project. As the work continues, the project is being managed by the Department of Highways and Public Works.

So, I do have an update for members from an HPW briefing note on this. So, Kêts'ádañ Kù is under construction, and it's expected to be completed in the fall of 2027 — that's the most recent information that I have — after which, the building will be prepared for students, and then I would expect occupancy shortly thereafter, perhaps around Christmas after all of the additional work is done.

That said, if there are any updates, I think most folks know that the construction of the school was delayed due to some design deficiencies around seismic — the project team identified a seismic design issue — which required the design to be updated to fully meet current building code requirements.

We remain committed to completing the school, and I will be travelling there on November 6 with the MLA for Kluane, the Minister of Environment, to meet with the Kluane First Nation and get a tour of the construction site so far as well as the duplex that the Yukon Housing Corporation is building for staff accommodation. So, I look forward to visiting the community of Burwash Landing with the MLA and seeing first-hand how progress is going. Again, the completion date that I mentioned is the most recent information I have. If there are updates to that timeline, I'll provide them to the House when we get them.

Debra-Leigh Reti: What is the next rural school replacement after Burwash Landing?

Hon. Scott Kent: There was an earlier report done maybe four, five years ago that ranked the school in Teslin as well as the school in Haines Junction as the top two rural schools. As I've mentioned a number of times, we're currently refining that list, and then we'll integrate it with the Whitehorse rankings that the previous government did to give an overall snapshot of what schools are being replaced.

Of course, we know École Whitehorse Elementary School is next in line for that, and there is money in the main budget for 2026-27 to begin work on the replacement of the school in Teslin. On that same trip that I'm making with the MLA for Kluane, we will also be stopping in Haines Junction and visiting the St. Elias Community School and talking to the community there about some of their concerns with that facility.

I should also provide an update to the House from the project advisory committee for the school in Teslin. We've received the nominations from the Teslin Tlingit Council to sit on that committee as well as the Village of Teslin. We will appoint a staff member from the school as well as someone from school council and have somebody from Education and Highways and Public Works participate in that work, as well, and look to determine a suitable site location and what that school will look like. So, we're anxious to get to that work. That work will be underway soon and that money is appropriated in the budget that we voted on in the spring.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you for that information from the minister. Is the government looking at any expansions of existing schools in Whitehorse?

Hon. Scott Kent: Outside of the modulars that I spoke to the Member for Mountainview about, which are portable classrooms that would be deployed in Whitehorse cities, we're also looking at the high schools in and around Whitehorse. We will be putting modulars at Mercier as part of a short- or medium-term solution to their space requirements. We would be looking at some expansion at Saint Francis of Assisi as they're at or near capacity. I believe that the two Catholic elementary feeder schools for that school both currently have wait-lists for them as well. They're full, so we'd be looking at expansions there.

The Minister of Economy, Tourism and Culture and I attended the Porter Creek school council meeting last night, and that school is currently at 670 students. They have about a 770-student capacity, but given the growing community of Whistle Bend, as well as the potential for development at Range Point, close to Northland Trailer Park, which is in the attendance area, that school will soon be full. F.H. Collins, as well, has two modulars on-site, but I think we would like to look at a bigger expansion for that. That's something that's following up on a commitment that we made in last year's election platform.

Again, I should mention, as well, Hidden Valley Elementary School. I believe it's at about 150-percent capacity, so they're being very creative with their learning spaces there right now. We want to expedite some sort of either modular placement or expansion at that school to add additional classrooms and space for that school community.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Can the minister provide some statistics on staffing in Yukon schools? What I'm looking for is how many teachers and EAs were in the Yukon schools in September 2025, and what that number was in September 2026.

Hon. Scott Kent: We're just endeavouring to get that information. Of course, I have the deputy minister here, and there are also a number of officials back at the Department of Education who are listening in. So, hopefully, they can provide that to me, and if I get that information before we clear the Department of Education, I'll provide it to the member opposite. Otherwise, I'll follow up with a letter to the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, as well as copying members of the Official Opposition.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Thank you Madam Chair. That concludes my questions, so I just want to thank the minister and his official.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education?

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

Unanimous consent to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried

Lane Tredger: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, 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 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required.

Chair: Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$9,653,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$9,653,000 agreed to Department of Education agreed to

Clerk: Committee of the Whole has now completed consideration of all of the departmental votes of Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*, and we will now return to Schedule A.

On Schedule A

Schedule A agreed to

On clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On preamble

Preamble agreed to

On title

Title agreed to

Hon. Currie Dixon: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28* without amendment.

Patti McLeod: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that the Chair report Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28* without amendment.

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: Madam Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 203, entitled *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

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

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

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

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

Hon. Currie Dixon: I'm pleased to rise at Third Reading to speak to the fall capital budget, which is, of course, formally titled *Bill No. 203, the Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*. As members will be aware, the intent of this bill is to allow the Government of Yukon to speed up some of our processes around procurement, preparation, and tendering of projects, and the projects that were outlined in this, some \$138 million worth of appropriations, are intended to follow through on that.

