

Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 47	1st Session	36th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, October 21, 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
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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, October 21, 2026

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Speaker's statement — Charging another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood

Speaker: Before we proceed to the Daily Routine, I would like to make a short statement about a procedural matter.

I have heard recent comments on honesty in this House, and I would like to remind all members that Standing Order 19(h) prohibits charging another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood. As noted in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, "remarks which question a member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order." All members are assumed to be honourable and should be treated accordingly.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: It is my pleasure to introduce two individuals who are no strangers to this House: Ted Staffen, former Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and Doug Phillips, former Commissioner of Yukon. Both are former Members for Riverdale North. Please join me in welcoming them back to the House.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any other visitors to be introduced?

Visitors introduced

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Statement — Yukon business mission

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I rise today to recognize the inaugural Yukon business mission taking place in Ottawa this week. This delegation brings together Yukon business leaders from Alkan Air, Chu Níikwän Development Corporation, Ketza Construction, NVD, Pelly Construction, Small's Expediting, Total North, and Building Systems Consulting. Together, they are showcasing the expertise, capacity, and innovation of Yukon businesses while promoting opportunities for our territory. As Canada advances nation-building projects and strategic investments, this mission highlights Yukon's businesses as proven delivery partners and demonstrates the value of northern expertise. By working together around shared priorities, this delegation is helping ensure Yukon businesses and the interests of Yukoners are represented with a strong and united voice.

I am pleased to support the mission and commend the members of the delegation for their leadership, collaboration, and commitment to advancing Yukon interests. I wish them every success in their discussions.

Statement — Whitehorse hardcourt bike polo

Carmen Gustafson: Today, I want to highlight something that happens a few times a week in my riding of Riverdale North. Many people may not be aware that an otherwise quiet park on Liard Road is home to Whitehorse hardcourt bike polo, a sport with a growing following in the Yukon. Bike polo is an inclusive, community-focused sport that attracts dozens of players to the Liard rink each week — teams of three players on bicycles of all shapes and sizes, who have a mallet in one hand to handle a ball and try to score on the opposing team's net, all without putting a foot down to steady themselves. There is cheering; there is camaraderie; there are crashes; there are costumes; and sometimes there are snacks.

Whitehorse hardcourt bike polo hosts tournaments catered to developing local talent and late each summer invites outside players to the barrel sider, a weekend-long tournament and celebration. Thanks to Whitehorse hardcourt bike polo for bringing your passion and energy to Riverdale North.

Statement — Association of Yukon Communities

Patti McLeod: Today, I'd like to acknowledge the good works that the Association of Yukon Communities does. In looking at the resolutions adopted by AYC, we can see an ambitious agenda. The noted areas of concern are things that can affect all Yukoners, things like modernizing Yukon's property assessment framework to promote equity and transparency and review of rural infrastructure and land development project delivery. There's much more listed on their website, and I encourage people to visit them.

One of the things I most appreciate is that the annual general meetings are held around the territory in communities that can host. This is a boost to the economic health of our communities, and I thank them for that. Having a unified voice when pursuing community issues is a positive way to move our concerns forward. Not only is the work done on a territorial level, but those issues can be moved forward on a national level through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and I thank them for their advocacy.

Statement — Small Business Week

Justin Ziegler: I rise to celebrate Small Business Week and the importance of supporting our local entrepreneurs. Last week, the Premier told this House his caucus had not used AI in years. Yet on Monday, the Yukon Party caucus celebrated small business with an AI-generated image of a coffee shop.

This morning before 9:00 a.m., I visited Baked Cafe, Midnight Sun Coffee Roasters, Cerberus Cafe, and Riverside Grocery. At each one, someone was already at work ready to welcome me with a smile and a good cup of coffee. I bought four drinks and took four photos, real photos of real people in real Yukon businesses. Photographers, graphic designers, and illustrators are small business owners too. They are among the first to lose work when a government chooses a generated AI image over a real one.

I'm looking forward to attending Yukoner Appreciation Week and visiting as many real local businesses as I can over the weekend and taking lots of photos.

Statement — World Polio Day

Doris Anderson: October 24 is recognized as World Polio Day, an opportunity to raise awareness of the global effort to eradicate polio. Polio is a highly infectious disease that can cause paralysis and, in some cases, death. While there is no cure, it can be prevented through vaccination.

Today, I would like to recognize Ramesh Ferris, a Yukoner, a polio survivor, and dedicated advocate for global polio eradication. Through his work with Rotary International, Ramesh has raised awareness of the tremendous progress made toward ending polio and the work that remains. His efforts have included a 7,140-kilometre hand-cycled journey across Canada to raise awareness and funds for eradication efforts. Ramesh, thank you —

Speaker: Order.

Are there any documents for tabling?

Are there any committee reports to be presented?

Are there any petitions?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Question — Electricity rates

Kate White: Yesterday while in Ottawa, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources told a House of Commons committee that Yukoners could face an additional 53-percent electricity rate increase if the federal government does not fund the territory's energy projects. He said that would cost the average household approximately $2,100 more a year on top of the rate increases Yukoners have already absorbed. That is a serious warning from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. Yet it was delivered to a committee in Ottawa before it was presented to Yukoners, discussed in this Assembly, or raised during briefings with opposition MLAs.

Why did Yukoners have to learn from a committee hearing in Ottawa that their electricity rates could go up by an additional 53 percent?

Hon. Ted Laking: The member opposite is correct. I did deliver those messages to a federal committee yesterday afternoon.

Where the member opposite is incorrect, though, is that last week I was in this House and I highlighted the significant infrastructure costs that are being faced by Yukoners. What the member opposite also left out of their comments was that, after I highlighted that we needed federal investment in that, they rolled out their critic for Energy, Mines and Resources to the media to say Ottawa shouldn't pay for it and Yukoners should. We disagree because we do not want to see rates go up in the Yukon.

Kate White: Yukoners are already struggling to pay the nearly 30-percent increase we've seen in less than two years, and in January, we faced an additional five-percent increase. Yesterday, the minister warned that rates could rise by another 53 percent. The minister said that this is based on the more than a billion dollars of infrastructure needs. What he did not provide was the calculation behind the 53-percent increase or any timeline for when it could affect Yukoners' bills. Even a staggered increase of this size would be devastating for Yukon families and businesses and drive up the already high prices across the territory. Yukoners deserve answers, not just an alarming headline delivered in Ottawa.

Will the minister explain how the 53-percent increase was calculated and the anticipated rollout for those increases if Ottawa doesn't come to the rescue?

Hon. Ted Laking: The way that this was calculated is that the department and the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation took the calculation of what the expected cost is of these infrastructure costs and calculated what that would look like if it were applied to rates.

We're trying to avoid that. That's why we have been spending the last year engaging with the federal government, seeking federal partnership, and explaining to them that this is not an acceptable path forward to expect Yukoners, just 24,000 ratepayers, to pay for these costs. Many of these projects are nation-building projects that support national goals. We believe that the federal government needs to be a part of this. We would hope that the Opposition also supports that.

Kate White: I thank the minister for the calculation, but I'm still interested in what that rollout could look like.

Yukoners elected the Yukon Party to take responsibility for Yukon's electricity system. Federal partnership is critical, but hoping that Ottawa pays 75 percent of the bill cannot be Yukoners' only hope. If that funding does not arrive, the minister's only alternative cannot be massive increases for Yukoners.

During the election, the Yukon Party promised to cut electricity rates. The Yukon Party has not delivered, and now the minister is warning that bills could rise by an additional 53 percent. Yukoners need to know what this government will do and not only what it wants Ottawa to do.

If the federal government does not agree to the minister's funding request, what is this government's plan to prevent a 53-percent increase from hitting Yukoners?

Hon. Ted Laking: I actually encourage the member opposite to pay a bit closer attention to these debates over the last several Sittings. We have highlighted that there are significant energy costs that are associated with poor planning over the last decade by the former government that was supported by the NDP. What you need to do is you need to plan for these things properly and invest in these issues so that you do not end up in emergency situations where you have significant investments required to stabilize the Mayo dam.

What we're working on is to get federal partnership to cover those costs and to help support us so that we do not have to put all of this on ratepayers. We have indicated both in this House last week and again yesterday to a federal committee that if we do not address this, we would have to start making considerations such as how we limit growth in the territory.

Question — Whitehorse Emergency Shelter

Lane Tredger: This week is Poverty and Homelessness Accountability Week. It's a week to focus on understanding the experiences of Yukoners affected by these issues.

In this House, we often talk about the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and the people who depend on it. But when this Minister

of Health and Social Services talks about the shelter, he almost always seems to focus on criminals and the need for more policing. It makes you wonder if he's met any of the shelter's residents, if he's heard them tell their stories, or has taken the time to understand the complex issues that have trapped them in homelessness. He's been asked in this House before if he's visited the emergency shelter since becoming minister, but he has chosen not to answer. I'll ask again today. Has the Minister of Health and Social Services visited the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter since he was made responsible for it almost a year ago?

Hon. Brad Cathers: Again, we see a mischaracterization by the NDP of my comments regarding the shelter at 405.

We have recognized the role that it plays in supporting vulnerable Yukoners, and we have continued to support its operations. But again, the NDP seems not to acknowledge the concerns that we hear from residents of the area, from businesses in the area about activity that is around the shelter and in some cases in the shelter, including drug dealers who are preying on vulnerable people. That is what I have referred to in the past.

Again, as noted publicly, at the request of Yukon First Nations who attended the leadership summit and the 405 Alexander Advisory Committee, we did agree to extend the contract of the current operator till the end of the fiscal year. But we are also working right now on the development of an expression of interest to determine who will operate the various components of the shelter, including the emergency shelter part, the housing part, and food services.

Lane Tredger: I have to assume from that answer that the minister still hasn't visited the emergency shelter. But unlike him, I have.

One thing I heard about was that the lack of communication from this government about the future of the shelter was adding enormous stress and uncertainty to the daily operations. Over the summer, shelter residents and their families waited anxiously for news until days before the shelter's contract was set to expire. No one is at their best when they're stressed and worried about the future. People accessing the shelter are already in crisis, and adding more uncertainty escalates tensions and makes it even harder for staff to run a calm and safe program.

The Yukon Party have now extended the shelter contract until March 2027, so they have time to communicate clearly and give people a chance to prepare. But March is only five months away.

When will the Yukon Party publicly announce their plan for changes to the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter?

Hon. Brad Cathers: We look forward to sharing more information. However, we also have to recognize the fact that there were commitments made around involving the 405 Alexander Advisory Committee and requests that we've received from First Nation leadership. As well, this has been a subject of discussion at the Yukon Forum. Again, there are some parts of this that we need to share information with other governments as well as with the 405 Alexander Advisory Committee before we make announcements about it.

But as we touched on in the release that was issued earlier this summer, we are actively considering options related to the shelter, including the possibility of shelter operations occurring at another location or locations. But those discussions will involve the 405 Alexander Advisory Committee as well as First Nation leadership before we're in a position to announce the specifics of it.

However, as I have noted, we're proceeding with the development of an expression of interest process for the emergency shelter to identify a fair, transparent, and competitive approach to identifying the best service provider or providers. This will allow us to consider service delivery models to support the need for safe, effective, and responsive shelter, housing, and food services for Yukoners in need, whether they are at that location or somewhere else —

Speaker: Order.

Lane Tredger: The emergency shelter is the last line of defence when people have exhausted all of their options to find a home. Unfortunately, this problem is only set to get worse.

On Monday, during debate on the Yukon Party's proposal to allow unlimited rent increases, the Minister of Community Services was asked what would happen to people who couldn't afford a large rent increase. She said that Yukoners could access a range of housing supports, including — quote: "emergency shelter services".

It is shocking that the Yukon Party is suggesting the emergency shelter as a solution to unaffordable rent. Allowing people to be priced out of their homes and then sending them to the emergency shelter is not only heartless; it's incredibly expensive and ineffective. But since it's what she said the Yukon Party is planning for, one would hope that they're taking it seriously.

What additional capacity is being added to the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter to support people who won't be able to afford rent increases?

Hon. Brad Cathers: Again, as I noted earlier, at the request of the 405 Alexander Advisory Committee and First Nation leadership who attended the leadership summit this summer, we agreed to extend the contract of the current operator for the shelter until the end of the fiscal year. In the time period between now and then, this will allow us to develop an expression of interest process for the emergency shelter and its individual components, including housing, the emergency shelter, and food services, to go out to a competitive, fair, and transparent process to identify the best service provider or providers.

As I noted, we are also considering the possibility that it may include an alternative location or locations for some shelter services.

Question — Mining industry guidelines

Carmen Gustafson: The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has committed the government to implementing all recommendations made by the independent review board.

Among the most significant recommendations in the report is an update to the guidelines for mine waste management facilities. In a September 2025 CBC article, the then-Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said that over half of the IRB recommendations could be met through revisions to the guidelines and that Yukon Government was getting to work on it. The September 2026 IRB recommendations update reports that a panel has been established. As there are heap leach mines

currently in assessment and permitting processes, the completion of the guidelines is time-sensitive.

Could the minister provide this House with an overview of the work plan and timeline for the update to the guidelines?

Hon. Ted Laking: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the member opposite's continued interest in the independent review board and the government's success in implementing all of the recommendations.

The IRB report included 56 recommendations, and of these recommendations, 52 are already implemented, and the remainder are expected to be implemented by spring 2027.

Carmen Gustafson: The mine waste facility guidelines were originally developed as a collaborative effort among industry, First Nations, government, and regulators. Rebuilding trust in the mining industry and heap leach mining in particular will require transparency and the inclusion of many voices and views impacted by mining.

I appreciate that a panel has been created to do the work to review and propose updates to the guidelines. The panel's work will be very important to ensuring future mines are built and operated to the highest possible standards to reduce their impact on the Yukon.

Could the minister provide details about the panel that is doing this work on behalf of Yukoners, such as the names and expertise of the members of the panel?

Hon. Ted Laking: I do not have that information with me today, but I'm happy to provide that to the member opposite.

Carmen Gustafson: Yukoners know that the work to update the guidelines will take some time and will take several steps to complete, from establishing terms of reference to final approval of new guidelines. As we saw from the heap leach facility failure at Eagle mine, it's imperative that we get these guidelines right.

Consultation is a critical step in the revision of the guidelines that requires planning and resources devoted to ensuring all voices are heard and changes are made that reflect the input received. In addition to consulting Yukon First Nations, this should also include environmental groups, experts, Yukoners and communities impacted by mining, industry, and others.

Could the minister please share what consultation has occurred and what the consultation plan is going forward?

Hon. Ted Laking: Obviously, these recommendations come out of an independent review board, which was made up of experts, and the member opposite is referring to the third-party group of experts that will be working on updating the guidelines when it comes to the membership of it and the expertise of those on it. I've committed to get back to the member opposite with that, and I'll also commit to get back to the member opposite with the work plan moving forward.

Question — Rural land development strategy

Tyler Porter: As we welcome the Association of Yukon Communities to the Chamber today, I'd like to highlight an issue that continues to affect the growth and future of our rural communities, and that is access to land for housing and development. We know that without available land and the necessary infrastructure, it becomes difficult for families to build homes, businesses to expand, and communities to attract and retain residents. In its 2022-23 policy position paper on housing availability and affordability, AYC identified a chronic shortage of land and housing in Yukon, noting that this persistent shortage creates challenges for communities both economically and socially. These concerns highlight the importance of making sure our rural communities have opportunities to grow and plan for the future.

Can the Minister of Community Services share what the government is doing to address these challenges and help unlock more opportunities for rural land development?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: For years, I've heard from communities about the challenges they face because of Yukon's chronic land and housing shortages. These concerns have been echoed by municipalities, Yukon First Nations, employers, and community organizations across the territory. When there isn't enough serviced land available, it becomes harder to build homes, attract workers, support local business, and keep young families in our communities.