I should note as well that part of the impetus or theme of this bill has been to speed up the process and to ensure that the process is done expeditiously, and I could say with confidence that the Yukon Legislative Assembly has participated in that as well, and that we have passed this \$138 million in appropriations in a fashion that I think is much faster than I even anticipated. So, I'm very pleased to see that this bill will be passing so quickly.

Passing this bill today and perhaps assenting to it later today, will allow the government to begin that work even sooner than we had anticipated. The departments that were listed in the budget that we debated over the course of the last number of days will have even more time to get to work and to get some of these projects out into the private sector to allow the intent of what this budget is aimed to do to occur.

I made some more substantive comments at Second Reading about the content of the bill, the time that went into it, and would, of course, like to thank officials in the Department of Finance for putting it all together. Following Second Reading, we've gone through each of the departments that have appropriations in this budget and been able to provide responses to opposition members and debate throughout the Committee of the Whole process, and so I'm pleased to see that's concluded as well.

With that, we're pleased to see this budget bill proceed. We're pleased to see it advance, and this means that we as ministers and we as the Yukon Government can get to work on implementing it.

Lane Tredger: I will start by thanking all the officials who have worked to get this budget to us here in the Legislative Assembly, who have answered our questions and provided information. On this side of the House — or I should say, I should speak for my party, for the Yukon NDP — we do support the idea of planning farther ahead. We think that's a good idea, and there are many projects in this budget that I think we do support and think are good projects and should happen. However, we don't agree with the overall leadership and direction set in this budget or by this government, and so as it is a confidence matter, we will be voting against this budget.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I rise today to speak to Bill No. 203, the *Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28*, and as I did state in the Second Reading, in principle, we have no objections to the decision to proceed in this manner. With such a short construction season up here, I'm sure Yukon contractors will be in favour of this approach. Project managers seeking to get work done over the summer season — they'll be happy to have more time to prepare and do the administrative legwork ahead of time. While I appreciate that not all projects are ready or in need of the extra time that this budget allows, splitting the capital budget in this way makes it very difficult to evaluate the capital budget plan in its entirety for the year, and I guess we'll have to wait until Yukoners see the full picture in the springtime.

At Second Reading, I noted the overall capital budget for this current fiscal year is quite a bit lower than previous years, and budget documents from the spring showed the capital budget being reduced even further next year, so this means less work for the private sector and less investment in the important infrastructure that is needed to grow the territory and improve the lives of Yukoners. Proving work so it can be tendered earlier is undercut by reducing the amount of work overall.

I will be voting against this bill.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I'm keen to see this matter brought to a vote.

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: Disagree.

Lane Tredger: Disagree.

Brent McDonald: Disagree.

Linda Moen: Disagree.

Carmen Gustafson: Disagree.

Justin Ziegler: Désaccord.

Debra-Leigh Reti: Disagree.

Clerk: Madam Speaker, the results are 12 yeas, seven nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried, and that Bill No. 203 has passed this House.

Motion for Third Reading of Bill No. 203 agreed to

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

Clerk: Second Reading, Bill No. 13, standing in the name of the Hon. Jen Gehmair.

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

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

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I'm pleased to rise today to speak at Second Reading of Bill No. 13, the *Labour Relations Boards Statutes Amendment Act (2026)*. This bill proposes targeted amendments to two Yukon statutes: the *Public Service Labour Relations Act* and the *Education Labour Relations Act*. The purpose of this bill is straightforward: to modernize the legislative framework governing Yukon labour relations boards and ensure that it reflects the institutions and practices in place today.

These are technical amendments with practical importance. Labour relations boards provide an independent forum where workplace disputes can be considered fairly, consistently, and according to law. Yukon's two labour boards have long relied on federal partners for adjudication and administrative support, which provides access to experienced decision-makers and specialized tribunal services. This bill does not replace that model. It makes sure that Yukon's legislation properly supports it.

Over time, federal legislation, institutions, and administrative arrangements have changed, while some provisions in Yukon's legislation have not kept pace. This has resulted in outdated references and uncertainty about authorities, governance, and administrative responsibilities.

Most recently, Canada passed legislative amendments that impact one of the federal entities that supports the Yukon labour boards. In particular, in the spring of 2026, Canada amended the *Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada Act* to expressly permit the entity to provide support services to the territorial entities, which includes the Yukon

labour boards. Corresponding amendments to the Yukon statutes are now required to formally recognize and legislate those arrangements.

The bill addresses these issues in a focused and targeted way. It preserves the service delivery model, updates the statutory framework, and clarifies how boards are supported and governed. The policy intent is continuity. The same statutory institutions continue under a more current framework.

This bill is guided by four principles. The first principle is to ensure a targeted approach. The bill is deliberately focused only on addressing governance, administration, and legislative clarity to align with the federal statutes that support the current service model, without reopening Yukon's broader labour relations model. The bill does not make changes to collective bargaining or the dispute resolution systems or alter substantive rights, such as the right to strike or access to grievance adjudication.

I want to be very clear on that point. Under the *Public Service Labour Relations Act*, collective bargaining is governed by sections 39 to 51 of the legislation. No amendments are proposed to these sections. Similarly, under the *Education Labour Relations Act*, collective bargaining is governed by parts 4 and 5 of the legislation. No amendments are proposed to those parts. The bill is designed to make targeted changes to ensure there is clear authority for how the boards are appointed, governed, supported, and operated.

The second principle is reliable and continuous service. Employees, employers, and bargaining agents need reliable access to labour relations services when disputes arise. The bill provides a clear legislative framework for the federal partners that support Yukon boards. This reduces the risk that technical gaps or outdated provisions could disrupt services or create uncertainty. The goal is simple: preserve reliable access to labour relations services while strengthening the legislation that supports them.

The third principle is independent, fair, and accessible decision-making. The bill maintains the independence and impartiality of labour relations boards and adjudicators. This clarifies the distinction between administrative support and adjudicative decision-making. Those who provide administrative support can help organize and enable a proceeding, but they do not decide on its outcome. This clarity supports public confidence and ensures that matters continue to be decided by authorized and independent decision-makers.

The fourth principle is clarity and accountability. The practical benefit of this bill is straightforward. It provides clear authorities for Yukon's existing labour relations model, clarifies who has authority to act, updates terminology, and reduces uncertainty about how the system operates. Importantly, this bill does not create a new dispute resolution system or change the substantive rights of the parties. It makes the existing system clearer, more predictable, and easier to administer.

These principles are reflected throughout the bill. The primary objective of the bill is to maintain the existing labour relations model by ensuring alignment with the federal institutions and the service arrangements that currently support the Yukon labour boards. To do so, the bill updates the statutory references and terminology so that Yukon legislation corresponds with current federal institutions and service

arrangements. It confirms the continuation of Yukon's existing Labour Relations Board and provides a clear framework for its governance. It clarifies provisions related to the board composition, panels, and presiding members to align with the current federal service model, so that parties can better understand how matters are assigned and heard. It also provides clear authority for administrative support and delegation, while maintaining a firm boundary between administrative functions and adjudicative decision-making.

The bill modernizes authorities in alignment with the federal service model, including those related to hearings, pre-hearing processes, evidence, and participation through appropriate technology. It also allows boards and authorized personnel to assist parties in resolving issues where the parties agree, while preserving the board's responsibility to decide matters that remain unresolved. The bill also updates provisions related to oaths and affirmations, legal protections, and confidentiality. These changes help ensure that those exercising statutory authority under their responsibilities can perform these duties effectively and in good faith.

Finally, the bill clarifies the use of temporary mediators, advisors, and experts, and aligns the adjudicator appointment process under the *Public Service Labour Relations Act* more closely with the approach under the *Education Labour Relations Act*. These changes are about making the system work better without disturbing the rights at the heart of it.

Updating references and confirming continuity — I will now summarize the principal areas addressed by the bill. The bill updates statutory references and terminology so that Yukon legislation corresponds more closely with the current federal labour relations framework and service arrangements. This is responsible legislative maintenance. Outdated references can create uncertainty about who is responsible for a function and whether a provision continues to operate as intended.

The bill also confirms the continuation of the existing board. It does not create replacement boards. As I noted earlier, the policy intent is continuity. The same statutory institutions continue under a clearer and more current framework. The bill adds and updates definitions that support the existing framework. Definitions help distinguish the roles of boards, statutory appointees, administrative officials, and support service providers. The bill clarifies provisions concerning board composition, panel operations, and the designation of presiding members. Labour relations matters may be heard by a panel or a designated member. The legislation should clearly explain how those decision-making structures are established and how responsibility for a decision is determined.

Clear governance provisions help ensure that matters are assigned and heard in an orderly way. They also help parties understand the authority under which a decision is made. These amendments support consistent administration and reduce the risk that a procedural question unrelated to the merits of a dispute will create uncertainty or delay. They do not alter the obligation to act fairly, impartially, and within the law.

The bill provides a clearer statutory framework for the administrative arrangements that support the boards. Boards and tribunals need practical support to manage files, coordinate hearings, arrange facilities, and carry out related administrative work. At the same time, legislation should clearly distinguish administrative assistance from adjudicative authority. The bill

confirms the authority for support services provided through federal partners and clarifies the role of the chief administrator and support personnel.

It also clarifies delegation authorities. Efficient administration may require specified powers, duties, or functions to be assigned within the governance structure, but adjudicative responsibility must remain with the person or body authorized by law to decide the matter. The amendments make that boundary clear.

Administrative support may enable and organize adjudication. It may not determine the outcome of a dispute or displace the decision-maker's responsibility to decide according to law. By clarifying authority, the bill helps officials perform their roles confidently and makes responsibility for decisions easier to identify.