That is why, during the election, we committed to developing a rural land development strategy to help unlock more land for housing and economic development in communities across the Yukon. We're working with community and business partners to identify where land shortages, servicing limitations, and infrastructure gaps are constraining growth, and what actions are needed to address all these challenges. This work will help identify future residential, commercial, and industrial land opportunities and ensure investments are directed where they are needed most.

Tyler Porter: Developing a long-term strategy for rural land development is an important step forward. At the same time, we know that communities are facing these challenges today, and we need to continue making progress while this work is underway. When land and housing opportunities are limited, it becomes harder for families to settle in our communities, for employers to attract workers, and for local businesses to plan ahead. There's an opportunity to build on the work already happening across the territory, particularly when it comes to making more land available and investing in the infrastructure needed to support development.

Can the minister highlight some of the work the government is currently undertaking to increase land and housing opportunities and support growth in rural Yukon?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: While we work with our partners on the rural land development strategy, communities are already seeing action. We've released 43 residential lots in the Dhäl Gähy Mountain Ridge subdivision in Haines Junction, creating new opportunities for families to build homes and supporting future community growth. We've released 10 over-the-counter lots for purchase in Haines Junction, Mayo, Carmacks, and Whitehorse, and we've also provided certainty on some community infrastructure projects through the 2027-28 fall capital estimates, including $10.5 million for community housing projects in Haines Junction, Mayo, and Teslin, $4.5 million for Haines Junction Infrastructure Upgrades – Phase 4B, $4 million for the Mount Lorne water

treatment plant, and $4 million for the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation public works building.

We recognize that strong communities are the foundation of a strong economy, which is why we are working across government to support community development and sustainable growth throughout the Yukon.

Tyler Porter: As we recognize Small Business Week, I think it's important to acknowledge the role that small businesses play in keeping our rural communities strong.

When we talk about rural land development, the conversation often focuses on housing. While that is certainly important, we also need to consider opportunities for businesses, local employment, and future economic growth. Whether it's a local contractor looking to expand, someone wanting to start a new business, or a community looking to attract investment, having access to suitable land and infrastructure can make a significant difference. There are opportunities across rural Yukon to support different types of development, including commercial, industrial, and agricultural uses.

Can the minister explain how the government's approach to rural land development is helping identify and advance these opportunities while supporting local businesses and strengthening rural communities?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: Rural growth depends on available land, housing, and investment opportunities. That is why we're advancing industrial and agricultural development across rural Yukon. In Dawson City, planning is underway for 15 to 20 unserviced industrial lots in Callison east. In Faro, detailed design is underway for up to 17 lots in the Mitchell Industrial subdivision. In Mayo, lands and soil data within the Silver Trail are being assessed to identify opportunities to expand and diversify agricultural land offerings. Additional work is underway in Mount Lorne, Haines Junction, and Dawson for increased agricultural purposes.

We're also investing in workforce housing with the 2027–28 fall capital estimates, allocating $2.2 million for staff housing in Burwash and Ross River. Together, these investments in land, infrastructure, and workforce housing are helping rural communities attract people, support local businesses, and build for the future.

Question — *George Black* ferry in Dawson

Brent McDonald: The *George Black* ferry's last run of the season this year occurred on October 14th, one of the earliest dates ever. The ferry has previously operated as late as November 11th. This year, Highways and Public Works said conditions could end service before October 14th but did not offer an extension of service if conditions were favourable, which has been done in the past. Residents understand that the ferry cannot operate when conditions become unsafe. What is not clear is the reason for having a fixed removal date.

Why has a fixed date been chosen to end ferry service when operating conditions remain favourable for continued operation?

Hon. Linda Benoit: The *George Black* ferry is important to us. It's an important transportation link for Dawson City residents and businesses, and we're certainly aware of that. The ferry gets chosen on a set date because there are staff involved that are seasonal. There are also businesses and contractors involved in removing the ferry from the river. The date is chosen within two weeks, generally, of when the ferry is going to come out.

It also takes temperature into account. Although the river may look favourable, if temperatures start dropping below zero, important life safety infrastructure doesn't work, including potentially fire extinguishers, inflatable life safety devices, and that kind of thing.

Brent McDonald: When the ferry stops running for the season, emergency services also stop for West Dawson and Sunnydale residents until an ice road is established. Westside residents have always stepped in to help their neighbours when emergency services are unavailable. Local knowledge and volunteers are an important part of emergency preparedness. The new West Side Association has prioritized organizing emergency response during freeze-up and break-up periods. Residents need to know that the government has a current emergency response plan and will communicate it.

Does the government have an emergency response plan specific to West Dawson and Sunnydale, and if so, how will this plan be communicated to residents?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: We do agree that emergency response plans for communities are incredibly important in all areas of the territory, including areas such as West Dawson, which have some restrictions on travel at certain times of the year, for sure. I understand that the new West Side Association has come together to talk about how to help look after their own community, and that's really great. We enjoy working with partners. We like to have partners in all things that we do regarding emergency response because they are the knowledge holders of the community in which they live.

The Department of Community Services does have emergency planners, and would be happy to talk with the West Dawson folks about what the plan is for emergency response.

Brent McDonald: Dawson residents have been canvassed for years about a future Yukon River crossing. The previous government awarded a 12-month ferry replacement planning study and said work on a new ferry could begin in 2027, with service potentially starting as early as 2029. That study should now be complete. The current government has not said whether it will continue with that plan or perhaps take a different approach.

Is this government committed to the ferry replacement plan? Will they release the replacement study, and are they still committed to a 2029 timeline?

Hon. Linda Benoit: The member opposite is correct. We have completed some study work on replacing the ferry as it is reaching the end of its service life. Our current planning is considering a larger ferry that would provide more capacity than the existing vessel. This would better accommodate larger vehicles and help meet future demand.

Of the $250,000 budgeted this fiscal year, approximately $120,000 will support planning work, with the remainder allocated to geotechnical studies to inform detailed design and construction. I'm happy to check with my department to see what information I can release to the member opposite.

Question — Land development

Adam Gerle: As we mark Small Business Week, Yukon businesses continue to tell us that access to land remains one of the biggest barriers to growth, investment, and job creation. Businesses looking to expand need industrial land. Producers looking to increase local food production need agricultural land. Employers across the territory need more housing so they can attract and retain the workers required to fill jobs and grow their operations. Without an adequate supply of serviced and developed land, it becomes more difficult for businesses to invest, communities to grow, and Yukon families to find housing.

Recognizing the important link between land development, housing availability, workforce growth, and economic development, can the Minister of Community Services tell this House what the government is doing to support economic growth and help Yukon businesses succeed —

Speaker: Order.

Hon. Cory Bellmore: Access to land is critical to economic growth, business expansion, and job creation. That's why our government is advancing new land development opportunities in and around Whitehorse, including industrial and agricultural land opportunities, future development areas such as the Ice Lake Road South, additional developable lands on the Whitehorse periphery, facility work on Yukon Government-owned sites identified through the City of Whitehorse infill initiative, and new opportunities for country residential development.

At the same time, we're increasing the supply of residential land. Whistle Bend phases 12 and 13 will provide 10 multifamily and commercial lots, supporting about 400 housing units. Our partnership with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation on the Chasàn Tatäy development will create seventy lots and support more than 400 additional housing units. These initiatives will increase housing supply and help ensure Yukon employers have access to the workforce needed to support continued economic growth. They will also create opportunities for private sector investment and provide for the land base necessary for businesses to expand, create jobs, and strengthen the Yukon economy.

Adam Gerle: Making land available is only part of the solution. If we want to see more homes built and more economic activity, we need to ensure land gets into the hands of those who are ready and able to develop it. For years, builders and industry organizations have raised concerns that the lot lottery system was not always aligned with the goal of increasing housing supply as quickly as possible. We know that when builders can access land more predictably, projects can move forward sooner, more homes can be built, and employers have a better chance of attracting and retaining the workers they need.

Can the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources explain how changes to Yukon's land allocation programs will help builders get projects underway faster and increase housing supply for Yukoners?

Hon. Ted Laking: Our focus is on ensuring that public land programs support the broader goal of getting more homes built for Yukoners. That's why we've launched a pilot project for a residential builder's lottery. This pilot is helping us test new approaches that provide builders with more direct access to land and create greater certainty for those prepared to begin construction. Through the pilot, seven lots were sold directly to builders, and we're preparing an additional builder's lottery to build on those results.

By connecting development-ready lots with development-ready builders, we can help reduce delays between land development and construction and bring new housing to market sooner. This approach supports our broader efforts to increase housing supply, improve affordability, and ensure employers have access to the workforce needed to grow their businesses. We'll continue to work with industry and our partners to modernize land allocation programs and ensure they support the efficient development of homes for Yukoners.

Adam Gerle: Yukon businesses want to invest, builders want to build, and families want more housing options. But all of that depends on keeping construction costs under control. Industry raised concerns that implementing the 2025 National Building Code too quickly could increase costs, create uncertainty, and slow down projects at a time when we need more housing and commercial development, not less. The government recently delayed implementation of the new code until June 2027.

Can the Minister of Community Services explain how that decision will support housing construction, business investment, and economic growth in the Yukon?

Hon. Cory Bellmore: Our government made the decision to delay the implementation of the 2025 National Building Code because we heard clearly from industry that more time was needed to prepare for these significant changes. We also heard concerns that some of the new requirements could increase construction costs and create additional challenges for housing and commercial projects. At a time when Yukoners need more homes, and businesses are looking to invest and grow, our priority is to remove barriers to development, not create new ones.

The Yukon has unique northern conditions, and what works in larger urban centres across Canada does not always make sense in our communities, our climate, and our construction industry. That's why we're taking the time to engage directly with industry and ensure the code is implemented in a way that reflects Yukon realities.

Our goal is simple: maintain strong building standards while ensuring we have a practical regulatory environment that supports construction, attracts investment, creates jobs, and helps grow the Yukon economy.

Question — Public service employee health care benefits

Linda Moen: Mental health affects all Yukoners, including those working for the public service. One way that employers remain competitive and support employee wellness is by ensuring their extended health benefits keep pace with the real cost of care. As the cost of living has increased, so too has the cost of many health care services, including mental health counselling.

What is this government's plan to ensure its extended health care benefits keep up with inflation and meaningfully cover mental health counselling for all public service employees?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I do appreciate this question and the opportunity to speak about the benefits that Yukon Government does afford for its employees.

We remain committed to maintaining a strong and sustainable benefit plan for employees and will continue to endeavour the best value and price for those supports and services. We do offer one of the most comprehensive public service sector benefit plans in Canada, and benefit premium rates are reviewed annually to ensure the plan remains fiscally sustainable and responsive to the claims experience, projected costs, insurance reserve requirements, and emerging health and insurance trends.

Linda Moen: Thank you to the minister for that response. I'm truly glad to hear that this is being taken so seriously. Access to mental health support is not just about having coverage on paper. It is about ensuring employees can access the number of counselling sessions they need without facing significant out-of-pocket costs. Current benefits pay for fewer counselling sessions than they did just a few years ago.

Can the minister tell this House when the government last reviewed its coverage for employee mental health benefits, and whether it's considering increasing coverage limits to reflect the rising cost of counselling services?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: It's my genuine honour to be able to share this information with the House. The Joint Management Committee representing both employees and employers administers the group insurance plans, and these are reviewed regularly. Premium changes in effect on April 1, 2026, included a four-percent decrease to extended health care, and a six-percent decrease to dental care, and a 7.5-percent increase to basic life insurance.

The Public Service Commission continues to review options and endeavours to have the best programs and services available for Yukon Government employees. They also work hard and diligently to ensure that employees are aware and the options of services are communicated to them regularly, and that the services are readily available for employees to access at any given time.

Linda Moen: I hope to see increases to reflect the cost-of-living increases. There are innovative approaches that employers can use to supplement traditional benefits, including health spending accounts. These accounts provide employees with greater flexibility to access a broad range of health and wellness services, increasing wellness and quality of life. Health spending accounts can be used to supplement mental health costs for Yukon public service members.

What options like health spending accounts has this government considered to improve mental health access and affordability through its extended health care benefits plan?

Hon. Jen Gehmair: I can't speak directly to the examples that the member opposite has noted. However, I can say with confidence that the Public Service Commission does regularly review options out there and makes choices for Yukon Government employees based on what the best options are for us to deliver here in the territory. We do have a range of options and a very generous package for employees. However, we understand that things change from year to year, so that's why we do regularly review and look at what the market can offer on a regular basis and work with our partners, including unions, to provide the best services to staff.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 40 — Warming centre

Clerk: Motion No. 40, standing in the name of Debra-Leigh Reti.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to offer a warming centre for the winter months in the Jim Smith Building.

Hon. Scott Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 12.1, I request that the motion be allowed to stand on the Order Paper.

Speaker: So ordered.

Motion No. 40 stood on Order Paper

Motion No. 51 — Airport security screening

Clerk: Motion No. 51, standing in the name of Debra-Leigh Reti.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with Transport Canada to institute security screening for passengers flying to Old Crow, Dawson City, and Inuvik.

Hon. Scott Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 12.1, I request that the motion be allowed to stand on the Order Paper.

Speaker: So ordered.

Motion No. 51 stood on Order Paper

Motion No. 183 — Coal-fired energy projects

Clerk: Motion No. 183, standing in the name of Carmen Gustafson.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Riverdale North:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to prevent the development of coal-fired energy projects by issuing a direction under section 17 of the *Public Utilities Act* to the Yukon Utilities Board that the Board not review any energy project certificate application for an energy project that is designed to use, convert, or process coal.

Carmen Gustafson: I'm happy today to rise to speak to Motion No. 183. As stated in the text of the motion, the intent of that motion before you today is to effect a pause on any coal-fired electricity generation in the Yukon.

The motion engages two parts of the Public Utilities Act: the sections under part 3 that deal with applications and the review and approval of energy project certificates, the power of

Cabinet to direct the Yukon Utilities Board. This action is intended to commit to what the government is on record saying, that they are not considering any coal mining or coal-fired electricity for the Yukon.

The timing of the motion is intended to precede any serious consideration of any such projects. There are currently no coal mines or coal-fired electricity generation in the Yukon and none before regulators. There has been some talk by a proponent that is presenting this as an option for the Yukon, but it's at a very early stage with relatively small investment into such a project. By making the direction considered in this motion, the Yukon Government will be getting ahead of the issue and setting a policy direction that would clearly signal that priorities of the government do not include supporting coal-fired electricity. This provides certainty and clarity for industry, proponents, and Yukoners at very little cost or effort to the government.

There have been several directions made to the Yukon Utilities Board using section 17 over the years. They're largely used to provide direction about rates and cost of electricity, but they have also been used to guide the consideration of applications from renewable energy, independent power producers, and a piped propane distribution franchise. Those are most similar to what the motion is asking for today in terms of making policy related to a specific type of energy project. I do think that the motion fits within the intended use of a directive to the board.

There are many problems with using coal for electricity generation. It is becoming exceedingly rare in Canada, according to statistics from the Government of Canada and from the International Energy Agency, which is an agency that tracks energy sector indicators and policy around the world. There's been a decrease of 87 percent in total electricity generation from coal in the last 25 years. Coal production has decreased by 30 percent at the same time. In 2025, the most recent year of reporting, the share of electricity generated by coal in Canada is only 2.4 percent. That's most similar to the amount of electricity generated by biofuels at 1.7 percent. If you compare this to 25 years ago, coal generation was the second largest electricity source in Canada, surpassed only by hydroelectric generation. Today, coal generation is surpassed by natural gas, nuclear, and wind.

The carbon emissions from coal — coal is the most carbon-intense form of electricity generation at twice the greenhouse gases of a natural gas plant. Canada has decreased carbon dioxide emissions from coal by 80 percent in the last 25 years.

There are also air emissions other than carbon dioxide — namely sulfur dioxide and mercury. In jurisdictions that used to burn a lot of coal, a majority of their sulfur dioxide and mercury emissions did come from coal plants. The cost of mitigating those emissions significantly increases the cost of electricity produced by coal, potentially outpricing renewable and lower-emission fossil-fuel options.

There's also water use. Thermal generation, particularly coal, is one of the largest non-consumptive water uses in Canada. Water is predominantly used for cooling thermal plants. Large surface water withdrawals by thermal plants can have impacts on aquatic organisms, including fish that get caught in the intake system, and it can also impact availability of water in stressed systems.

Although this motion doesn't look to impact coal exploration or mining, no coal generation would occur without mining coal. Let's talk about the experience of coal mining in some other parts of Canada. When I'm talking about this, I'm referring to a paper published in 2025 from the *Environment Pollution* journal. The process of mining coal exposes waste rock through which water can leach contaminants into the environment even long after a mine is closed. This is particularly harmful to aquatic ecosystems downstream of coal mines. A primary element of concern is selenium, which has negative impacts on fish and invertebrates and bioaccumulates. In studies from the Elk Valley in BC, home to several mines that produce coal used for steel-making, raised levels of selenium have been recorded hundreds of kilometres away. Coal mining in the Yukon could therefore impact the Yukon River watershed far downstream. Other contaminants include elevated nitrates, calcification of riverbeds, and major ion inputs that can reduce water quality. These impacts can continue and have been recorded to continue after closure and reclamation, as documented in the historic coal mining districts in the Crowsnest Pass region and more modern coal mining in the McLeod River basin outside of Hinton, Alberta, both in the Canadian Rockies.

Coal mining in the Yukon has occurred in the Carmacks area and was used for heating mines in Keno and Faro, and the Tantalus coal mine shut in 1982. I didn't find that in an academic paper; I got that from a Yukon Nugget. There's not actually a lot of information about coal mining in Yukon, but it did occur.

Current regulatory framework — Yukon's current coal mining, carbon capture, and emissions regulations are not up to the task, and enforcement of such rules would be onerous.

The motion allows time for the Yukon to truly consider whether it wants to allow coal-fired electricity or coal mining, have conversations with technical experts and Yukoners and, most importantly, Yukon First Nations. If it were the case, after a thorough process and consideration, Yukon could update its legislation to provide a modern framework that would permit coal-fired electricity generation.

One of those things that would need to be updated would be carbon storage rules. There is no carbon capture legislation that would allow for a carbon capture and storage component at a Yukon-based facility. Coincidentally, the legislation that's needed for carbon capture and storage is very similar to that needed to support geothermal energy in the Yukon, and I don't know that legislation is underway.

The extraction rules for mining are out of date, and Yukon has no experience with modern coal mining. Putting a pause on the development of coal-fired electricity, which would drive the desire to mine coal in the Yukon, allows Yukon breathing room and the time to either decide to prohibit coal mining altogether or to update the legislation to reflect today's standards, priorities, and values.

Other regulations — such as for air emissions, water use, and protection of aquatic ecosystems that are most at risk due to coal-fired electricity and mining — could also be reviewed and updated as required. Time is also needed for Yukon Government to find outside consultants or develop and acquire internal technical expertise.

When I asked in April 2026, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said that he is not considering coal generation or mining in the Yukon. What this motion does is ask the

government to develop a regulatory response to commit to that. The motion ensures that no coal-generated electricity is permitted for the Yukon.

While I understand the immense pressure that our grid is facing and that the Yukon Energy Corporation is under a lot of pressure to add new generation capacity, I don't think that coal is an answer. It will not happen in the short term, and the long-term prospect is something Yukoners need to consider.

Passing this motion also helps to ensure that the Yukon Utilities Board, YEC, and ATCO focus on the very real problems facing our electricity grid and the most tangible and realistic solutions that we have real experience and expertise in. That doesn't include a poorly thought-out idea to burn coal.

To reiterate, I've brought this motion to codify the direction that I've heard from this government regarding producing electricity by burning coal in the Yukon. It's happening prior to any significant development or serious consideration of coal-fired generation to send a clear and unequivocal signal that the Yukon will not be contemplating the permitting of any coal-fired thermal electricity generation facilities.

It does not interfere with the existing rights of owners of coal leases, as it does not prevent exploration work or proving a resource should an owner of a coal lease choose to do so.

There is no timeline included in the motion. This allows for policy and legislative development work to occur.

I do hope that the members opposite consider this motion and support it to allow Yukon to have an honest, open, and mature conversation about the future of electricity in this territory.

Hon. Ted Laking: I rise today to speak to Motion No. 183 urging the government to politically interfere in the quasi-judicial agency called the Yukon Utilities Board by telling them not to review any application with respect to coal-fired electricity.

This motion raises a broader question about the independence of our regulatory bodies. The Utilities Board acts as a quasi-judicial, independent regulatory body. Its role is to assess applications based on evidence, public interest, and law. The motion as worded is essentially the NDP asking for political interference with an independent regulator, which is certainly something that I and my colleagues will note for future debates.

That said, I think this motion is ultimately a solution in search of a problem. There are currently no projects before the Yukon Utilities Board seeking approval for a coal-fired generation facility. No proponent is before the Yukon Utilities Board seeking approval for coal generation. There are no applications pending, and there is no project that is realistic. The Government of Yukon and the Yukon Energy Corporation are neither considering nor pursuing coal-fired electricity generation. Further, the federal government has mandated a phase-out of coal-fired power generation stations by the end of 2029. The issue has already been solved.

In essence, the member is asking the government to redirect its resources to go fight against a figment of their imagination, spending thousands of dollars to stop something that has already been solved —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Member for Takhini, on a point or order.

Kate White: On a point of order, under Standing Order 19(g) — that the minister's statement about my colleague from Riverdale North is both false and unavowed.

Speaker: Minister of Health and Social Services, on the point of order.

Hon. Brad Cathers: I would suggest that the Leader of the Official Opposition might want to read the Standing Orders. My colleague certainly did not contravene them. He did not charge a member with uttering a deliberate falsehood, as the member indicated. He did suggest they were relying on a figment of their imagination, which is not referenced in the Standing Orders.

Speaker: Official Opposition House Leader, on the point of order.

Lane Tredger: On the point of order, when members are speaking to a point of order, they're supposed to speak directly to the point of order and not give suggestions about what other members should or shouldn't be reading.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: The Chair will review the Hansard. Members are cautioned to temper their remarks.

Let's proceed, Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

Hon. Ted Laking: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Motion No. 183 — *continued*

Hon. Ted Laking: Where I left off was that spending thousands of dollars to stop something that has already been solved is a poor use of limited taxpayers' money. While I believe the issue is already solved, I do want to put the member opposite's fears to rest, so earlier today, I wrote to the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation reiterating the Government of Yukon's current position that we are not considering or pursuing coal-fired electricity as an energy solution. Further, I directed them to continue to not consider or pursue coal-fired generation of electricity.

To recap, the Government of Yukon is not considering or pursuing coal. The Yukon Energy Corporation is not considering or pursuing coal-fired electricity. The Yukon Development Corporation, which owns the Yukon Energy Corporation, is also not considering or pursuing coal-fired electricity. There is no proposal before the Utilities Board to pursue coal-fired electricity, and further, the federal government has effectively banned coal-fired electricity starting in just three years. Finally, I have written to YDC and YEC to once again reaffirm this position.

Given that this motion is not timely, urgent, or addressing an issue facing Yukoners immediately, we can revisit it in the future if the federal government were to repeal the federal ban on coal-fired electricity. I will table the letter here that I wrote to YDC and YEC earlier today.

Motion to adjourn debate

Hon. Ted Laking: To remain focused on Yukoners' priorities, I move that debate be now adjourned.

Speaker: The Member for Porter Creek Centre has moved that debate be now adjourned.

Are you prepared for the question? Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.
Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Division

Speaker: I will call for a division.

Bells

Speaker: Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Agree.
Hon. Scott Kent: Agree.
Hon. Cory Bellmore: Agree.
Hon. Brad Cathers: Agree.
Hon. Linda Benoit: Agree.
Hon. Ted Laking: Agree.
Patti McLeod: Agree.
Hon. Laura Lang: Agree.
Hon. Jen Gehmair: Agree.
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.

Clerk: Madam Speaker, the results are 12 yea, six nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.
I declare the motion carried.
Motion to adjourn debate on Motion No. 183 agreed to

Motion No. 181 — *A Place to Be: Framework for Community Action to End Homelessness 2025-2030* recommendations

Clerk: Motion No. 181, standing in the name of Lane Tredger.

Speaker: It is moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to endorse all of the recommendations in the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition's report entitled *A Place to Be: Framework for Community Action to End Homelessness 2025-2030*.

Lane Tredger: I'm rising today to talk about this plan called *A Place to Be*. It's a really cool plan, and rather than try to explain it myself, I'm going to start by quoting from a press release from the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition about what this plan is and what it tries to do — this press release was announcing its launch. So, quote: "People with lived experience, service providers, elected Officials, and Community partners will gather On Thursday, June 4 from 11:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre to honour the development of *A Place to Be: Community Action to End Homelessness* and share its vision with the community.

"*A Place to Be* is a plan to reduce homelessness in the Yukon by 50 percent. It is an evidence-based framework grounded in data to provide a clear picture of homelessness in the territory. It outlines the system changes required, the housing needed, and the supports that help people remain housed.

"'As of April 2026, homelessness in the Yukon reached its highest recorded level. Our goal is to reduce that number by 50 percent.' said Maddie Porter, Community Action Plan Coordinator. 'With community support and the courage to commit to this framework, fewer people will be experiencing homelessness a year from now.'

"The recommendations in *A Place to Be* were developed using local data, perspectives from people with lived experience, service providers, and government partners, a community survey, and site visits at shelters and support providers in Whitehorse, Dawson City, and Watson Lake. It contains 29 recommendations to strengthen the homelessness response system and address the significant gap in the housing continuum related to permanent and supportive housing."

I think everyone in this House understands that housing and homelessness is a key issue for so many Yukoners. I'm sure there's not a riding in this territory that is not touched by people who are struggling to find or keep or afford a home and people who are acutely homeless. It's perhaps most visible of a problem in my riding, where we see the very real effects of someone who is not able to find a home and is staying at the shelter, is staying in a tent, is living on the streets. But there are people across the territory who are couch surfing, staying in unsuitable accommodation. It's an enormous problem that we have a duty in this House to be considering and trying to solve.

But specifically, this motion today urges the Government of Yukon to endorse all 29 recommendations of *A Place to Be*. The recommendations span four areas, and those areas are: "Strengthen the housing-focused workforce and system practices", "Strengthen system governance, accountability, and coordinated access", "Embed equity and cultural safety through First Nations and lived-experience leadership", and "Advance prevention and housing stability through coordinated, system-wide supports."

I'm not going to go through all 29 recommendations, but I will give some examples of the kinds of things that are in this report. One of them is to "Develop Interim Housing Options for People Leaving Treatment, Corrections, and Health care." That's something we've talked about a lot in this House.

It talks about strengthening community connection and drop-in supports outside of emergency shelter. We've talked a lot about decentralizing the services that are provided at, for example, the emergency shelter so that people have many places where they can access the services they need.

Another recommendation is creating opportunities for people with lived experience to lead training on the realities of homelessness. Another one is preventing returns to homelessness. These are the kinds of recommendations that are in the plan, and I think they're all very good recommendations. I hope that this government will commit to supporting them and that the Yukon Party will commit to their government doing that.

The context for this motion is that recently the minister endorsed this plan — which I applaud him for doing. I

understand that what he meant by endorsing the plan did not include endorsing the plan's recommendations and that he had discussed that with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition. When they asked him to endorse the plan, they were not asking him to endorse all the recommendations. It's an unusual use of the word "endorse", for sure. I think most people would think that endorsing a plan would mean endorsing the things in it, but that's kind of beside the point, because what I'm actually here to do today is ask it. We are asking for this government to endorse the recommendations in this plan.

What I really want to do is understand the Yukon Party's thoughts on the details of this plan more thoroughly. I'm less interested in what they did or didn't mean by "endorsement". What I want to know is their opinions on these recommendations, because if they don't feel like they can support all the recommendations in the plan, I'd like to hear why not.

The Yukon Party and the minister of housing have access to the expertise and knowledge of the public service. He has access to information I don't have, and there may be very good reasons that some of these recommendations can't be supported. It would be really helpful to us as Opposition — in our role as representatives, as advocates — to understand the government's insights on these recommendations so that if some of them aren't doable according to the minister, we'd like to understand why not so we can consider those arguments and potentially change our minds or adjust our approach if we shouldn't be advocating for these recommendations if they don't make sense.

I do really hope that the government will talk about if they can support these recommendations and, if not, why not — which ones are the problems and what are the problems with them?

Both we and the Third Party have asked about this in Question Period, and we haven't gotten an answer. But I will totally concede that Question Period is a very fast time. There's not time to dig into detailed discussion of individual recommendations. That's part of why we brought it forward today, so we can have this more detailed discussion about the recommendations: Which ones are possible? Which ones are not? And if not, why not?

I'm going to leave it there for now. I'll turn it over to the Yukon Party, and I hope that they'll be letting us know which of those 29 recommendations of the plan they endorse, they would support, and which ones — if there are any that they can't support — why not? — so that we can understand that as a House and as the Yukon.

Hon. Scott Kent: It's an honour to respond to this motion brought forward by the Member for Whitehorse Centre, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak in a little bit more detail here today about this particular topic.

Yesterday in the Legislature, I tabled a briefing note that was entitled *A Place to Be: Framework for Community Action to End Homelessness 2025–2030*. It was prepared on August 3 of 2026, and it was prepared by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, Reaching Home Community Entity. Again, all members of the Legislature and indeed the public should have access to this on the Legislative Assembly website. As I mentioned, I tabled it during the normal course of business yesterday.

I just wanted to start by providing a snapshot of what Yukon Housing Corporation and some of the partner departments in the Government of Yukon are doing in response to homelessness right now. The Government of Yukon is working with partners to strengthen coordination and improve how people connect to housing and support. Yukon Housing supports this work by providing buildings and funding for partner-led housing and by providing 20 percent of its housing units in Whitehorse for those experiencing homelessness on the by-name list. The Department of Health and Social Services provides operational funding to support several partner-led supportive and transitional housing initiatives.

Housing for people experiencing homelessness is allocated through coordinated, partner-led processes that prioritize need and support longer term housing stability. Yukon Housing provides housing assets used across the homelessness response, including entire buildings leased to non-governmental partners and individual units within the housing portfolio. Yukon Housing and Health and Social Services support partner-operated supportive housing projects in Whitehorse, including 17 units at 408 Alexander, 16 units at 5131 Fifth Avenue, and 18 units at 190 Olive May Way. Yukon Housing also contributed $12.9 million to the renovation of the former High Country Inn for the recently opened Hearth project, which is 67 units, and that supportive housing model is now operational.

Yukon Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services continue joint work to improve coordination, data use, and housing access consistent with the government's mandate and Auditor General's recommendations. Engagement with community organizations is ongoing to align housing supply, supportive housing delivery, and coordinated access.

The Reaching Home Community Advisory Board finalized the community action plan 2025-30 to guide efforts to reduce and prevent homelessness. As a member of the board, the Yukon Government continues to participate in discussions on the community action plan to support alignment with existing initiatives and collaboration with community partners to prevent and reduce homelessness.

I think that as the motion brought forward by the member reads, it is:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to endorse all of the recommendations in the Anti-Poverty Coalition's report entitled *A Place to Be: Framework for Community Action to End Homelessness 2025-2030*.

Unfortunately, that does not align with what was requested by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition in the briefing note that they provided to us in early August.