The bill also modernizes procedural authorities available to the boards in alignment with the federal statutes that support the current service model. The contemporary tribunal framework must support orderly hearings, pre-hearing processes, applications, evidence, and participation through appropriate communications technology. The bill clarifies the subject matter that may be addressed through procedural regulations and confirms authority to require compliance with the act, regulations, and board decisions. It also recognizes that boards, board members, and authorized support personnel may assist parties in resolving issues during a proceeding where the parties agree. This does not take away the board's responsibility to decide any issues that remain unresolved. The primary objective is to support fair, practical, and efficient processes while preserving independent adjudication.

The bill updates and standardizes provisions concerning oaths and solemn affirmations. The two statutes currently take different approaches. Under the *Public Service Labour Relations Act*, board members are required to take an oath prescribed by regulation. Under the *Education Labour Relations Act*, the form is specified by the chair without the same supporting regulatory structure.

The bill creates a clearer and more coherent framework identifying who must take an oath or affirmation when that requirement applies to their responsibilities. The wording reinforces the duties carried out by those who exercise the statutory authority. Clear and consistent requirements support public confidence by affirming that officials must carry out their duties and functions faithfully, impartially, and to the best of their judgment, skill, and ability.

The bill modernizes legal protection for board members, statutory appointees, and other officials who perform functions under the statutes in alignment with the federal statutes that support the current service model. Independent decision-makers and those who support them must be able to perform lawful duties without the constant risk of personal liability for actions taken in good faith within their authority.

The bill also protects specified working materials, including notes, draft orders, and draft decisions, from disclosure without the consent of the person who created them. This supports the confidentiality of the deliberation process. These protections are not permission to act outside the statutes, disregard procedural fairness, or exercise authority improperly. They apply to the good faith performance of the statutory duties. And the balance is important. Officials require

appropriate protection when carrying out public functions, while parties require confidence that statutory powers remain bounded by law.

The bill clarifies authority to engage temporary mediators, advisors, and experts to assist a board in an advisory capacity when specialized support is needed. These roles support the work of the board. They do not replace the board's authority or the responsibility of an adjudicator to decide a matter independently.

The bill also amends the *Public Service Labour Relations Act* to align the adjudicator appointment process more closely with the approach under the *Education Labour Relations Act*. Under the proposed approach, the board would continue to consult the employer and the bargaining agent before appointing or reappointing an adjudicator. Consultation recognizes that both sides have a legitimate interest in the impartiality and competence of the person who may hear the dispute. It does not give either party control over the appointment or a veto. The board remains responsible for the appointment and for ensuring the adjudication process proceeds fairly and independently.

What the bill does not do: It is equally important to be clear about what this bill does not do. It does not change collective bargaining rights. It does not reduce protections for employees, employers, or bargaining agents. It does not give government authority to direct a board or adjudicator on the outcome of a matter. It does not eliminate independent adjudication or procedural fairness. It does not transfer decision-making of the board or adjudicator to an administrative support provider. The goal is an administrative modernization, not a restructuring of Yukon's labour relations system.

The practical benefits are important. A stable and well-functioning labour relations system helps ensure that disagreements are addressed through legitimate, independent, and properly supported processes.

Ensuring alignment with the federal institutions and service arrangements that currently support the Yukon labour boards is necessary to maintain and support the labour relations systems for employers, employees, and bargaining agents. All parties benefit from a labour relations system that is supported by clear, current legislation and provides access to an impartial forum.

This bill is focused and practical. It responds to a clear need for Yukon's legislation to reflect current institutions and service arrangements. It preserves what is working, updates what is outdated, and clarifies what is uncertain. Most importantly, it strengthens the foundation for a labour relations system that is reliable, independent, accessible, and accountable. The bill preserves the existing labour relations model and the substantive rights of employees, employers, and bargaining agents while providing greater clarity and certainty for everyone who relies on the system.

I look forward to hearing the views of members during this debate and to the bill's careful consideration as it proceeds through this House.

Linda Moen: I'd like to start by saying that I have spoken before about my experience working with unions and as a labour advocate. Unions play a very important role in protecting workers' rights by providing clear processes

around employment practices, workplace rights, wages, and health and safety. How important it is for Yukon public service workers. These public service workers are people who deliver essential services, maintain our highways, support our communities, and help keep the Yukon running every day. With these rights, they ensure that workplaces are fair, organized, and predictable.

Bill No. 13 is a focused and targeted piece of legislation. It maintains the existing framework, modernizes certain provisions, and aligns Yukon legislation more closely with federal legislation. It has been many years since significant changes of this nature have been made. It is important that the Yukon legislation continues to work effectively alongside federal laws and processes. Collaboration between different levels of government helps create systems that are efficient, consistent, and easier to navigate. We've also been assured that these amendments do not change or interfere with the collective bargaining process.