On the first page — and I quoted in Question Period yesterday, but I'll quote again. The decision requested is, quote: "That the Yukon Government join other governments in formally endorsing *A Place to Be* with a statement of support outlining Yukon Government's commitment to:

"1. Participate as a partner in the governance and implementation of *A Place to Be*

"2. Use *A Place to Be* as a framework to inform policy and program decisions related to homelessness and housing stability

"3. Work collaboratively with other governments, NGOs, and people with lived experienced to establish, monitor, and work toward an annual homelessness reduction goal."

That same document goes on to say — and I'll quote again — this is on page one: "Endorsement represents a commitment to collaboration, shared priority setting, and continuous improvement." Then, bolded, it says, "It does not commit

Yukon Government to implementing every recommendation, approving additional funding, or making legislative changes. Recommendations requiring future capital or operating investment would continue to be considered through normal budget and decision-making process."

This will be the final quote from this first page — quote again: "The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition (YAPC) would like to issue a joint communication with the Yukon Government to mark the statement of support in September 2026."

But that's not the only place in the briefing note that this is mentioned. I'll draw members' attention to page 6 under the frequently asked questions section of Appendix C, and under this, the second question was: "Why does endorsing *A Place to Be* matter?" It says — and I'll quote again: "Endorsement would confirm Yukon Government's participation in a shared approach to reducing homelessness. A Place to Be brings all partners who are investing in the sector together to build more effective solutions. This framework will promote increased transparency, reduced duplication, and better outcomes. Governments retain authority over their own funding, policies, legislation, programs, and operations, while benefiting from the collective wisdom of the Community Advisory Board (CAB), which has perspective on the whole system, to support better decision-making."

Then on the top of page 7 — I'll quote again: "Endorsement does not constitute approval of every recommendation or commit Yukon Government to new funding. It signals a commitment to participate in collaborative priority setting based on a shared framework and the measurement of progress toward reducing homelessness."

I think much of this work will be accomplished through the work of the community advisory board. The community advisory board is the existing Reaching Home Community governance table. Under its revised mandate and membership, it will provide system-level leadership and coordination to support implementation of *A Place to Be*.

The CAB's role — and I'll share a couple of the bullet points from the document I tabled yesterday — is to: identify shared annual priorities; support coordination across governments, First Nations, municipalities, and community organizations; monitor progress toward homelessness reduction goals; review system-level data and outcomes; identify implementation barriers and opportunities; and recommend actions that support the framework's implementation.

The CAB itself will be comprised of a number of senior decision-makers, including from three Yukon Government departments, one of which, of course, is the Yukon Housing Corporation, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, a rural First Nation representative, the City of Whitehorse, three NGOs, two lived-experience circle members, Reaching Home Community entities, and the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition as well as Housing Infrastructure and Communities Canada.

The CAB is an existing table with a revised purpose and membership. It will be an effective coordinating body and not an additional layer of bureaucracy. I think that is the most effective place for us to refer the recommendations that are contained in the *A Place to Be* framework for community action to end homelessness.

I think that while the motion that was brought forward here today was very well-intentioned, if we were to adopt it and vote on it as is, that would go against the information that was provided to us by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition at the briefing they gave to our caucus in early August.

With that, I'm going to move an amendment.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Scott Kent: I move:

THAT Motion No. 181 be amended by:

(1) replacing the phrase "endorse all of the" with the phrase "continue to prioritize and implement"; and

(2) adding after the title "*A Place to Be: Framework for Community Action to End Homelessness 2025-2030*" the phrase "as determined by the established process in the report".

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation:

THAT Motion No. 181 be amended by:

(1) replacing the phrase "endorse all of the" with the phrase "continue to prioritize and implement"; and

(2) adding after the title "*A Place to Be: Framework for Community Action to End Homelessness 2025-2030*" the phrase "as determined by the established process in the report".

Hon. Scott Kent: On the amendment, I'll just read out what the motion would sound like or would look like with the amendments that I've proposed here this afternoon. The motion would then state:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to prioritize and implement recommendations in the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition's report entitled *A Place to Be: Framework for Community Action to End Homelessness 2025-2030* as determined by the established process in the report.

I think obviously the changes that we've made are, rather than a blanket endorsement — which would have gone against what was provided to us by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition in their briefing note — but replacing that with making sure that we prioritize and implement recommendations but relying on the community advisory board, the CAB, that will continue to do and has done much of the work on developing and then the subsequent implementation of this report and the framework that was provided. As I mentioned, there are a significant number of experts and representatives that are included on the community advisory board.

As I mentioned earlier, while I appreciate the intent of the motion, I hope that the members opposite will see the amendments that I brought forward as an opportunity to strengthen it, put some additional teeth around prioritization and implementation of those recommendations but also respect the existing process that includes three senior government representatives and the other governments and organizations that I mentioned in my initial response. As I mentioned, while I appreciate what the member opposite brought forward, I do believe that this amendment strengthens the motion overall, and I hope that members would support the amendment.

Lane Tredger: We will support the amendment.

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

Amendment to Motion No. 181 agreed to

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

Hon. Laura Lang: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for bringing this question to the floor for the simple matter that I get to speak to something that I am equally passionate about. I think I should formally say: I rise today to speak to Motion No. 181 regarding endorsement of A Place to Be.

When we think of a framework, what comes to mind for me is two different aspects: the parts of a building or an object that supports its weight and gives shape; additionally, a set of beliefs, ideas, or rules that are used as a basis for making judgments, decisions, et cetera. Either description establishes the intent to create a structure, a high-level form that requires participation to build on it. This is what I understand A Place to Be as: nimble, community-built, and responsive to annual priorities based on established structures that is given shape but improved over time by Yukoners participating together.

I have particularly appreciated this intent when reflecting on where our territory and homelessness partners have evolved from. A Place to Be is building on decades of dedicated and evolving work by many partners to prevent and end homelessness. It is specifically creating a tool necessary for our territorial participation in the federal government's objective under Reaching Home, Canada's homelessness strategy. That nine-year strategy's intent is to work with provinces and territories to deliver projects based on community priorities and data with clear outcomes, based on a funding envelope of $5 billion. A requirement of Reaching Home is for all participating communities to have a plan, a strategy, or a framework that governs a community advisory board to then access funding. Like us, the federal Reaching Home strategy intends to address homelessness by building from the successes and challenges of their past practices.

That sounds rather simplistic, and that is not my intent. In fact, the approach our government endorsed a few weeks ago is based on the result of decades of working and learning what approaches are best applied when addressing the multi-faceted nature of homelessness. For that reason, I will take a few minutes to highlight a few historic components that have informed our territory and this current framework.

In 1999, Canada initiated the first real footprint into a planned approach to addressing homelessness through the introduction of the National Homelessness Initiative. Two programs, the Regional Homelessness Fund and Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative, enabled 61 designated communities across Canada to create government-community partnerships based on community-based plans. The Yukon was one of these 61 communities. Modest funding was provided for local priorities with the intent that this initiative would address housing needs and the growing pressure for action on homelessness. It was through this that the community entity model with community advisory boards was developed, a piece of the national homelessness governance structure that continues with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition being our territorial community entity and the continuing secretariat for a community advisory board as noted in A Place to Be.

From 2007 to 2019, our country saw the launch of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. At this point, the federal government shifted to a more pointed emphasis on collaboration and community ownership of local challenges and solutions with homelessness. The federal government put a standardized and formalized approach to systems-level homelessness collaboration, an approach that is very Canadian. This means that each designated community was expected to create and maintain a community advisory board, or a CAB, which would supervise the creation of its own community plans based on specific local challenges. By most accounts, this approach was reasonable to ensure local priorities and leadership were at the forefront, and national successes were realized, including successes for the Yukon such as the development of the 2017 Safe at Home plan to end and prevent homelessness. However, challenges also emerged related to the effect and effectiveness of collaboration and governance, which we know here to be true.

Starting June 11, 2018, Canada launched Reaching Home, Canada's homelessness strategy, following a country-wide consultation. Funding arrangements were revised, most notably for the territories. The intent of Reaching Home built off the HPS purpose and broadened it to include three key components: housing first, coordinated access, and a data software system that we call HIFIS. I won't spell out the acronym; I don't remember it.

At the same time of the launch of Reaching Home, other federal plans like the 2017 Canada's National Housing Strategy: A Place to Call Home and a 2018 Opportunity for All – Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy were publicly launched. This was a pivotal moment. Not only was there significant effort to address housing, homelessness, and poverty, the development of Reaching Home aligned with the 2018 July PT release Meeting the Challenge: Provincial-Territorial Vision Statement on Poverty Reduction. In that release, PTs emphasized collaboration to address social and economic challenges that cross all levels of government.

During a similar time frame, our territory had been working hard on how we could address the prevalence of homelessness. That included initiatives like the 2012 Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Strategy, Housing Action Plan for Yukon 2015-2025, Forward Together—Yukon's Mental Wellness Strategy—2016-2026, the 2017 launch of the Safe at Home plan to end and prevent homelessness, and in 2020, *Putting People First* and *Aging in Place Action Plan*.

During this time, our territory saw significant change. This included new organizations, retirements, and hirings of executive directors and changes to priorities for existing service providers. There were several territorial, municipal, and First Nation elections. No matter the changes in leadership, commitment to supporting vulnerable Yukoners remained and continued to receive support. That support continues today.

Reflecting on this time, I can see the evolution of the homelessness-serving sector, as led by the community advisory board, growing from what was local community organizations joining and working together, to local community organizations developing and redeveloping governance structures, to local community organizations more clearly and explicitly evolving their governance structures and now adding prioritizing data for tracking and measurement. All through these years, there was a continual build on these aspects of interest and priority, knowing that how we were doing things initially may not be relevant five years later or three years later. This was all while priorities were continuously made and adjusted annually by the community advisory board. Throughout this, the membership of the community advisory

board evolved with a few that know this history well, and I am proud to share I hold membership to a good part of this history, including our successes and our challenges.

It was a true pleasure for caucus to receive a YAPC briefing on A Place to Be that included how the framework was created and the intention behind the 29 recommendations. I am familiar with the level of intention and effort that has gone into the creation of this framework. Choosing the four strategic priorities is an immense feat on its own. For the record, those are: strengthening the housing-focused workforce and build the right housing supply, strengthening governance access and coordination, embed equity and cultural safety through First Nation and lived-experience leadership, advance prevention and housing stability.

When I consider these four priorities at a high level, I note they are pragmatic, evidence-driven, and meaningful. However, the nature of these four strategies must require variation on the how, because people change, times change, and new challenges emerge, because resources change, because we learn from approaches that simply don't work here and learn new ways to confront challenges. We have known this to be true since 1999. What doesn't change is a sincere intent to contribute to something that has meaningful impact.

I'm going to just pause on my notes for a second and try to answer a question that the member opposite had asked regarding examples within A Place to Be that raise some questions. I turn to page 76 of the plan, specifically 3.3, which says: "Support Culturally Rooted, Peer-Led Supports With an Initial Focus on First Nations Men". This is a wonderful initiative, and there's some really interesting project-based work underway right now by a number of First Nations that have decided to put diligent effort into this area, and I applaud this particular action with great might.

I also realize that if I was sitting on the CAB today, I would ask for variation on this very action, because another project that is equally powerful, The Nelson Project, encompasses all men, so that includes First Nation men and non-First Nation men. By virtue of how this is described, The Nelson Project would not be captured in this particular action. Right here, I can see a variation that again, if I was sitting back on the CAB, I would want to see this change.

Since 1999, we as a territory have learned that no one organization is or can be responsible. It is a shared effort to address complex challenges that we are committed to be part of. Together, we target shared objectives that have evolved over time, and we know that they may continue to shift in the future, like an example that I just made right now.

To be clear, I'm not speaking on YAPC's behalf, but I can imagine that if I was the CE, having a partner at the table endorsing a coordinated and collaborative approach to addressing homelessness, continuing to build on coordinated access and data infrastructure, and helping to set the annual priorities is what matters.

The reason is simple. As we've seen clearly since 1999, people and needs are dynamic and evolve over time, as do the responses. I trust that now, with this background and reflection, it is realized that politicizing A Place to Be is counter to the very nature and purpose of what the framework is working to deliver and the collaborative work and shared understanding that led to its development.

I thank the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition and particularly Maddie Porter for the terrific work in the creation of the framework. As a supporting minister and with my department sitting in one of the three spots on the CAB, I sure am looking forward to participating in a CAB meeting anytime soon, and I'm looking forward to complete support of the House in the efforts of this plan.

Kate White: Today, I'm wading into the conversation, and I'll note that homelessness and poverty are political. Because if enough actions were taken, we wouldn't be talking about poverty or homelessness. We wouldn't have food banks. We wouldn't have emergency shelters, because people's basic needs would be met. It is political.

Ending poverty, ending homelessness is political, and I hope with the comments I've heard today that this is a different colour of Yukon Party government than the one I experienced when I was first elected. Because this is not my first action plan to end homelessness in the Yukon. This isn't the first time this has been discussed here. This is not new for me in this Chamber.

We welcomed the change from the minister, and I welcome the words from the Minister of Justice, because I hope it will be different. I hope actions will be taken when I haven't seen them taken before, because poverty and homelessness are inherently political. Budgets, actions get taken. They get prioritized. Decisions get made. That is all political. It is political.

Making decisions to remove protection from no-fault evictions is political, and it is absolutely against the recommendations of A Place to Be that says that keeping people in their homes is the best thing that could happen. When we have conversations like this — the reality, poverty, homelessness — they are political.

We are currently in the 21st week, the 21st time that Poverty and Homelessness Accountability Week has happened in the Yukon. It has happened 20 other years — 20 other years.

A success story would be if it never happened again. A success story would be that there was no longer poverty, that there no longer was homelessness, and that community organizations didn't need to call on politicians to be accountable. That would be successful.

Success in reducing poverty would mean that there would not be a food bank. Success would mean that the food bank located in Whitehorse was never designed, was never intended to be a food bank for all of Yukon; if they didn't have to send out food packages to every single Yukon community, that would be success.

Talking to the folks who were behind the establishment of the Whitehorse Food Bank, when they got together initially, they thought it would be temporary. They thought it would be temporary. They never imagined a future where the food bank would be sending out hampers to every Yukon community.

When we talk about poverty and homelessness, it is political, because governments control finances, they control resources, they have the ability to direct, they have the ability to make decisions, policy, focus, who they support and who they don't, and so it is political.

It is political when we have this conversation, and I have heard more supporting words today in this discussion about the most recent action plan, A Place to Be, than I have heard previously in this Assembly in this way, and so that can give me hope. But there is no time ever that I will say that a discussion about ending poverty

and addressing homelessness is not political. It will always be political. When people's needs aren't met, that is a political decision. When policies change, when regulations change, when legislation changes, that has the ability to either harm or help. That is a political choice.

That is a political choice, and I'll note that even in the small document, there was one other thing. I note that the residential tenancy legislation is open right now, and recommendation 1.6 talks about including an amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act to specifically recognize permanent supportive housing, allowing providers to maintain supports while tenants retain their rights. But that's not an amendment that's currently being debated in this Assembly. What's being debated is the removal of rent control. Political decision. It's a political decision. That will influence poverty and, in my worst fear, homelessness. Putting in no-fault eviction is a political decision that will affect people's ability to stay in their homes when we're talking about eradicating homelessness. I understand. How come it's uncomfortable to recognize it that way — to have to look at it and recognize that decisions in this Assembly affect people and that those decisions are political in nature? They can be driven by ideology. They can be driven by research. They can be driven by best practice. But there is still one group of people who makes a decision and others who bear those costs. Today, when we're talking about A Place to Be, I do hope that in the next number of years, the Yukon Party can point to the action items, that they can point to the reduction of poverty, that maybe the Whitehorse Food Bank is not sending out quite so many hampers, that the emergency shelter has fewer people staying, that people have access to the housing that they need when they need it. Because that would be a great conversation in this Assembly, to say that the political decision was made to tackle those things.