This week, we have spoken a great deal about the importance of consulting with the right people when legislative changes are being considered. In previous Sittings, the Yukon Party has raised concerns when government has failed to conduct meaningful consultation. The same standard should apply here. We have been assured that unions were engaged during the development of these amendments. Given the importance of these changes, we hope the government has undertaken thorough consultation and will continue to engage directly with those affected by the legislative changes in the future. I look forward to asking questions of the minister and her department officials.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I rise briefly to speak to Bill No. 13 at Second Reading.

This is largely an administrative matter but with some significant real-life implications. As I understand it, this bill brings our labour relations legislation in line with federal rules so that the federal government can continue providing administrative support to the Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board and the Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board. I am happy to hear that the Public Service Commissioner and her department were able to find a resolution to this issue and appreciate that while it may not be the most glamorous bill, it is the result of a great deal of hard work and effort by those working within the government. Thank you for those efforts, and that's it.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I appreciate the comments of other members of this House and look forward to a more fulsome debate in committee.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Motion for Second Reading of Bill No. 13 agreed to

Hon. Currie Dixon: Madam Speaker, I move that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier 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. 13, Labour Relations Boards Statutes Amendment Act (2026)

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 13, entitled *Labour Relations Boards Statutes Amendment Act (2026)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 13, Labour Relations Boards Statutes Amendment Act (2026)

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 13, entitled *Labour Relations Boards Statutes Amendment Act (2026)*.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: First, I'd just like to start by welcoming my official, Meagan Lang, Public Service Commissioner, here with me today to support debate. I will keep my remarks short, as I've covered most of the details in my Second Reading speech, and would like to open the floor up to questions from members of this House.

Linda Moen: Thank you to the Public Service Commissioner, Meagan Lang, and her staff who assisted us in briefing us on this amendment to Bill No. 13. I wish there was more meat and potatoes to it. It has been straightforward, the questions that we had asked, but I do have some questions for the minister and her department official.

As I stated numerous times before, I've been in an active labour union for the last 21 years. When I was employed by the federal public service, I played many roles in my time — starting out as a shop steward, then local president, area council president, founding member of the Yukon Indigenous Peoples Committee, and chair of the Yukon Regional Women's Committee.

I believe in the bargaining process and all the aspects that go with it — all of the members that play an important role in contributing to the bargaining process, to the collective agreement process, to all of the people who are at the negotiating table, and finally, to the members who are being affected by this and the ability to vote on a collective agreement that affects their pay, affects their benefits, and affects their working conditions.

So, when we talk about this bill to amend this act that is more in alignment with what the federal government is doing,

it makes sense. The questions that I have are general in nature. Either the minister or her official can answer.

My very first question is: Can the minister clarify the process that was followed to develop and update the legislation that we're discussing?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: The statute no longer fully reflects the current federal framework or the way that Yukon labour relations boards are administered. So, without these amendments, Yukon's legislation will continue to contain outdated references or unclear delegations and gaps in authority for administrative support. The immediate trigger was the 2024 concern that the Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada might no longer be able to support Yukon's labour relations matters because the Yukon's boards were not clearly covered by the federal legislative authority. Federal amendments enacted in March 2026 reduced the immediate continuity risk — but the review also confirmed the significant gaps — outdated references remain in Yukon legislation that must be addressed to support the continuation of the existing labour relations system.

So, with respect to the question more directly, normal legislative processes did prevail through this within Yukon Government and conversations within the stakeholders for the Public Service Commission.

Linda Moen: That leads right into my next question. Can the minister outline what unions, organizations, and stakeholders were consulted during the development of these amendments?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: Through 2024 and 2025, all stakeholders, including bargaining agents, were engaged with respect to the continued operations of Yukon's existing labour relations framework.

This was in response to a concern that the current model may be impacted without federal legislation amendments to permit continued support for Yukon boards from the Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada. In spring 2026, the federal government made those amendments, and in May of 2026, the need for corresponding amendments to the Yukon legislation was discussed at a joint consultation meeting with bargaining agents.

In July 2026, bargaining agents were informed of Yukon Government's pursuit of proposed amendments to clarify the board's establishment and authority, align Yukon legislation with current federal statutes, and reflect existing service delivery arrangements. They were provided with copies of the relevant federal legislation that would guide and align exercise, namely the *Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act* and the *Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada Act*. They were also informed that the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board and the Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada would be engaged on the draft legislation concepts to ensure consistency with the federal legislative framework and current operational practices, which occurred in July and August of 2026.

Linda Moen: I don't think the minister listed the union specifically by name. Can she provide that or the organizations and stakeholders that were consulted by name?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I did refer to the bargaining agents in my previous correspondence, but to be more specific, communication and information was shared with the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, Yukon Employees' Union, and the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

Linda Moen: Thank you for that information.

Now I'm going to ask: Can the minister confirm how the feedback from those consultations influenced the final version of this bill?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: To confirm, we did receive feedback from the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board as well as from the Administrative Support Tribunal Service of Canada, both of which were received by the Department of Justice and considered in drafting.