I remember being in this Assembly when we were talking about 16 extra mats for the Salvation Army prior to the construction of the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. Political decision.

When we talk about poverty and homelessness, there is the need to recognize that if we were in a place where people's basic needs were met, we wouldn't be talking about poverty and homelessness because people would have what they needed. We wouldn't be talking about access to emergency housing or emergency shelter or rental housing. Or I wouldn't be talking about the food bank that, right now, I'll note, is doing a drive not for food but for money because, for them, money can stretch farther than the weird things in the back of the cupboard that no one wants to eat.

I welcome folks to donate to the Whitehorse Food Bank. You could donate $500 a year and be a member of the Green Apple Club. I don't have my pin, but I donate every year. Could donate to the Safe at Home Society. Could donate to the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre. There are a lot of organizations that could use the support. Organizations that I'll note also depend on government funding to support community. I'll remind folks here, whether it's comfortable or not, that when we talk about poverty and homelessness, it is a political conversation. It's about priorities. It's about focus. I hope that in the next three years, this government shows Yukon and shows organizations and others who put so much time and energy into A Place to Be that they are committed, that they are partners, that they will put the resources behind the recommendations that they can have a positive change on. But they will be accountable for their decisions, because the decisions we make in this Assembly matter.

I've mentioned before the irony of tabling Bill No. 8, the Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act (2026), and then a letter endorsing A Place to Be on the same day. It hit hard. It did hit hard.

When I went to the Anti-Poverty Coalition's 30th anniversary, I wasn't feeling super great. When I walked into that room, I cried, and I cried with the friends and the people that I've been working alongside on this very issue since I was elected here. I think about all of the folks that I've met through Whitehorse Connects. I think about the people who work in those NGOs that support community, and I think about all those lessons.

I will remind this Assembly that whenever we talk about the eradication of poverty and homelessness, it will always be a political conversation, because governments get to prioritize where the money goes and what rules or regulations or laws change, and all of that has consequences.

I appreciate the amendment. I appreciate the words from the Minister of Justice, and I challenge the Yukon Party government to show Yukon what they can do to be the best partner when it comes to ending poverty and homelessness, that they put their money behind these initiatives that are brought forward, because that's really what will matter.

I'll just say it again: Poverty and homelessness will always be political issues, and I will never pretend that they're not. Governments have the ability to direct finances and drafters and policies that can either uplift people or harm people. When we're talking about this very issue, you can see where the lines are drawn. I challenge them: Show Yukon; be a different Yukon Party government; be different than what we saw before.

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

Lane Tredger: The minister of housing in his remarks said that he appreciated the intent of this motion, that he was hoping to give it more teeth. That's something that I think is always a good idea. I look forward to seeing that play out, and I hope that it works really well.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Clerk, please poll the house.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Agree.
Hon. Scott Kent: Agree.
Hon. Cory Bellmore: Agree.
Hon. Brad Cathers: Agree.
Hon. Linda Benoit: Agree.
Hon. Ted Laking: Agree.
Patti McLeod: Agree.
Hon. Laura Lang: Agree.
Hon. Jen Gehmair: Agree.
Adam Gerle: Agree.
Doris Anderson: Agree.
Tyler Porter: Agree.

Kate White: Agree.
Lane Tredger: Agree.
Brent McDonald: Agree.
Linda Moen: Agree.
Carmen Gustafson: Agree.
Justin Ziegler: Accord.

Clerk: Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.
I declare the motion as amended carried.
Motion No. 181, as amended, agreed to

Motion No. 182 — Rental market registry

Clerk: Motion No. 182, standing in the name of Lane Tredger.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to monitor the residential rental market by creating a registry by December 1, 2026 for residential tenants and landlords to voluntarily submit notices of rent increases and evictions.

Lane Tredger: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this motion. There is a reason why any good evidence-driven policy evaluation requires data collection, and that's what this motion is asking for. Currently, there's no way that I'm aware of to know how many Yukoners get evicted in any given month for any given reason or how many have their rent increased or by how much. The Bureau of Statistics in the Yukon conducts a rent survey regularly that gives information about average and median rent prices, and I believe that the residential tenancies office tracks complaints. But neither of those directly measures what we want to know. Because what we want to know, what this motion is hoping that we can find out is if this proposal comes into force, how many people are going to receive eviction-without-cause notices, how many people are receiving rent-increase notices, and what types of rent-increase notices are people receiving? Are they two percent, five percent, 10 percent, 50 percent? This would be a very useful thing to know to understand what the effects of this legislation are.

It would actually really be helpful to have data that starts before December 1, but I do understand that's coming up rapidly, so that's why we've indicated a December 1 start. However, if that were to start sooner, I think that would be wonderful. I think that would be actually very helpful.

It's not, of course, the way we've suggested, going to be an exhaustive collection of all the evictions or rent increases in the Yukon because, we've suggested making it voluntary. I think it would be really helpful and useful to know how many rent increases, how many eviction notices, for what reasons and purposes — the totals are. I do think that would be a challenging thing to implement. It would require quite a bit of policy work, possibly regulatory or legislative changes, and we need something that can happen quickly. We have suggested a voluntary registry, because at least that will give us some data. That will give us a sense of what is the range of rent increases people are experiencing. Is this happening to a couple people? Is this happening to a lot of people? It will kind of give us a minimum understanding of what's going on.

We've also suggested that rather than having people just call or write or fill out a form saying what they have experienced, we've actually suggested that people submit their notices. That's important, because then it would allow the keepers of the registry to verify those statements and also make sure that each one only gets submitted one time.

Yesterday in debate, the minister said that her department is actually working on some data collection plans, but I haven't heard details about what those are yet. It's possible that the plans she has will actually fulfill the goals of this motion, and if so, I'm hoping that she can share some details about that work that's underway so that we can understand if what the department already is planning to do already does this or whether an additional step, as is contemplated in this motion, is required.

Ultimately, the goal of this motion is to make sure that we can make good decisions. We've heard that this move is made on a lot of anecdotal data, and I think Yukoners deserve better than that. I think they deserve real evidence-based decisions, and this motion, if passed, if enacted, would help make sure that we have the evidence as a common base that we can all talk to rather than each of us saying that I had a conversation with this person and you had a conversation with that person. We'd all have a shared base of data that we could all work with to have, I think, a more fruitful debate about what the best way to tackle housing issues in the territory is.

Hon. Cory Bellmore: I rise today to speak to Motion No. 182 put forward by the member from Whitehorse Centre. I do appreciate the purpose and intent of the motion as well as the comments and feedback we've received and the need to monitor the rental market and the detail required as we move forward. I think that this is really important work, and we need to be able to access reliable information. This information is really important. It's important for tenants and landlords. It's also important for policy- and decision-makers. We also must ensure that the data we use is accurate and collected through methods that Yukoners can trust.

With that said, we have committed to expanding how we monitor and working with the Bureau of Statistics on the rent survey as we go forward. The detail they collect is not entirely the detail we need, as we have intended to monitor the changes as we move. The rent survey is the current method for information that is collected, and it frames its questions to provide usable, reliable data, although I am open to considering other data collections.

We've talked about this at length, and I really do appreciate the purpose and intent of this motion.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Cory Bellmore: With that, I move:

THAT Motion No. 182 be amended by:

(1) adding the words "consider options to" between the words "Government of Yukon to" and "monitor";

(2) replacing the words "by creating" with the words "including the possibility of"; and

(3) deleting the words "by December 1, 2026".

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services:

THAT Motion No. 182 be amended by:

(1) adding the words "consider options to" between the words "Government of Yukon to" and "monitor";

(2) replacing the words "by creating" with the words "including the possibility of"; and

(3) deleting the words "by December 1, 2026".

Hon. Cory Bellmore: For a full hearing of what the motion would sound like with the amendment, it would be:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consider options to monitor the residential rental market, including the possibility of a registry for residential tenants and landlords to voluntarily submit notices of rent increases and evictions.

Again, I just want to say that I appreciated the motion to do this important work. I think that we definitely need data. We definitely need good, concrete, reliable data that we can all use to have input into and base decisions on, and that work is really important as we see these changes in the *Residential Tenancies Act*. We've committed to monitoring the changes that have been made. I don't want to go on too long. I just wanted to say thank you for bringing this forward.

Lane Tredger: The minister just said that we need data and that they're committed to monitoring the effects on the market. Then I don't really understand this amendment. It's just really strange, because I got up and I said that I understand they're working on some data collection plans. Let's hear about them. Let's see if that works. They have known this is coming for a long time. If they thought the data collection was important, they could be here six weeks out from this change with a plan to do data collection instead of saying: Yeah, we probably need something different than what the Yukon Bureau of Statistics is doing right now, but we're not going to say what, we're not going to say how, we're not going to say who, and we're going to make sure we delete anything with a deadline.

This is the Minister of Community Services who has full power to direct her department to decide: We're making these changes. This is serious. We should take this seriously. We should come up with a good way to measure this data.

But when that's suggested to her, when a method is suggested, she changes it to be entirely useless, entirely unbinding — changes "will" to "consider", adds "including the possibility of", and deletes the timelines.

I can tell you this: The motion with this amendment does nothing. There was nothing stopping her from considering this already. In fact, I would say to be a responsible lawmaker, one must consider the effects of the laws you're bringing forth. I certainly hope she's been considering it for some time.

This amendment renders the motion useless, and we will be voting against it.

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

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Agree.
Hon. Scott Kent: Agree.
Hon. Cory Bellmore: Agree.
Hon. Brad Cathers: Agree.
Hon. Linda Benoit: Agree.
Hon. Ted Laking: Agree.
Patti McLeod: Agree.
Hon. Laura Lang: Agree.
Hon. Jen Gehmair: Agree.
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.

Clerk: Madam Speaker, the results are 12 yea, six nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.
I declare the amendment carried.
Amendment to Motion No. 182 agreed to

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

Kate White: I believe the number of times I asked about species at risk legislation in the territory was 16, at least for the creation of the *Species at Risk Act*, and so I look forward to my new question that will be asked repeatedly about how government is monitoring changes to the rental market. I think this is probably one that will go on beyond me until we see the creation of a program that actually tracks what's happening there. The minister and I have had lots of discussion in Committee of the Whole about different ways, including the Bureau of Statistics, but I see this as probably a question that will be asked more than once in the coming years.

I look forward to the day where there's an ability to track what's happening in the rental market.

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

Lane Tredger: I'll just close by reiterating the fact that pretty sweeping changes are potentially coming in the rules around residential tenancies that have the power to really harm a lot of tenants, and I think it's really important that we know what happens, that we have a way to track that. So, I hope that is taken to heart by the Cabinet, the ministers, and the people who have the power to put that system in place.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Agree.
Hon. Scott Kent: Agree.
Hon. Cory Bellmore: Agree.
Hon. Brad Cathers: Agree.
Hon. Linda Benoit: Agree.
Hon. Ted Laking: Agree.
Patti McLeod: Agree.
Hon. Laura Lang: Agree.
Hon. Jen Gehmair: Agree.
Adam Gerle: Agree.
Doris Anderson: Agree.
Tyler Porter: Agree.
Kate White: Agree.
Lane Tredger: Agree.
Brent McDonald: Agree.
Linda Moen: Agree.
Carmen Gustafson: Agree.
Justin Ziegler: Accord.

Clerk: Madam Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.
I declare the motion as amended carried.
Motion No. 182, as amended, agreed to

Motion No. 180 — Committee meeting minutes

Clerk: Motion No. 180, standing in the name of Kate White.

Speaker: It is moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition:

THAT Standing Order 46 of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly be amended by adding: "(6) The Clerk to the Committee shall publish a record of all decisions made and actions taken by a committee in the committee's meeting minutes."

Kate White: One of the reasons why I chose to bring this motion forward in debate today is because predominantly lots of the discussions that happen in committees of the Legislative Assembly are actually behind closed doors. I'll note that some committees of the Yukon Legislative Assembly share their meeting minutes and many don't. But I will note that when we talk about transparency and accountability and good government, I think it's important to note that transparency occurs when government-held information that includes activities and decisions is open, comprehensive, timely, freely available to the public, and meets the ability to be accessed. Transparency empowers citizens to exercise their rights, hold the government accountable, and see how decisions are made.

The reason why we're having a discussion right now is because conversations in committee meetings, for example, about making minutes public themselves aren't public.

When we look at the standing committees of the Legislative Assembly, I'll note that it's Members' Services Board. I'll just read the description. It says, "The Members' Services Board is responsible for all matters of financial administrative policy affecting the Legislative Assembly." I'll go on to say that means the internal economy — that is the budgets that are approved for the Legislative Assembly, for the House Officers, and for more. For example, Members' Services Board makes money decisions. But for those money decisions, unlike when a budget comes for debate in the Assembly, there's no understanding on how that was reached. So that is one of them.

When we go to the next committee — so we have the Standing Committee on Public Accounts — and I'll note that I thank the Premier, because Public Accounts was very challenging until the 35th Legislative Assembly. I say that coming from a position where my mentor, Elizabeth Hanson, was really passionate about Public Accounts and really struggled when she was the chair of Public Accounts between 2011 and 2016. When the former MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin became the chair of the Public Accounts in 2016, there was work toward trying to make that committee more functional. Then I'll note, in 2021, when the now Premier became the chair of Public Accounts, there was a real effort in making sure that work was transparent and available to Yukoners and they could see. I'm doing my best to follow in the footsteps that he and I and others on that Public Accounts Committee in the 35th Legislative Assembly worked so hard to establish.

I'll note that the meeting minutes for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts are available; you can see them online. I'll remind folks that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts is responsible for reviewing the Public Accounts and all reports of the Auditor General. I'll note that this is a committee, for example, that is particularly public compared to all the others, because it holds public hearings. In a public hearing with the Auditor General on the Public Accounts, there's the ability for committee members to ask questions of the Department of Finance and the Auditor General's office and have responses so citizens can see what those questions are and what the answers are. Then when there are audits on programs, those are also public hearings, so folks can listen. Public Accounts, I would say, is the gold star of transparency in the Yukon committee landscape.

Next, we have the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, and this committee is charged with reviewing parliamentary procedure and practice in the Legislative Assembly, and they may also deal with questions surrounding the parliamentary privileges of the Legislative Assembly and its members. I'll note that it also has public meeting minutes, so we can look and see what was discussed, like on September 1. They do have their public meeting minutes.

Next up is the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. This was a committee that hadn't met for 20 years until recently. The Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments has the authority to review any regulation that comes into effect after the committee is formed, and the Legislative Assembly may also refer existing or proposed regulations to this committee for review. I will also note that its meeting minutes are also public, so that's exciting news.

I will go next to board appointments: the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees. The mandate of this committee is to make appointments to major government boards and committees. I'll note that it doesn't have public meeting minutes, but it could, because it doesn't have to have the discussion around, but it could have the outcome.

When we look at this motion today, it says: "… shall publish a record of all decisions made and actions taken by a committee in the meeting in the committee's meeting minutes." By that, when I look at the appointment to major government boards and committees, it doesn't mean the discussion about the people, for

example, who applied for those positions but the outcome, the decision. Who will be sitting on those things?

The reason why I wanted to have the conversation here in this Assembly is that this is the only public place where I can have this kind of conversation about the importance of transparency and accountability in those internal committees without having that conversation in an internal committee. Sometimes I have said, for folks who are of my demographic, that it's like Fight Club, which is you can't talk about Fight Club outside of Fight Club — right? Members are not supposed to talk about committee business outside of committees, but where minutes are made available, the public can get an idea of what that discussion was.

I think it's really important when we talk about growth and we talk about how far the Yukon has come. I'll remind members that when I first got elected, the budget in 2012 was just over a billion dollars, and now here we are in 2026 and it's well over that amount. We've grown. We've gone from 19 members to 21 members. We are doing a lot more work in the Assembly. We're doing a lot more work in committees like Public Accounts and Members' Services Board and all those things, and so this is an opportunity for us in this Assembly, those folks who sit on those committees, to have this conversation, because the reality is any conversation we have really isn't captured when we're in those committee rooms.

I think this is an opportunity to move toward transparency and accountability. I'll note that accountability was used five times in the Yukon Party platform and transparency was used seven times, so I think that's important. I think it's important and values we share, and so I was hoping to have this discussion. I hope to hear from members opposite whether they support it, if they have concerns, what those concerns could be, but I want to make sure that conversation is publicly recorded right now and answered.

I think Yukoners should be able to understand how committees work and the decisions they make. I especially think that when we're talking about financial decisions, that should also be transparent, that Yukoners can understand how money or resources are being moved within those committees.

I welcome my colleagues to join me in this conversation today. Of course, I'm optimistic that it will pass, but I am a realist. It's Opposition Wednesday, so the likelihood of it moving straight through as I've written is slim to none, but I'm optimistic.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Kate White: The Premier has just made a sound off-mic that maybe is an indication that he will support my motion. Maybe there's a willingness, but I hope others join the conversation.

For folks who are new in this Assembly that were elected nearly a year ago, they probably have thoughts and experiences. For those like the oldest hat in the Assembly, the Member for Lake Laberge, he might have some thoughts. Those of us who were second oldest would be the Member for Copperbelt South. The Member for Watson Lake-Faro-Ross River, like me, has been here for 15 years. There's a lot of knowledge in this space, and there's lots of new MLAs.

Again, I think this is an opportunity to have a discussion about how we can improve our business in committees. I know that committees have been doing the work, which I appreciate. I will also note that it is a lot, and I recognize that, but it is important. The internal committees of the Legislative Assembly are important to the work of the Legislative Assembly and of Yukon Government. I think this is an opportunity, like I said, to hear from different ages of hats, new and old — tired, in my case — about what folks would like to see.

I welcome the conversation. Like I said, I remain optimistic that it will pass but realistic enough to know that I've been through many Opposition Wednesdays where very few times have any motions of mine passed without amendment, and sadly, or sometimes even passed.

I look forward to the conversation. I hope it is light. I feel like this is not one that should really be controversial, but who knows? I welcome my colleagues to join me in the conversation around making minutes of committees publicly available.

Adam Gerle: I would like to thank the Member for Takhini for bringing forward this motion today.

As chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, I would first like to commend the members of this all-party committee for the collaborative and constructive approach they take to the committee's work. We may at times have differing perspectives, but members consistently engage in thoughtful discussion and work to seek consensus.

The Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges discusses and makes recommendations regarding procedural matters pertaining to this House. This includes evaluating and proposing amendments to the rules and Standing Orders. Most recently, we recommended extending the time allocated to Question Period, changes to written questions, and the addition of members' statements to the Order Paper as a trial during the 2026 Fall Sitting.

The motion as brought forward seeks to make the records of decisions made and actions taken by committees published in the committee minutes. This matter, which would require an amendment to the Standing Orders, is within the purview of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, and as such, I would request that it be referred to the committee for discussion.

Amendment proposed

Adam Gerle: Therefore, I move:

THAT Motion No. 180 be amended by:

(1) adding the phrase "the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges consider" between the word "THAT" and the expression "Standing Order 46"; and

(2) replacing the phrase "be amended by adding: '(6) The Clerk to the Committee shall publish a record of all decisions made and actions taken by a committee in the committee's meeting minutes'" with the phrase: "to determine if Standing Order 46 should require committees to publish a record of all decisions made and actions taken by a committee in the committee's meeting minutes".

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek South:

THAT Motion No. 180 be amended by:

(1) adding the phrase "the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges consider" between the word "THAT" and the expression "Standing Order 46"; and

(2) replacing the phrase "be amended by adding: '(6) The Clerk to the Committee shall publish a record of all decisions made and actions taken by a committee in the committee's meeting minutes'" with the phrase: "to determine if Standing Order 46 should require committees to publish a record of all decisions made and actions taken by a committee in the committee's meeting minutes".

Adam Gerle: As I noted earlier, I believe the most appropriate place to discuss committee procedure is within the committee itself rather than on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. As chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, I commit to working with my fellow committee members to facilitate this discussion and to consider the request as made by the Member for Takhini at our next meeting.

Kate White: On the amendment, Madam Speaker — there's been so much talk about red tape reduction in the last number of weeks that I think: Welcome to red tape addition by taking a conversation and a decision that could happen here in the Assembly and putting it back toward the committee behind closed doors for discussion. I'm sure that, when I talk about how I feel like this is a red tape addition, that it's missing the part about transparency in the conversation right now and that we will not be supporting the amendment. But I'm sure my colleagues will have things to say about the amended motion.

Hon. Scott Kent: On the amendment, I just want to say, as a member of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, I think there's been a lot accomplished in the last year since the election, since the appointment of the committee. The chair of the committee referenced our changes to written questions as well as changes around Question Period timing. We also agreed upon a roster for Question Period after we were directed to do that work by the Speaker in the truncated Sitting before Christmas and then, of course, the introduction of members' statements, which is a major change for how we do business and allows us to expedite the time that is allowed for debate after the regular Orders of the Day.

I think there's been some tremendous work done by the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. We benefit a lot from the guidance of the clerk of that committee in providing us with information around what happens in other jurisdictions around opportunities.

Perhaps some of the committees that are part of this Legislature have sensitive information that they deal with, so I think it's more prudent for us to refer this motion and this idea back to SCREP, where we can have a discussion. Then, of course, that discussion has the possibility of coming back to the floor of the House for a vote by the Legislature. I think that this discussion belongs at that committee, and it will serve us as legislators well to have the analysis done and the discussion and all of the information in front of us when we're determining how best to move forward with this particular item.

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

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Agree.
Hon. Scott Kent: Agree.
Hon. Cory Bellmore: Agree.
Hon. Brad Cathers: Agree.
Hon. Linda Benoit: Agree.
Hon. Ted Laking: Agree.
Patti McLeod: Agree.
Hon. Laura Lang: Agree.
Hon. Jen Gehmair: Agree.
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.

Clerk: Madam Speaker, the results are 12 yea, six nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.
I declare the amendment carried.
Amendment to Motion No. 180 agreed to

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

Justin Ziegler: This is a great time that we are all living in right now.

I'm also sitting on SCREP — Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. I will be putting motions to this to make sure Standing Order 46 is being modified so that minutes of every committee are being made public. I would like to remind all Yukoners who are listening that the minutes from SCREP are actually made public, so they will be able to see the motions that are being brought forward and how they're voted. Stay tuned for this.

Now we've gone through a lot of my notes, so I'm just going to carry on here. I would like to say that committee work is a part of the job of an MLA that I really genuinely enjoy. It is a part of the job where we do things, we discuss things for real, and things change.

I have a real true passion for Public Accounts. It has been a great experience for me. We've had good conversations. We've had good public hearings, and I do think that the work we do in Public Accounts is going to change things. I do believe that making all minutes public from every committee is going to change things for the better in terms of the big picture of the democracy in general — right? A lot was said. I could say it again, but we're getting dangerously closer to 4:00, so I think a lot of us would like to have a break at some point.

Transparency is actually sometimes uncomfortable, and we can see that right now. This is a good example that transparency seems uncomfortable. Some of us are rule followers. SCREP seems sacred for some of us here. Transparency is uncomfortable; it means our decisions can be questioned, criticized, and judged by the people we serve, but that discomfort is fully part of the job. If a decision is a right one, we should have no problem putting it on the record.

If you want my honest opinion, I actually think that these committee meetings should be public. They should be open to the public. They should be on Hansard, because I think we have nothing to hide. I'm not on every committee, but the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts — the conversations we have in these committee meetings are good, open, honest conversations, and I would have no problem to have these conversations being put on Hansard and have people being able to attend these meetings. I think it would actually be a healthy thing, if you want my opinion.

I'm just going to get back to minutes. Having all the minutes public also increases accountability, and I don't think anybody should fear that — right? We were all elected to disagree. We were all elected to have conversations. We were all elected to debate to bring forward our ideas, our ideal. Some of us do it more than others, but I think we should not fear transparency. If there is anything to fear in transparency, then we should question our intent.

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

Kate White: Oh, Madam Speaker — so close. I was so close. I thought for sure we would let the light in and that this Chamber — the folks who were elected in the 36th Legislative Assembly — would be ready to bring those minutes and those discussions — I'll note that it's not all discussions is really what the ultimate decision was.

I challenge folks in this Chamber to tell Yukoners that the work we do in committees is more secretive or should have more secrets or be less transparent than the committee business of the House of Commons, because I will disagree. But I will note that I was able to watch the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources present in Ottawa by being able to watch that committee hearing. I have been able to read the Hansard transcript. I can look at all other internal committees of the House of Commons.

The Premier is saying that's not true —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Kate White: He just said that there were in-camera meetings for a reason. I don't disagree, but one could call when in committee that it would be in camera and that it not be recorded or reported.

On the committees from Parliament, it says: "… Minutes of the Proceedings are the official record of all decisions made and actions taken by the committee at a meeting. The committee clerk prepares the minutes and publishes them online as soon as possible after the meeting." It talks about reports being made. I'll note that this was an opportunity for members to say why or why not they thought that minutes should be available. It was an opportunity that sadly has been missed.

I look forward to reading the meetings minutes from SCREP, though, when this gets discussed. I'll note that in recent SCREP meetings, for example, making electronic petitions available was voted down. Unfortunately, we can't see who voted, but unfortunately, it didn't make it through. I thought this was an opportunity where we could bring more transparency to the work, particularly around the Members' Services Board — the board is responsible for financial decisions. I guess I'll see what SCREP does.

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

Motion No. 180, as amended, agreed to

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

Speaker: It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

Bill No. 204, *Second Appropriation Act 2026-27*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 204, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2026-27*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 204, entitled Second Appropriation Act 2026-27.

Hon. Currie Dixon: I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill No. 204. Of course, this is the *Second Appropriation Act 2026-27*, also known as the supplementary or Supplementary No. 1. This is the first time that members will have seen this supplementary come forward with a contingency vote. There's a specific line in relation to contingencies, which as a stand-alone line, we will get into at some point in the course of debate. But at this stage, I'm happy to respond to general questions before we move into individual votes for specific departments.

Kate White: I appreciate the time today. I just wanted to get a bit more clarity. I do appreciate that the Premier and his ministers have made all departments available for briefings in this Fall Sitting, and I just wanted to get a sense of how each minister or each department will come up if they're not included in this supplementary budget.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Any department with a vote in this supplementary will be brought forward per the usual, as I'm doing right now, and if we proceed through, we'll move to the Executive Council Office, which is my responsibility as well. We'll have officials from ECO come down and so on, and then we'll proceed through those departments in the order that we determine at House Leaders' meetings each day.

There are departments, though, that do not have line items in this supplementary, so there's been expressed an interest in providing for debate on those departments. This is something that we discussed in the spring as well when I indicated that our preference was to move away from the supplementary estimates being a comprehensive exercise where the department seeks new funding for a range of different things and instead shifting to the budget in the spring being ideally the budget for the entire year. When we discussed that, we looked at a range of options to allow for debate on different departments. The result of those debates and discussions was that, in consultation with the Clerks, it would be possible in Committee of the Whole, by way of motion, to call departments to appear in Committee regardless of whether or not they have a line in the supplementary budget.

The ones with a line require a vote, and so we have to go through them all individually. But for those departments that don't have a line and don't have a vote in this supplementary, we can, by way of motion in Committee of the Whole, bring forward the minister supported by officials to answer questions about their department.

Kate White: I appreciate the response from the Premier.

Just to follow up on a point that was made earlier in debate — and just because I'm not sure of what department it would be in — can the minister tell me what department will have put funding toward The Nelson Project this fiscal year?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I'm told that would be the Department of Health and Social Services.

Kate White: I appreciate that, because they will be appearing here and it's just to get some additional information.

As everyone in the Yukon knows right now as they look at the gas pumps, the cost of diesel is actually alarming, at times very close to $3 or around that point. We know that affects things, for example, like home heating. It will affect the entire, for example, suite of large machinery operated and owned by the Yukon Government. What are the anticipated costs that government is expecting with the current cost of diesel? When we look at the heating of Yukon Government buildings that use diesel or home fuel — I cannot find the words for that, but I think the Premier can help me out.

What are the anticipated increases in costs right now when we look across the whole of government when it comes to the current price of diesel?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The Department of Finance doesn't track those costs government-wide, although I would point to specific departments that would have a much better sense of the direct impact of the cost of increasing diesel prices. In particular, the Department of Highways and Public Works is the obvious one, where they operate machinery that obviously has its primary input as diesel, and so they're very much attuned to the direct impact of cost and cost increases to diesel prices.

As well, when it comes to public buildings, there's a mix throughout Yukon Government's suite of holdings. There are buildings that we own directly and therefore typically pay heating costs for, and again, that would fall under the Department of Highways and Public Works. But in many cases as well, the department contracts out or leases out space from third parties. The example that comes to mind is the Economy, Tourism and Culture department whose offices are in the blue buildings on Alexander Street, and typically, as a result of the lease agreement with the commercial property owner, they would provide the heating for those spaces, and so we wouldn't see heating costs directly passed on typically. But there's a whole range of different spaces across the Yukon Government in the Yukon, and I would probably have to defer most of those questions to the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

Kate White: I appreciate that. Would the minister then say, for example, that would be the same question for the Yukon Housing Corporation, who owns many housing units — some heated by home heating fuel? Is that where we would find out about the anticipated increase in costs?

Hon. Currie Dixon: Yes, that's my understanding.

Kate White: The reason I'm asking about that is that when I look at the documents that were provided during the briefing — so the 2026-27 interim economic update and the 2026-27 interim fiscal update — I'm just curious about these costs. Again, no one in the Yukon anticipates that Yukon Government has any control over the cost of diesel based on things that are happening internationally; no one is making that suggestion. But I'm just wondering about what the influence of those additional costs will do, for example, when we look forward at economic updates.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Obviously, rising diesel prices put pressure on a variety of different departments, and the member opposite has referenced some of them. At this point, we haven't had any specific appropriation associated with those rising diesel costs. Departments that are affected by that at this stage deal with those pressures internally. If they were to reach a point where they could not deal with that and we had to consider making a change, the department would need to make a request to Management Board and we would have to consider approving additional funds for a specific department for a specific reason if it got that serious. At this stage, I don't think we're there yet, but one never knows. With an increasingly unstable global environment, it's not inconceivable that diesel prices could continue to escalate rapidly, and if that was the case, we may need to consider making a change. At this point, we haven't had to yet.

Kate White: I also appreciate that. It's not so much about making a change. The Department of Finance is the one that moves all these pieces around, and so I'm just trying to get a sense of what kind of conversation, communication, what kind of monitoring is happening. One would think that if this goes on for a long time, it could affect longer impacts, and so I'm just trying to get a sense of how the department works with others to monitor the current situation.

Hon. Currie Dixon: The member is correct. The Department of Finance is at the centre of the government when it comes to these decisions, but the affected departments are the ones that do most of the monitoring. Again, I would point to the Department of Highways and Public Works as an example of that not only on the costs that are on the Yukon Government but the costs that are on contractors who are doing work for the Yukon Government. For instance, if a contractor bids for a multi-year project and sees their costs dramatically escalate to the point beyond their capacity to continue, they will

communicate with the department to express that concern, and that's something we'd have to deal with on a case-by-case basis.

But at this stage, as I said, while there is certainly pressure on departments and departments will be in some ways struggling to adapt to the diesel prices, at this point, we haven't seen a situation where we need to make budgetary changes at the Department of Finance level to respond to those pressures.