Linda Moen: Can the minister confirm how long this consultation process has taken?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: Throughout 2024 and 2025, all stakeholders, including bargaining agents, were engaged with respect to continued operation of the existing framework. In spring 2025, the federal government made their amendments, and then again in May 2026, we met and had a discussion on the amendments.

Linda Moen: Since I did ask questions earlier about the active bargaining process that's happening currently, can the minister explain if this has any effect on the ongoing bargaining process?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: As I did outline in my speech earlier, to be very clear, this does not have any impact on any bargaining whatsoever, and there's no parts of this act that refer to bargaining as being touched through this amendment.

Linda Moen: Thank you for that information.

And my next question is: Is the minister able to provide any letters of support from the affected unions, bargaining agents, stakeholders that she would be willing to share with me or other interested parties?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: No, we do not have any of those two available to share.

Linda Moen: I'm just having a bit of difficulty to understand — if we're going through a consultation process and the information that is provided that would influence these changes are not available to me or the public or a bargaining agent that may be affected by these, I find it a bit troublesome, and maybe the minister can explain that so I can have some clarity on that.

Hon. Jen Gehmair: Department of Justice consulted with federal boards and the federal organizations that provide administrative support to Yukon's Labour Relations Board to ensure proposed amendments are consistent with their legislative framework and current operational practices. Bargaining agents were informed that the Yukon Government was pursuing proposed amendments to clarify the board's establishment and authority and align with Yukon legislation and current federal statutes and reflect existing service delivery arrangements. Bargaining agents were provided with copies of

relevant federal legislation that would guide the amendment exercise, namely the *Federal Public Service Labour Relations Act* and the *Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada Act*. They were also informed that the Federal Public Sector Labour Relations and Employment Board and Administrative Tribunals Support Service of Canada would be engaged on the draft legislative concepts to ensure consistency with the federal legislative framework and current operational practices.

So, plenty of opportunity was put out there to engage in conversation, and either between the Department of Justice or the Public Service Commission, the opportunity to have those discussions was made available.

Linda Moen: Those are all the questions that I have at this time. I just want to again thank Public Service Commissioner Meagan Lang and her officials who were at the briefing. That gave us a good understanding of what this bill is about and what those amendments will mean. Thank you to the minister.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 13, *Labour Relations Boards Statutes Amendment Act (2026)*?

Unanimous consent to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 13 read and agreed to

Linda Moen: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 13, entitled *Labour Relations Boards Statutes Amendment Act (2026)*, read and agreed to.

Chair: The Member for Mountainview 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. 13, entitled *Labour Relations Boards Statutes Amendment Act (2026)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

**Clauses 1 to 71 agreed to
Title agreed to**

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I move that Bill No. 13 be reported without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Minister for the Public Service Commission that the Chair report Bill No. 13, entitled *Labour Relations Boards Statutes Amendment Act (2026)*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

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

Clerk: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2025-26*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Committee of the Whole recess for five minutes.

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 205, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2025-26*.

Is there any general debate?

Debra-Leigh Reti: As the Premier noted, this bill contains only two items for the Yukon Development Corporation, and the spending is 100-percent recoverable from Canada. One of the items is the Battery Energy Storage System project. In the spring, the minister informed Yukoners that the project was damaged over the last winter. The future viability of the project is still unknown. I'll have questions about the project when we get to debate on YDC. But by the end of the month, the government will be releasing the Public Accounts for the 2025-26 fiscal year.

So, my only question is: Does this spending and this supplementary budget comply with the *Financial Administration Act*, in particular, section 17?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I'll let the minister provide responses about this particular line item when we get to YDC.

Debra-Leigh Reti: That's my only question.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 205?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause 1. The bill's schedules form part of clause 1. One of the schedules is Schedule A containing the departmental votes.

Yukon Development Corporation

Chair: We will now go into Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ted Laking: There are no changes to the Yukon Development Corporation's operation and maintenance budget. The capital budget has an increase of \$949,000 related to the Arctic energy fund and Investing in Canada infrastructure plan. These programs are 100-percent recoverable from the Government of Canada. As such, changes in the budget result in corresponding changes in the recoveries from Canada. In 2025-26, these programs were supporting the Sâde Watson Lake solar initiative, Kluane N'tsi wind energy project, and the Yukon grid-scale Battery Energy Storage System.

This adjustment is administrative and compliance-driven. As projects progressed, expenditures and claims occurred in a different fiscal year pattern than originally forecast. Legislative spending authorities therefore needed to be aligned within the fiscal years in which those expenditures and recoveries occurred. Management Board provided interim spending authorities so that project claims could be processed while maintaining compliance with legislative authorities. These supplementary appropriations complete that process. These expenditures remain fully recoverable under existing federal agreements and do not create a net financial impact for the Government of Yukon. So, with that, I welcome questions.

Lane Tredger: I want to start by just understanding the process a little bit more, because I'm more used to seeing supplementary budgets come in the spring. And my understanding is that this spending would have had to happen before, I guess, April 1, 2026 in order to be considered part of this budget.