Kate White: I noted earlier today that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources was in Ottawa in front of a committee saying that without funding from Ottawa, Yukon was at risk of a 53-percent electricity rate increase. During his presentation, it was indicated that Yukon was looking at a 75/25 model or 25 for Yukon, 75 for Ottawa.

Can the minister give us an update on where we are in securing that funding?

I'll note that since we were last here — congratulations to the minister and his department for getting a favourable response to the debt-cap increase; I think it's really important. We recognize that without the financial ability to make decisions, that can really hinder the operation of government. That I think is important, and congratulations on that. But I'm interested to know where Yukon is as far as securing additional funding, mainly around energy.

Hon. Currie Dixon: The Yukon Government is indeed seeking federal support for our energy infrastructure priorities. Those requests have been made over the course of the last year through a multi-faceted engagement with the federal government. That work has typically been led by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, although other ministers have certainly contributed to that work, and I certainly have as well. We all have our points of contact in the federal government, and it's helpful to maintain a consistent message with the federal government, so we've asked ministers across a broad set of portfolios to express a consistent message with Ottawa.

All that being said, I'll defer mostly to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources around progress, but I will say that talks are ongoing with the federal government. We've heard positive responses from our overtures to the federal government so far, but we are not in a position to express any firm commitment from the federal government as of yet.

Kate White: I appreciate the response from the Premier. I will note that Energy, Mines and Resources does not have a supplementary budget, so I would indicate that this is a question or a conversation that we'd like to have with the minister for a better understanding of that, because I think it's important to get a handle on that.

Just going back to probably discussions in this Assembly previous — can the Premier tell me: Currently, with the debt load that Yukon pays, understanding that they come from different pockets, what is the interest rate that we pay right now on the debt that we're carrying? I think he actually broke it down to a daily amount at one point, and so I'm just looking for a refresher.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Yukon's debt load overall varies across the various departments and entities that carry debt for us. For instance, there is a small amount of debt with the Hospital Corporation. There's a fairly sizable amount of debt with the Yukon Development Corporation and the Energy Corporation. I would have to defer on those debts at this point just because I don't have that information available, but I do have a pretty firm grasp of the debt that the Yukon Government carries, and in general, the long-term debt that the Yukon Government carries is in relation to those two $200-million bond issuances that we conducted over the course of the last year or so. Those two different offerings come with two different debt rates: One is about 3.1 percent, and one is about 3.8 percent.

In general — I'm being a little bit loose here, but in general, the Yukon Government forecasts to spend about $15 million per year in debt-servicing costs.

Kate White: I appreciate that response from the minister. One of the things that I do appreciate is we did get through the fall capital budget for the first time in 25 years — or I think since the Minister of Education was previously, a long time ago, in Cabinet with a different colour of government was the last time that it happened. Anyway, it was a long time ago that it happened in Yukon, and so we've had the conversations around that. And like I've said previously in this Assembly, I appreciate the efforts and the actions, and it will be important to measure how that works and the success of this on the other side. I'll also note — because I think CBC maybe was confused — that it is a money budget; it is one of confidence, which is why I voted against it. It was a weird CBC interview to have to try to explain why I voted against a confidence motion, but anyway, I do think it's important. In briefings with the Department of Finance, one of the questions I have is how — as the overarching, let's say, umbrella — how will the department monitor success? What measures? Is it the number of contracts that have gone out ahead of what would have been the normal schedule? I'm just looking to find out how Yukon can look toward what success is and how the department is going to monitor that.

Hon. Currie Dixon: I just want to quickly note that, while we are keen to discuss the fall capital budget, what we have before us is not the fall capital budget; this is the 2026-27 supplementary estimates. I'm happy to answer this question and I will, but I just wanted to be clear that I'm responding to the budget that's already passed.

In general, as I noted when we were debating that budget, the Department of Finance will engage with departments that have appropriations in the fall capital budget to work with them around the forecast for tendering and for the work that they should be doing in advance of the conclusion of this budget year and the spending of the money that was appropriated during the Sitting. The way that we'll look at that — obviously, we want to see the departments begin to do the work that we committed to doing. Whether that's early design work, whether that's working with the contracting community to provide them information about the forecast for when these contracts will come out, in some cases — and I should say in many cases — we hope that results in actual tenders going out the door, that companies will actually bid on tenders and perhaps even be awarded contracts leading up to April 1 with the goal of them hitting the ground running as soon as possible.

Now, will every single contract happen exactly that way? I don't think that's probably the case. I do think that some of these

could be staggered over time, that departments will move at slightly different paces from department to department and perhaps even from branch to branch. But that being said, this is a new process and one the Department of Finance has indicated to the departments that we will be watching closely and providing support where possible. We want to see these contracts issued. We want to see them go out. We want to see procurement advance, and we want to see that money be spent in an appropriate way given the kind of things that we've said over the course of debate in this Legislature about the fall capital budget.

In addition to the internal work that we do, we'll also anticipate hearing from private industry about what we've been doing and how we've been doing it. It's possible that the contracting community may have feedback for us about how to improve this process, about whether or not it worked well, and we will certainly be engaging very closely with industry about that. There are a number of different ways we can do that. Obviously, we have bilateral relationships with individual companies that are going to be expressing their thoughts on individual contracts, and then we speak more broadly with groups like the Yukon Contractors Association about the trends that will emerge over time as we effectualize these appropriations.

In general, there's internal work, there's external work — we'll engage with stakeholders. To the extent that we're able to engage and hear feedback, we will, and we'll do our best to navigate this brand new process.

Kate White: I do appreciate that. I'm just trying to get a sense on how — I appreciate that every department that had money out — it's just trying to look at the overall picture. We're here in general debate talking about that overall picture, and I'm just trying to get a sense of what that looks like, because I think it's important.

During the briefing, which I did appreciate, one of the increases to the revenue has to do with the Beaufort Sea royalties — and I chuckle only because it turns out it has been a generational thing. I think it was 33 years that this has been ongoing; it's not at the end. But I know folks within the Department of Finance have been working, some of them, for a very long time here. It predates some of them who have been doing the work, and I think this is a good opportunity to hear about the Beaufort Sea royalties — how we finally got to this point, which is almost resolution, and then it's not quite closed up, so what that might look like.

Hon. Currie Dixon: This is one that goes back in the history books a little bit, as the member opposite has indicated. Through the course of an oil and gas agreement between the Yukon Government and the federal government that dates back to the early 1990s and then subsequent to that, the conclusion of the devolution transfer agreement, there were historic royalties collected for operations in the Arctic, in the Beaufort Sea, in relation to oil and gas development and exploration in that area. This money has been allocated to the Yukon but has been sitting with the federal government for a very long time. The federal government has indicated a willingness to reopen those discussions, and there are ongoing discussions between the federal government and us about the agreement and how we can transfer and bring forward that money and finally have access to it. That's what this is. This money is being made available for the first time in a very long time. Unfortunately, I'm going to have to defer to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, as EMR has been the point department for that agreement and the work and negotiations in between them. Finance has carried it in the sense that we are obviously engaged in the way that we handle the money, but the details of the agreement and some of the history there I think would be better served by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources talking to it.

Kate White: I'll just continue to add the questions for a department without money in the supplementary budget but with the commitment that we'll be able to ask those.

Just out of curiosity, knowing that the money was held by the federal government before we got it, did Yukon receive any interest payments on that funding, or was it just the original amount that would have been from back in the day?

Hon. Currie Dixon: I don't believe that we did. I don't believe that there were any interest payments on that funding, but I'm going to have to double-check and confirm at a later date.

I would note just to be clear, if it wasn't clear, we're certainly committed to having the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources appear in the Legislature, having the minister respond to questions despite the fact that they don't have an appropriation in this supplementary budget.

Kate White: My apologies to the Premier; I know; I understood that. I was just mostly giving EMR officials a heads-up that this will also be a question.

Also, I will note that it's a bit disappointing that in 30 years, $10 million didn't have a chance to earn Yukon a lot of interest in that time, which would have been cool.

I'll note that there is a decrease in the revenue for alcohol tax revenue. If the minister can give me an idea — also to be clear, I think if Yukoners drink less, that is a success. But I do have questions, for example, about whether this revenue is specifically through Yukon Government liquor stores or if it's also through liquor sales. For example, there are our private offsales that purchase through Yukon Liquor Corporation. So, I'm just trying to get a sense of whether that revenue is reflective of just Yukon Government liquor stores or if that's liquor sales altogether.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Every year, the department puts forward forecasts for what they anticipate to be their revenue and expenditures, and that's the spring budget. What we're doing at this stage in the budget cycle is providing an updated forecast about what we're anticipating for revenue. In this particular case, the Yukon Liquor Corporation has decreased the amount that we forecast we will receive as a result of liquor sales in the Yukon. To put a fine point on it, yes, Yukoners are drinking a lot less, and that means a lot less revenue for the Yukon Government.

To the member's question, I will defer some of the details to the Yukon Liquor Corporation. However, I would note that all liquor sales go through the Yukon Liquor Corporation, and so it doesn't matter if it's a sale at an offsales or anything else or at a bar or a restaurant; all the liquor that is sold in the Yukon comes through the Yukon Government and revenue is collected based on that.

Kate White: I appreciate that response from the minister.

Just a question for my own clarification: When we talk about tobacco taxes, does that include taxes on vape products?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The answer is that they're different. There's a separate vaping tax that's collected in a different way, and I believe there's a bilateral agreement between the Yukon and Canada with regard to the collection of tax on vaping products. It's different than the way we collect tax on tobacco.

Kate White: I'm going to ask some questions about that vaping tax, because I don't actually know the answer. I appreciate that I think fewer people smoke cigarettes than a number of years ago, but I will say that vaping is rampant especially I will say with teenagers who are not old enough to buy vaping products but have vaping products. How does government track, for example, that industry in the territory? How are we keeping track of tobacco products that are not cigarettes and that standard or what one might imagine when we talk about tobacco? How does the government track vaping sales or vape sales or anything around the edges of that industry?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The federal government imposes an excise tax on vaping products, and so vaping products are tracked, stamped, and followed by the federal government. We are the recipients of the money via an agreement between Canada and Yukon. We don't have much to do with this one. In the case of tobacco or alcohol, we have a much more hands-on role. In the case of vaping, it's federally regulated. It's a federal excise tax that is collected by the feds and then shared with us based on their analysis of what products were sold in Yukon.

Kate White: The reason why I was talking about the tax specifically is because I thought that might be a way to try to understand, for example, the amount of products. This is when young people in my life will be like: You don't know anything. And I will appreciate that is true. But my understanding is that vape juice actually has nicotine in it, so it is a tobacco product, and so I'm just trying to get a sense on how the territory is able to pay attention to what is happening with that. I'll say that there's all sorts of concerns, of course, nationally, internationally, about young people who never started smoking but went right to vapes. I'll note that I know some young people who never smoked, but the vape juice that they use would probably put a horse down, and so I'm just trying to get a sense on if it's the Department of Health and Social Services that would pay attention to it or where that is.

But I think about harm reduction, and maybe vaping was initially created to be harm reduction from smoking, but it has gone off in a completely different section. You don't smoke cigarettes that taste like tutti frutti, but you do get vape juice that tastes like fruit. I'm just trying to get a sense on how Yukon Government is paying attention to what is happening, which I think could have pretty significant health costs.

Hon. Currie Dixon: The regime around vaping is largely driven by the federal government, as I said. They're the ones who collect the excise tax. They stamp the products and track which jurisdictions they go to, and that's how the amount is calculated. There's an agreement set between Canada and Yukon around the amount that we receive by way of that vaping tax. There's an amount that's applied in addition to those jurisdictions that have agreements with Canada, and Yukon is one of I believe eight or nine, perhaps even 10, different jurisdictions that have an agreement that allows us to receive that revenue.

When it comes to the public health aspect of vaping, that's something that the Department of Finance isn't involved with in the same way. I know that vaping as a smoking cessation tool is something that is considered by the Department of Health and Social Services in some of their public health work, and so I would defer the sort of public health aspects of that debate and discussion to that department. I think that's also how it works at the federal level too. I think Health Canada plays an important role in the vaping regime at the federal level, and they take into consideration the health promotion angle in terms of vaping as an alternative to smoking. I'm probably not prepared to enter into a broader debate about whether it's an appropriate health promotion response to be taxing vaping at this level, but at this point, I can certainly say that Yukon benefits from the tax and the collection of it by the federal government.

Kate White: I appreciate the conversation with the Premier, and it's mostly trying to get an idea. We track alcohol sales; we understand that can harm folks. We track the sales of cannabis; we understand that can harm folks. I thought it was weird when I was a teenager and I could sell people cigarettes not tracked in the same way, and it's just mostly about how that is being tracked here in the territory.

I appreciate the conversation and recognize that I didn't necessarily need any kind of concrete answer, but I think it's one that we should consider. I'm going to have a conversation with the Minister of Health and Social Services about how that data on young people vaping is tracked or if it's tracked and if it's not tracked, why it isn't tracked. I appreciate the conversation.

One of the things that had been discussed in briefings was the Yukon Government's path to balance, and I had a lot of questions about: Is there a place where there's clear steps or clear targets that are laid out? I appreciate that it's a bigger thing and all the pieces go together. I understand that, but it's mostly, if we look at government financing and finances across the entire spectrum, it's the ability to say to each department: Okay, well, how are you following clause 1? What does this look like in your department and as far as tracking that path to balance? I look forward to more information from the Premier.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Just to close the loop on vaping, I was going off of my own memory, but I actually had a note, so I'll just quickly provide a bit of information for the member opposite about this.

The Canada-Yukon Coordinated Cannabis Taxation Agreement stipulates that the Yukon receives 75 percent of the federal excise tax on cannabis sold in the territory. The Canada-Yukon Coordinated Vaping Product Taxation Agreement stipulates that the Yukon receives 50 percent of the federal vaping excise tax collected in the territory. There's some information about how it's different than the cannabis system. As well, here's something I didn't touch on: The Yukon is aware that vaping tax revenues have been lower than initially projected, and officials have raised the issue with Finance Canada. We continue to monitor vaping tax revenues and update forecasts as more information becomes available. There's a bit more information for the member about that.

When it comes to the public communication about the path to balance and the work that we do across government to ensure that we're being fiscally responsible, I think the way I would answer the question the member put forward is by pointing to

the interim fiscal update that was tabled alongside this budget document that we're debating now. The interim fiscal update is meant to be a digestible document that most Yukoners can pick up and review in a few short minutes to get a sense of where we're at in our budget work. Obviously, reviewing a 400-page budget document is probably not what most Yukoners are going to do, but we do try to have the interim fiscal update and the fiscal update that comes out earlier be digestible documents that Yukoners can consider.

If you review that document, Madam Chair, you'll see a number of important financial indicators that track where we sit, how we're doing throughout the budget year, whether we're meeting some of our targets. Of course, the budget in the spring is a forecast about what we intend to do and how we're going to do it, and then as we go through the budget year, we're able to comment more precisely on where we're at, and that's why we see things like the reduced forecast deficit being something positive from our perspective. When we see what used to be a projected $82-million deficit reduced down by about a third, that's a positive indicator that we're doing what we should be doing in terms of our overall budget objectives — trying to get back on a path toward balance. As well, in the fiscal update in the fiscal summary, you'll see a range of different charts that track the progress of the Yukon Government in a variety of different ways. Those are all very useful metrics for Yukoners, and I think that they are actually fairly digestible. I believe the document is only 10 pages long, so it's something that if folks are actually interested in the Yukon Government's financial performance, I would point them to that document.

The other one that's going to be coming up here in, well, less than 10 days, I'd say, is the Public Accounts document, and that allows for a much more in-depth review by legislators of the Public Accounts of the Yukon Government. It's not a year old, but it's an older review because it's a review of last budget year. But by this time, we finally have actual hard numbers that have been reviewed by the Auditor General of Canada and that we can actually look at as being a fact as opposed to a projection. For others who are interested in looking at those, the Public Accounts are a useful document to consider. Although, as the member opposite and I certainly know, they are not the most digestible document. It's also several hundred pages in length. Although increasingly, as a result of the work of the Public Accounts Committee, we've seen an increase in the number of charts and explanatory notes at the front of the Public Accounts documents that I think are more digestible to those who are interested.

Kate White: I was chuckling off-mic when the Premier was talking about how Public Accounts is more digestible now than it was before, and when I think about the Department of Finance, I always think about Clarke LaPrairie and his enthusiasm for tax law and policies and legislation and how much I love when he is giving walk-throughs or presentations of things. It sounded very reminiscent of the Premier right now talking about how much more digestible Public Accounts was, because sure, but — I agree that Public Accounts are a lot easier to read than maybe when he and I were first elected in 2011, but I hesitate to say that this should be someone's pastime.

I'm really lucky to work with incredible folks who were elected with me last year, and I'll note that my colleague the Member for Riverdale North is incredible for all the different reasons, but I'll note that she's also really on top of OICs, and so I'm going to share the floor with her.

I want to thank you for the time. I don't think I have any more questions for general debate. I do appreciate how when we are able to have back-and-forth conversations, the tone can often change in the Assembly, and so I do appreciate it. I appreciate that the Premier and I got to start, and I look forward to the continuing days of these kinds of conversations, and I'll just hand it over to my colleague.

Carmen Gustafson: Madam Chair, I appreciate the coincidence that the Finance official is in the room right now. I noticed an OIC was made today authorizing the Government of Yukon to give an indemnity in respect to a spill of a contaminant into the natural environment at Eagle Gold to a company that I'm sure we'll probably be hearing about more in the next couple days, and there are a few conditions for that indemnity. I understand that indemnities need to come under the *Financial Administration Act* if they're over a certain amount.

I wonder if I could get some more information about what the value of this indemnity is estimated to be and how that might impact Yukon's fiscal outlook.

Hon. Currie Dixon: The member is right to observe the OIC that came out, and what I would say is that is one part of a much bigger picture in relation to the situation at Eagle Gold and the court-ordered sale process that's underway, and I would just note for the member opposite that we'll offer the Opposition a technical briefing tomorrow on this matter.

Carmen Gustafson: I appreciate that a briefing will occur. Because the OIC was made and it is public now and there is an indemnity that's being authorized, I do wonder if I could get what the value of that indemnity is estimated at.

Hon. Currie Dixon: The indemnity does not have a specific amount to it; it's part of a much broader situation with regard to the sale process associated with the Eagle mine, and as I've said, this is something that I think members would benefit from a specific technical briefing about, because it's one part of a much broader picture.

Kate White: Understanding the point that the Premier has just raised, I'm wondering if it's possible — instead of clearing debate today on general, I'd appreciate an opportunity to talk again post our briefing, if that's possible. The Premier has a response for me.

Hon. Currie Dixon: What I'll say is that we'll offer members a technical briefing in the morning tomorrow, and I think it would probably make sense for us to call the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources for debate tomorrow.

Kate White: I do appreciate that and consider ourselves known. I'll also note that the minister has committed to having departments up, and so if I have questions for Finance after our briefing tomorrow, I'm sure he'll make himself available.

Thanks for starting general, and I'm looking forward to ECO next.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 204, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2026-27*?

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.

Executive Council Office

Chair: Now the matter before the Committee is Vote 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 204, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2026-27*.

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 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 204, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2026-27*.

Hon. Currie Dixon: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the supplementary budget for the Executive Council Office. I'm joined today by Associate Deputy Minister Brian MacDonald and Julie Desbrisay, who is the acting DM of ECO as of today.

I look forward to questions from members opposite. They have had a briefing with officials so far and look forward to answering questions.

Kate White: I welcome the officials both old and new to the Assembly, including in new roles. Welcome.

The first question I want to ask is around the Yukon Forum and engagement with Yukon First Nations. I want to get a sense on how agendas and topics of discussion are decided upon and the process to go up toward a Yukon Forum.

Hon. Currie Dixon: It's a process, I will say, that has been evolving over my time in this role. The agendas for each Yukon Forum are a matter of discussion between the Yukon Government and Yukon First Nation governments in the lead-up to the official date of each Yukon Forum. Sometimes, the issues are set well in advance, and there's a lot of understanding about what will be talked about. In some cases, the agendas are evolving right up until the days before a Yukon Forum. It's a difficult one to pin down. I'm not meaning to be elusive for the member opposite. I'm just simply noting that it evolves with the changing relationship between the governments and emerging priorities that individual chiefs or chiefs as a group or the Yukon Government may have and wish to express.

I would note that there is a senior officials group that meets periodically leading up to the Yukon Forum, and that's where things typically are hashed out. Although, I would note that I frequently have conversations bilaterally with individual chiefs and bilaterally with the Grand Chief to discuss not just the Yukon Forum but other issues. But often those discussions lead to the agenda setting of the Yukon Forum.

I don't mean to be elusive. I simply note that it does change from time to time. Each of the, I believe, four Yukon Forums that I've been to and co-chaired with the Grand Chief since I was elected has come together in a bit different ways, and we're moving toward a more clear agenda-setting process that will be based on the possibility of a strategic plan that all nations and the Yukon Government agree to. But that's part of the process we're still in.

Kate White: I'm interested in more details on how those agendas are developed or topics of conversation. The minister said that there was regular information-sharing between him and Yukon First Nations to set that. For example, as we're in 2026, we're nearing the end — are there themes that have been discussed or that remain topics of discussion? Are First Nations able to add things, and how does that work? Then the agenda items, once they have been discussed and decided on — how are they actioned?

Hon. Currie Dixon: As I indicated, there's a senior officials group that meets with some regularity. I don't remember the exact meeting schedule. I think it could be as frequently, though, as every other week, increasing in frequency as the Yukon Forum approaches. It's through that venue that representatives of individual First Nations, the Yukon Government, and CYFN all sit around the table and discuss a range of things, including what is likely to be on the agenda.

The member asked about some of the broad themes of things that we have discussed so far, and while some things that we discuss are confidential, I think it's fair to say and I've said publicly on a range of topics that the discussions we've had have been fairly positive. They have centred around issues like health care. They have centred around issues like mining and resource development, and they have centred around issues related to the opioid crisis. There's more than that — it wouldn't be fair to say that was — but those are some general themes that I think are a fair characterization of the meetings that I've had over the last year.

In terms of implementing some of the discussions, what typically happens is that the Yukon Forum generally tasks individual ministers and a committee of chiefs to take certain actions or look at certain issues. I'll use one example, being the new minerals legislation. A conversation occurred at the Yukon Forum in February. It occurred again in the summer, and then the Chiefs Committee on Mining and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources became the key group that led to the establishment of a working group of technicians between the Yukon Government and First Nations that are doing the spade-work of the policy and the legislative work associated with the new minerals legislation.

I guess in summary I would say it depends on the issue how we operationalize the decisions. But in general, when we task things out, it's typical that an individual minister and a collection of chiefs, sometimes coordinated around a chiefs committee, will have subsequent meetings, and that typically leads to actions of a variety of types.

Kate White: I appreciate that from the minister. How does consultation and priority-setting happen with the three unsigned First Nations — with the Ross River Dena, the Liard First Nation, and White River First Nation?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The three non-treaty nations are, of course, welcome to attend the Yukon Forum, and there's been an open invitation from the Grand Chief to those First Nations to attend the Yukon Forum. I should also note that non-Yukon First Nations sometimes attend as well. The Taku River Tlingit, for instance, and the Gwich'in Tribal Council will sometimes

have representation at the Yukon Forum to participate in the discussions. Their respective statuses vis-à-vis the Council of Yukon First Nations do tend to change from time to time. Sometimes, individual First Nations choose to opt out of the Yukon Forum because that's their choice. For instance, the Ross River Dena Council has not in my time participated in the Yukon Forum; however, the Chief of the Liard First Nation has chosen to attend the Yukon Forum over the course of my time. Those are decisions that those individual nations take on their own behalf, and they decide how and whether they'd like to engage.

Irrespective of the Yukon Forum, though, the Yukon Government has obligations, of course, to those individual First Nations vis-à-vis consultation, and we conduct those government-to-government consultations consistent with the policy matter at hand. If an individual minister has a particular area and they're required to consult with a non-treaty nation, the department will have a process by which they do that.

At the ECO level, we establish and maintain bilateral relations at the government-to-government level with non-treaty nations, and those take different forms. Previously, the government had letters of intent or MOUs with specific nations that articulated how the governments would speak to each other and get along and what priorities would be addressed by those respective governments. At present, we don't have an LOI or MOU or any of those acronyms with any of the three non-treaty nations. That's at present; that could change, but that's the status right now.

Kate White: I'll note that the Council of Yukon First Nations doesn't represent all Yukon First Nations, and so how do the Premier and ECO navigate that? Understanding that the Council of Yukon First Nations is representative of other nations but, for example, doesn't have — I always think about Grand Chief Peter Johnston who said he was a chief without people.

So, recognizing that not all Yukon First Nations, treaty or non-treaty, are represented by the Council of Yukon First Nations, how is that navigated, for example, while setting priorities for the Yukon Forum?

Hon. Currie Dixon: Obviously, the CYFN plays an important coordinating role for the First Nations that belong to CYFN, and by virtue of the legislation and some historic practice, the Grand Chief of the CYFN is the co-chair of the Yukon Forum. That's just the sort of legacy of the development of that relationship since the passage of the *Cooperation in Governance Act* under Premier Fentie. That could change going forward, but that's how we have come to effectualize the Yukon Forum currently.

None of that replaces the bilateral relationship and bilateral government-to-government relationship that we have with individual First Nations. Each First Nation, whether they are a member of CYFN or not, has a relationship with the Yukon Government, and then, of course, we both have relationships with the Government of Canada as well, and that treaty relationship between Canada, Yukon, and an individual First Nation that has a land claim and self-government agreement is an important relationship that's articulated by the land claim. For nations that don't have a treaty, we maintain a bilateral relationship as well, as I just pointed out.

While multilateral forums like the Yukon Forum are useful for having broader conversations and have led to, in some cases, processes like the new mineral legislation, they certainly don't replace our bilateral relationships and the obligations that we have on a government-to-government basis with each individual First Nation.

Kate White: Is the Atlin hydro expansion project viewed by ECO as a major project?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The Atlin hydro project is one where the proponent is, of course, THELP — the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership, the development corporation of the Taku River Tlingit First Nation — and it is a project that we would participate in as the purchaser of electricity if it were to go forward. So, it's an important project from our perspective in the sense that it could provide to Yukon an important supply of electricity going forward.

We have included the Atlin hydro project in a suite of energy projects that we've submitted to the federal government for consideration under the Major Projects Office of Canada, and if that's what the member is referring to, then no, it is not currently a major project, because no project in the Yukon has been designated as a major project under that process.

If she's referring to whether it is something we view as a major project from Major Projects Yukon — maybe I'll ask her just to clarify. But the project is a part of a broader suite of energy projects we presented to the federal government, and it's one that we've asked them to consider under the MPO, but it's not been designated that yet.

Kate White: Thank you, and it's a great question about clarification. I did mean Major Projects Yukon. So, is it viewed — as the Atlin hydro expansion, understanding that it's happening in Tlingit territory in Atlin, but is it viewed under Major Projects Yukon as being a major project?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The answer to that one as well is no, because the project primarily is occurring in British Columbia and went through the BC environmental and socio-economic assessment process there. That was largely done on the BC side. Obviously, if it were to go forward, there would be power lines that would come into the Yukon, but those from our perspective don't meet the threshold of becoming a major project in and of themselves in the Yukon.

Kate White: Thank you, and I appreciate that answer, but I do have questions as to what kind of engagements happened with the Taku River Tlingit. It has been a long time since the Atlin hydro expansion project was at the forefront. It's kind of fallen down and it's back up.

I was just interested to know what kind of conversations, consultation work the Premier and his office have done in conversations around the Atlin Hydro expansion, especially because it has been wrapped into this bigger energy plan.

Hon. Currie Dixon: I can only speak to the engagement that we've had with the Taku River Tlingit since my election. I can't say for sure exactly the engagement that happened over the past 10 years or so. But I've met with the spokesperson for the Taku River Tlingit First Nation at least once in person, several times at Yukon Forum, and we've had phone calls about

this as well. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has had engagement with her and the series of officials and consultants that they have employed as well in relation to the project itself. We've had discussions. They have impressed upon us the importance of the project from their perspective. They have explained why they think it's a benefit to their nation and their community.

The Yukon Government is of the view that if they are able to advance that project and sell us somewhere in the neighbourhood of eight to nine megawatts of clean, affordable, reliable energy on a year-round basis, it would be a significantly positive development for the Yukon grid. We view the project positively. We hope that they're successful in their engagement with the federal government to address the funding gap.

Kate White: I appreciate that from minister. I'm relieved; I'm just happy to know that there have been discussions and I think that's important. I do appreciate that the Premier is a year into this.

We talked about the support for the Ross River protected area feasibility assessment and that there was going to be a $160,000 increase in personnel, which worked out to one-and-a-quarter time-limited FTE.

I'll note that Parks Canada has just sent letters to their staff across the country with possible staffing changes, and I just wanted to know how or if this project will be affected by actions Parks Canada is in the middle of taking.

Hon. Currie Dixon: The project is the feasibility study on the development of an Indigenous protected area in the Ross River area. That is led by a steering committee with representatives of the three levels of government: the Government of Yukon, the Government of Canada, and the Ross River Dena Council. To my knowledge, there's been no change in the membership on the part of the Government of Canada, and I'm not aware of any change as a result of any staffing changes in the Government of Canada corporately that have led us to any different approach to this project in the Yukon. Regardless of who is at the table, Canada is meant to provide somebody, and while that person has been from Parks Canada right now, if that were to change as a result of some changes in federal staffing, we would have to adjust. But I'm not aware of any changes as a result of those processes that are underway.

Kate White: The Premier is as aware as I am and now has an inside line into land use planning or the request of nations. I'll note that, over the years when we were both in Opposition, the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun had definitely signalled that they were interested in working toward a land use plan.

Can the Premier walk us through where that might be or steps that are about to be taken or not taken?

Hon. Currie Dixon: The new chief has certainly expressed to me the interest that his nation has in land use planning.

That being said, land use planning is the responsibility of and is the lead of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Specific discussions about land use planning and which regions and what stage things are at would be properly in the gamut of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. But what I can say is that I've had a number of discussions with the new chief about that, and we look forward to engaging with him.

Kate White: I do appreciate that EMR leads land use planning, but I would have thought that the intergovernmental conversation piece would have come from ECO.

I do have more questions. Can the minister walk us through what are viewed currently as Major Projects Yukon? I know we were given a good list during the briefing, but if the minister can walk me through what are considered major projects right now.

Hon. Currie Dixon: Projects that are deemed to be major projects are ones that reach a certain level of threshold in the environmental and socio-economic assessment process.

Typically, a perfect example would be with the Casino project that will be a panel in that assessment process. That's a project that we would deem to be a major project and requires a level of coordination among the Yukon Government to ensure that we're able to provide carefully the input that's necessary of the Yukon Government into that process.

There's a range of others. I do recall and while I don't remember the exact list, I did provide a list to the member in the spring. To my knowledge, that list has not changed. The list that I provided to the member in the spring is still the list. That being said, I'll double-check that and note for the member that I'll return with that at a later date.

Madam Chair, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Patti McLeod: Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2026-27*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following filed document was tabled today:

FD 36-1-37
Letter re coal-fired power generation from Hon. Ted Laking, Minister responsible for the Yukon Energy Corporation, to Joe MacGillivray, President, Yukon Energy Corporation, and Shane Andre, President, Yukon Development Corporation (October 21, 2026) (Laking)