So, could the minister give a little more detail about when exactly this money was spent and why it didn't come in the Spring Sitting for approval and waited until the fall?

Hon. Ted Laking: We became aware of it later in the year than we would have liked, and the spending did not occur until the summer when Management Board gave authority for it.

Lane Tredger: So, I'm just a bit confused. If the spending happened in summer 2026, why is this being funded from the 2025-26 budget?

Hon. Ted Laking: The spending by the Yukon Government occurred this summer. The spending by the proponent occurred in the year in question.

Lane Tredger: It sounds like it's unusual, I guess, to have that sort of disconnect in the knowledge of when the money was being spent, that it didn't get approval until the summer, but the contractor had spent it or the proponent had spent it already in the previous year. Can the minister talk about if something broke down there or if there have been changes made or if that is a typical thing that might happen again?

Hon. Ted Laking: So, we work closely with the proponents on our projects.

It's just, this one — we became aware of it in our reconciliation and work with them that this spending had occurred in the previous fiscal year, and so this is just to align the spending authorities properly. The project is still within the same budget and the same timeline. It's just that the spending occurred in a different fiscal year.

Lane Tredger: So, I guess I'm trying to understand — I understand that it doesn't change the total amount of money spent, but I would assume that it's not typical that the department doesn't know that money has been spent until after the fiscal year it happened in.

Has anything been done to make sure that doesn't happen again? Is that considered a problem? Is that considered typical? Are there any new protocols in place? I'm just hoping the minister can talk about what they have learned from this experience and if they're going to do something differently going forward.

Hon. Ted Laking: There are two parts to that. First, these projects or these funds are wrapping up. Once these projects are done, we'll be done with these funds. But more directly to the point of the member opposite's question, I think that this was certainly a learning experience for the Yukon Development Corporation, and we certainly have identified that we need to stay in closer contact and have better communication with proponents so that we can be more on top of these things in the future.

Lane Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. So, I do actually want to ask more about what he said about the funds wrapping up, but first, I want to ask about this \$1,000 allocation for the Investing in Canada infrastructure program. My understanding is that's for the battery project, and I had thought that project was quite delayed. So, I've also never seen an allocation of just \$1,000 before. So, I'm wondering if the

minister can explain why that extra \$1,000 was necessary, particularly given that my understanding is that the project is quite delayed.

Hon. Ted Laking: That specific line item was to fix a rounding error.

Lane Tredger: Thank you to the minister. So, then, I guess I'll go on asking about the Arctic energy fund, which has funded a lot of projects over the years, and the minister said that it's ending. I wonder if you could tell me a little bit more about that fund. I guess what I'm trying to understand is — because I believe the federal government still has the Arctic energy fund, but I'm not sure what projects can be submitted to it.

Is it that there's no longer money available for the Yukon? Is it that we haven't submitted for additional projects? Is it that it's continuing, but the Yukon didn't succeed in getting any of the funding, or is the fund wrapping up altogether?

Hon. Ted Laking: The Arctic energy fund is no longer accepting project submissions, but we are keeping our ear to the ground for any other funding opportunities that come forward from the federal government.

Lane Tredger: My understanding is that the Arctic energy fund just announced yesterday that there was a fairly large contribution for the Northwest Territories — I think \$31 million through the Arctic energy fund. Is that its final funding through that program? Can you explain a little bit more about the structure of that federal program and how we have or haven't been able to access it?

Hon. Ted Laking: With respect to the specifics of the Northwest Territories program or project that the member opposite references, I don't have the details on that, so they would have to seek that information from the federal government. The information that I have is that the Arctic energy fund is no longer taking project submissions. But as I stated, as new funding becomes available or new programs are announced that we become aware of, we will certainly be looking at opportunities to apply for those.

Lane Tredger: And then, is there any funding left in the budget for the — I guess now that the money has been moved to the 2025-26 year, the money that was for the Watson Lake solar project, Sâde — is there any money left to be spent in 2027 from the Arctic energy fund on that project?

Hon. Ted Laking: With respect to the future years that are beyond the supplementaries that we're talking about, I'll return to the member opposite once we've had the opportunity to pull up that information. But I do not have that immediately available. But in the interest of allowing the debate to continue, I'll let the member opposite ask a question while we search for that information.

Lane Tredger: I think I may have phrased my question a little bit confusingly. I guess I'm wondering: In the current year that we're in, is there still money flowing to the Watson Lake solar project, or did it complete with the funding in 2025-26?

Hon. Ted Laking: Thanks to the member opposite for the clarifying information around the question. In the main

estimates that were voted on in the spring, there is \$3.4 million for the Arctic energy fund, and we're just working on getting the breakdown of that. But, of course, we're talking about the 2025-26 supplementaries and not the main estimates from the spring.

Lane Tredger: I can ask more in the first supplementary as well. He mentioned that this funding has also gone to the Kluane wind project. I wonder if there are completion dates or expected completion dates for both the Sāde Watson Lake solar and the Kluane N'tsi wind energy project.

Hon. Ted Laking: For the Sāde project, we understand that the proponent is expecting completion by 2027. I'm not aware of the expected substantial or final completion date of the Kluane wind project, but we do understand that it is partially or at least partially in operation right now. But, of course, that wind project is not part of this supplementary estimate.

Lane Tredger: Could the member just clarify about the Kluane wind project? Because I hadn't understood it to be part of this funding, but then I thought he mentioned it in his opening remarks. Maybe I misheard. Could he just clarify if it's part of this funding or where their funding is in this budget?

Hon. Ted Laking: In 2025-26, there was funding that went toward the project. That's what I referenced in my opening remarks. However, the money that's in this supplementary and the adjustments in the supplementaries are directly associated only with the Sāde project.

Lane Tredger: That clarifies that for me. So, I want to turn to the battery project for a minute. So, I had thought that it was quite delayed, but it sounds like, with the exception of the rounding error, the money was spent as planned in the 2025-26 year. Does that mean that the delays didn't actually happen until the current fiscal year?

Hon. Ted Laking: Apologies for the delay in response. Obviously, this project has a long and storied history, so we just wanted to go back and check the history of the delays. I would have to return to the member opposite with the full timeline there, but certainly in our brief research, we noted that in 2025, the project was already starting to experience delays. It may have already started experiencing them prior to that.

Lane Tredger: Can the minister talk about: If the project already had delays, why was the full amount of money allocated for the year spent? Was that due to cost overruns and then the money had to be reallocated to different parts of the project?

Hon. Ted Laking: As the projects progress, there have been certain deliverables.

You hold back some of it until substantial completion, but work has obviously been occurring on-site for many years now. As various stages progress, then there are payouts associated with it.

Lane Tredger: That makes sense to me that as something gets finished, you have to pay it out.

I'm just confused about if the things haven't been finished yet, which some of the things haven't been finished on time, why the payouts have already happened?

Hon. Ted Laking: Nothing has been paid for that has not completed yet.

Yukon Energy does hold the money back for their project management purposes, but at this point in time, the only things that have actually been paid to the contractor are things that have been completed.

Lane Tredger: I guess I'm trying to understand where that money is, then.

So, if there's deliverables that haven't been completed yet and they haven't been paid out because they're not completed, where did the money go that was allocated last year for those deliverables?

Hon. Ted Laking: Yukon Energy has that.

Lane Tredger: I suspect this is a question with a really complicated answer due to the structure of YEC. But I guess I'm just thinking about how with the Watson Lake solar project when money got paid sort of retroactively, we had to come back with another supplementary. But Yukon Energy seems to be able to have that money and just keep it for future payments. Is that a difference because they're a Crown corporation, or how does that work? Or I guess they're not exactly a Crown corporation because of their structure. Or is that why that's a difference?

Hon. Ted Laking: I'll return to the member opposite in writing.

Lane Tredger: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the minister. I look forward to that.

I believe the minister had shared in this House that one of the challenges with the battery delays was that there were some errors made that were quite costly and that Yukon Energy was working on whether they could recoup those costs from the proponent or the contractor. I may have not worded that exactly correctly, but I think that's what's been said.

Did any of that happen? And I'm wondering: If that money got recouped or were to get recouped in the future, where would that show up in the budget? Would that look like a decrease in a supplementary budget, or how would that work, especially if it was for a previous year?

Hon. Ted Laking: Of course, we're talking about the 2025-26 supplementary estimate, and the member is talking about the potential of commissioning the battery, so I don't think that is necessarily properly addressed here in the 2025-26 supplementary estimate.

Debra-Leigh Reti: I'm just going to ask the question that the Minister of Finance had referred me to: Does this spending in the supplementary budget comply with the *Financial Administration Act*, in particular, section 17?

Hon. Ted Laking: Yes, and seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Patti McLeod: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 13, entitled *Labour Relations Boards Statutes Amendment Act (2026)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 205, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2025-26*, 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.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of Yukon, in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to bills which have passed this House.

Commissioner Webber enters the Chamber accompanied by her Aide-de-Camp

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Speaker: Madam Commissioner, the Assembly has, at its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the Assembly, I respectfully request your assent.

Clerk: *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026), Judicial Remuneration and Administration Amendments Act (2026), Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2026, and Interim Capital Appropriation Act 2027-28.*

Commissioner: I hereby assent to the bills as enumerated by the Clerk.

I hope everyone had a lovely weekend with family and friends, and I hope you're not still eating turkey.

Anyway, I hope you have a good session, and I'll see you next time.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

The following legislative return was tabled today:

LR 36-1-42

Response to a matter outstanding from discussion with Justin Ziegler related to general debate on Bill No. 7, *Finance Statute Law Amendment Act (2026)* — Business Investment Tax Credit (Jen Gehmair)